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Othering Processes in Feminist Teaching

A case study of an adult educational institution

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– A case study of an adult educational institution

Chia-Ling Yang

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To Women's Room and TGEEA

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Abstract

Taking its starting point from a critical dialogue with feminist and postcolonial theory, this dissertation explores processes of othering in a feminist adult educational institution, Women's Room, in Sweden. Women's Room is a women-only school and half of the student body has a migrant background.

The project is an ethnographic study consisting of nine months of participant observations and interviews, with special attention to courses for migrant women. The active involvement of two groups of women – migrant students and feminist teachers – in processes of negotiation, resistance and reproduction of boundaries between 'us' and 'them' are at the centre of the analysis. While special attention is given to educational practices at the institution, these are also explored within the broader contexts of the Swedish gender discourse on nationhood and belonging as well as the changes taking place within the Swedish welfare state.

Using the concept of intersectionality, the dissertation demonstrates how categories of difference are interwoven and intermeshed in processes of boundary making. Different social categories, such as racialized class locations and racialized gender/sexuality, are articulated in different forms of racism. The study identifies racism in the interrelations of power structures and demonstrates that gendered and sexualized racism is embedded in discourses and practices of gender equality and the welfare state in Sweden.

Although my results highlight gendered and sexualized racist practices and discourses in feminist teaching and identify how these contribute to boundaries of difference and belonging, my research also illuminates complexities within the two groups of women in my study. Migrant students disidentify with the category of 'them' and challenge the stigmatized representation of migrants in society. Teachers present a fractured 'we', who criticize the boundaries of difference while also (re)constructing the migrant students as Others in the educational processes. I, the researcher, also participated in the othering process. Taken together this supports the fragmentary and contradictory nature of subject formations and identities.

This dissertation aims at furthering scholarship and activism in feminist methodology, feminist teaching practices and theorizing difference. I make the process of conducting feminist research transparent and discuss the dilemma of closeness and distance in writing a feminist research product. With my analysis of the roles of feminist teaching in the processes of othering, I wish the reader to (re)consider how difference can be theorized in feminist scholarship and how boundaries of difference can be resisted in feminist teaching.

Welcome, all women!

Harriet[1] wrote the Swedish sentence 'Welcome, all women' (*Välkomna alla kvinnor*)[2] on a white board and invited students to come forward and write this sentence in their own mother tongue. All of a sudden, the atmosphere in the lunch hall warmed up. Students and teachers rose to write the sentence in different languages: Spanish, Italian, Finnish, Czech, Persian, a language used in Somalia, Kurdish, Arabic and Chinese. Harriet then asked the teachers and students to read the sentences aloud. When I read the sentence in Chinese and Taiwanese, everybody laughed, since hearing those languages was a fresh experience for them. A school staff member also demonstrated the sentence in sign language. I was deeply touched by this activity. It made visible the differences among us (040906 field notes).

These were my field notes at the beginning of the fall term in 2004, when students and staff at the main school of Women's Room[3] gathered together for the first weekly assembly of the year. I was moved by the atmosphere at the school, and it seemed that most of the students shared my excitement when our many native languages proclaimed the differences among us. A Women's Room teacher, Birgitta, later described the school using Audre Lord's words 'It was a while before we came to realize that our place was the very house of difference, rather than the security of any one particular difference' (Lorde, quoted in teachers' on-the-job training, 041205 field notes).

My research subject – Women's Room – is a women-only, feminist-identified adult educational institution in Sweden. From the outset, the school's founders decided that half of the student body would have a migrant background. 'To encounter differences among women' was one of the explanations the school's feminist teachers gave for this decision.

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1   Most pseudonyms in the thesis were chosen by the informants themselves except some whom I forgot to ask to do so. In that case I chose the pseudonym.
2   Besides the general usage of italic letters for emphasis or book and journal titles, the italic letters in my thesis refer to Swedish words or abbreviations shortened from Swedish words.
3   Some teachers made use of the term 'a room of one's own' to refer to this school. I followed this usage and called this school 'Women's Room' throughout my thesis. I do not mention the name of the school or put Women's Room's website in the reference intentionally to keep it anonymous (although it is difficult for the school to remain anonymous; see discussion in Chapter 2).

Nevertheless, this understanding of difference as variation among fixed cultural or ethnic groups is something that I intend to interrogate throughout the thesis. During my nine-month participatory observation at Women's Room, I explored the contradictory processes of inclusion and boundary making, as 'us' and 'them' were defined and redefined in everyday interactions.

Aims of the study and research questions

This research explores processes of othering in a feminist adult educational institution in Sweden. Taking as its point a critical dialogue with feminist and postcolonial theory, this research is a study of how difference is negotiated, resisted and/or (re)produced in the discourses and practices of feminist teaching.

The project is based on an ethnographic study completed at Women's Room, with special attention to courses for migrant women. The two groups of women that are at the core of my empirical material are migrant students and feminist teachers. Most of the migrant students are refugees and asylum seekers from Middle Eastern and African countries. Some came to Sweden because of marriage. In the Swedish context, migrants arriving after the 1980s are considered 'late-comers'; especially those from Asia and Africa are in a disadvantaged position concerning access to the labour market. They are also described negatively in certain political rhetoric and by the Swedish media as 'dependents' of the Swedish welfare state who are likely to create social problems in Sweden. In short, these migrant students are classified as the Other in mainstream Swedish society.

The second group on which I focus is Women's Room's 'Swedish', 'feminist' teachers. Although 'Swedish' and 'feminist' identities for these teachers are diverse, and some teachers have migrant backgrounds, I classify the teachers as belonging on the continuum closer to the 'us' in terms of their power advantage over students, their feminist identification and their identification with the majority population.[4] With two groups of women in this study in different positions along the boundaries of 'us' and 'them', an important question is how they negotiate, resist and/or reproduce the processes of acknowledging, creating and performing difference.

This study also aims to explore othering processes in feminist teaching. The reason I focus on feminist pedagogical practices is because of the central role racialized gender issues play in the construction of boundaries of belonging in public discourses (Bredström 2003; de los Reyes, Molina and Mulinari 2002; Keskinen et al. 2009). This is especially true, Swedish feminist postcolonial scholars argue, when the image of Sweden as 'a country with gender equality' is closely connected to the identification of Swedishness. One can ask, then: when Swedish gender equality

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4   I will discuss the concept of continuum in Chapter 5. The heterogeneity in both groups of students and teachers will be shown in empirical chapters of the thesis.

(*jämställdhet*)[5] discourse becomes a mechanism of gendered and sexualized racism, what is the relation between gender equality in Sweden and Women's Room's feminist educational practices? What is the role of feminist teaching in constructing divisions between 'us' and 'them'?

A story not often told

This study is about a story not often told. I tell it for two reasons: the first is to explore and probe gendered and sexualized racism in feminist teaching. Secondly, my study locates Sweden – which has customarily held itself above other First-World nations in these matters – within a common European legacy of othering.[6] There is also a third reason. Telling this story means examining my own assumptions, including my previous image of Sweden as a model country for gender equality and my expectation that unimpeachable feminist ambitions would guide the country's feminist educational praxis.

Nordic countries often present themselves as untouched by colonial legacies and as democratic countries with highly developed welfare systems, human rights and gender equality.[7] Citizens firmly believe that their countries' international relations are characterized by aid for human and sustainable development and peacemaking, rather than colonialism or imperialism. While critical race theory and postcolonial studies have developed in the colonial centres to reflect on imperial pasts and how imperial power in the contemporary world is shaped and amplified by capitalism and globalization, there are no strong critiques of colonialism and postcolonial encounters in the Nordic countries (Keskinen et al. 2009). For instance, a book on multiculturalism published by Sweden's Ministry of Education states, 'France, the Netherlands and Great Britain have had completely different points of departure compared to Sweden, since they have a history as colonial powers' (Roth 1999: 12).

Discourses on nationhood, according to several scholars, locate the Nordic countries part of the Western world and draw their value systems from the Enlightenment, showing themselves willing to defend these values, sometimes more forcefully than

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5   There are two terms of equality in Swedish: *jämlikhet* and *jämställdhet*. *Jämställdhet* refers only equal relationship between women and men while the word *jämlikhet* has broader meanings, which refers to equal relationship between all individuals and groups in society. *Jämlikhet* grasps process of inclusion and focus on equal treatment and value of people regardless of their gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, nationality, religion etc.

6   Here I would like to underline the notion *Even in Sweden* used by Allan Pred (2000: xiii) – that 'Swedes are not somehow exempt from committing social injustices by way of arbitrary categorization and the stereotyping of Difference'.

7   Nevertheless, Swedish history illuminates clearly its colonial history of its occupation of Sami people, Norway and Finland. Denmark also has a colonial history and still 'owns' Greenland. Furthermore, although Norway and Finland were countries colonized by Nordic colonial countries (and Finland also by Russia), these two countries also govern the Sami people (see also Keskinen et al. 2009; Tuori 2009).

the former colonial powers (Keskinen et al. 2009; Ledje 2009). The heated debates on the veil, arranged and forced marriages and 'honour-related' violence in Nordic countries are examples of Sweden's location within a European frame. In this thesis I also situate the school, its teachers and the situations of migrant students within a context of regime change in the Swedish welfare state. I identify the neoliberal turn, which actually decreases the ability of the welfare state to provide for its citizens.

I also undertake a critical examination of the processes of feminist teaching. According to Kathleen Weiler (2001: 67-68), feminist pedagogy is a political project that emphasizes the importance of consciousness raising, the existence of an oppressive social structure and the need to change it, and the possibility of social transformation. Such a feminist educational praxis challenges the structure of the traditional canon and suggests alternative classroom practices. It highlights women as learners, pays attentions to the gendered nature of accepted knowledge in the academy, discusses the role and authority of the teacher and the epistemological question of the source of knowledge and truth claims of men and women. I adopt Weiler's definition as a way to identify feminist teaching practices at Women's Room.

I find some similarities among the goals of Women's Room and feminist and critical pedagogy.[8] Indeed, Women's Room teachers sometimes mentioned that they were influenced by scholars in both feminist and critical pedagogy. Throughout the thesis I nonetheless employ the term feminist teaching, instead of feminist pedagogy because feminist pedagogy developed differently in Anglo-Saxon countries than in Sweden. Although several scholars have offered race-based and poststructuralist critiques of feminist pedagogy in Anglo-Saxon countries (hooks 1994; Luke and Gore 1992; Ng, Staton and Scane 1995), mainstream gender and education research in Sweden tends to regard gender equality as something naturally good and worth striving for, without exploring the role of gender equality in constructing the nuclear heteronormative family and boundaries of belonging. I hope that my analysis of the role that feminist teaching plays in the process of othering will direct readers to consider more seriously how difference can be theorized in feminist scholarship and how the boundaries of difference can be resisted in feminist teaching. This thesis identifies some of the strengths of the Swedish model, but remains conscious of its weaknesses, especially from a postcolonial perspective.

8　The definition of critical pedagogy, according to Ira Shor (1993: 25) is that it 'challenges teachers and students to empower themselves for social change, to advance democracy and equality as they advance their literacy and knowledge' (quoted in Sleeter and McLaren 1995: 7). Although there are similarities between the two types of pedagogy, Jennifer Gore (1993: 25-26, original emphasis) argues that there is neither an alliance nor engagement with each other in feminist and critical pedagogy. Even both areas can be further divided into different strands in U. S. academy: (1a) feminist *pedagogy* constructed in Women's studies that emphasizes instructional practices; (1b) *feminist* pedagogy constructed in Education that highlights political vision in educational praxis; (2a) critical *pedagogy* constructed by Paulo Freire and Ira Shor that emphasizes both instructional practices and political vision (but more focus on instructional practices); (2b) *critical* pedagogy constructed by Henry Giroux and Peter McLaren that stresses political vision.

Where my research stands

Education has long been a field of research focus within sociology. In Sweden, there have been several studies concerning equity education, with a particular focus on class, gender, sexuality and ethnicity in schools.[9] Following this research tradition, I identify my research on the academic map of three areas specifically: (1) feminist scholarship, (2) critical and feminist pedagogy and (3) critical anthropology, sociology and feminist methodology.

The first area in which I situate my research is feminist scholarship. Difference is not new to feminist theory. Gender and class difference have been central to feminist theory. Black and queer feminists have challenged white, middle-class and heterosexual feminist scholarship and the women's movement while postcolonial feminists have pointed out power inequities among First-World and Third-World women and the role of white women in Western colonial projects. These feminist thinkers have challenged the presumed notion of sisterhood and developed an understanding of women and difference.

This study follows existing feminist debates of difference that give a central role to intersectionality (Brah and Phoenix 2004; McCall 2005; Rottmann and Ferree 2008; Valentine 2007). By analyzing how gender, sexuality and race/ethnicity[10] are intermeshed with and constructed by each other in a complicated process, I wish to argue for the importance of the concept of intersectionality in the context of current debates on gender and race/ethnicity in Swedish and European feminist scholarship.

The second area in which I situate my study is critical and feminist pedagogy. Throughout the thesis, I use voices and practices in feminist teaching at Women's Room to create a dialogue with feminist and critical pedagogy. By acknowledging the complexities of both students and teachers at Women's Room, I wish to draw into question the binary oppositions of liberatory teachers/oppressed students and 'progressive'/'traditional' education.

I define this study as a feminist study 'at home' (Skeggs 1997:30-31). The metaphorical home contains two meanings: it refers to the publication of the research product at the researched subjects' 'home' (that is to say, in Sweden), as well as the symbolic home of feminist teaching and theory, to which I have devoted myself for many years. These areas of feminist intellectual and political commitment are what teachers at Women's Room, my feminist colleagues in Taiwan and I all share. Throughout the writing process I have examined the dialogue that I tried (and failed) to establish with my informants, while intending to probe the dilemma of closeness and distance in feminist research. I also have tried to write myself *into* the thesis. By making clear the processes of knowledge making and the role of the researcher in

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9   See, for example, Ambjörnsson 2004; Andersson, Arnman and Jönsson 1980, 1983; Arnman and Jönsson 1985; Göransson 1992; Jönsson 1992; Öhrn 2002.

10 Although I regard race as a process of racialization, throughout the thesis I do not put race in the quotation marks since I think other social categories (such as gender or sexuality) are also constructed.

(re)production of the Other, I hope to participate in the contemplation of critical anthropology, sociology and feminist methodology.

A road map

A methodological chapter, intended as a reflection on the epistemological and methodological stance of this research, follows this introduction. This study is based on women's daily lives in a specific educational setting; I employ participatory observation and interviews as ways to document these women's voices and experiences in the educational process. The role of the researcher, fieldwork dilemmas and the challenge of writing a feminist research product 'at home' are in focus of discussion in Chapter 2.

Chapter 3 discusses the central concepts of the dissertation. I present discussions of difference in social theory and feminist scholarship. Then I discuss the importance of intersectionality, introducing the term gendered/sexualized racism as my theoretical framework in the thesis.

Chapter 4 provides readers with an understanding of the broader context of regime change within the Swedish welfare state. I focus on transitions and shifts in the Swedish welfare state and their impact on adult education.

Five empirical chapters follow. Chapter 5 links to the previous chapters by situating Women's Room and the women at the school in the context of the welfare state's transition. The chapter looks forward by examining how the concept of difference is conceptualized by teachers at Women's Room.

Chapters 6 and 7 focus on the words and actions of the two groups of women in relation to the process of othering, including how the women negotiate the discursive categories assigned to them. Chapter 6 traces how migrant students disidentify with 'them' by pointing out some alternative Other, while Chapter 7 discusses feminist teachers' disidentification with Swedishness and whiteness. Their speech and actions demonstrate the possibilities for anti-racist feminist teaching and transversal politics.

The two chapters that follow, however, indicate the settings where the Other is reproduced by the same feminist teachers. Chapter 8 focuses on discussions among feminist teachers and migrant students about marriage and family. Chapter 9 builds on the previous chapter, contemplating sexuality in the process of othering and the interplay between racism and sexuality.

The tension between resistance and accommodation in feminist teaching process at Women's Room illustrates challenges in feminist educational praxis. I suggest reading Chapters 7 to 9 together, in order to avoid falling into a one-sided description of feminist teaching at Women's Room. The last chapter draws together the threads of the preceding chapters in order to present the strength of this study and open further dialogues of future studies.

Researcher's roles and the research product

> To ignore questions of methodology is to assume that knowledge comes from nowhere allowing knowledge makers to abdicate responsibility for their productions and representations. To side-step methodology means that mechanisms we utilize in producing knowledge are hidden, relations of privilege are masked and knowers are not seen to be located. (Skeggs 1997: 17)

In pursuit of a postcolonial research project, I chose a (non) traditional way of doing fieldwork in a feminist institution. Traditional means that I spent nine months in the field, doing participatory observation, conducting interviews and gathering materials for my dissertation. Non-traditional means, firstly, inspired by feminist sociology and methodology, I began my research by taking women's daily lives as my starting point. Secondly, aware of the importance of self-criticism in anthropology and sociology, this 'study-up' research by a Third-World researcher seems to be, on the one hand, a work opposed to the construction of the Other in anthropology and sociology while, on the other, making Sweden (and ethnic Swedes) the Other in my examination. Thirdly, this research is not only the study of the Other, but also research on myself, my assumptions, standpoints, reflections and analysis. As I will illustrate later in the chapter, from the outset of the research I had an inner dialogue with my feminist and postcolonial knowledge, my previous experiences in feminist teaching, and certain (non-reflexive) questions about migrant women in Swedish society. During the research process, the shifting positions led to the change of my feminist worldview and the (un)learning process I underwent while researching my subjects.

In this chapter, I intend to first describe the methods by which I conducted the fieldwork research in a feminist institution, and secondly, to locate my methodological reflections on my role as a researcher, the ethical dilemmas faced during my fieldwork, and the difficulties encountered when writing the research product by placing them within the discussions of feminist methodology and reflexive anthropology/sociology.

Methodology and research methods

Methodological issues have been at the core of feminist debates since the 1970s. Questions such as who can be conceptualized as a 'knower', what can be understood as legitimated 'knowledge' and what can be studied (to be 'known') have been raised. Issues such as relations between the researcher and the researched, power structures between researchers and research and affective components embedded in research processes have been discussed (Fonow and Cook 1991; Harding 1987). For example, Patricia Hill Collins (1991) challenges the concept of the presumed neutral 'objective knower' and criticizes traditional ways of knowledge production that situate white men as the subject of knowledge and distort the experiences and representations of Others. Dorothy Smith (1987) criticizes the ways in which sociological discursive practices create a universal subject that transcends the local actualities of people's lives. She also suggests that in these practices people become the objects for sociologists' investigation and explanation. Embodiment and everyday experiences are taken as a starting point in the alternative created by Smith's (2005) *Institutional Ethnography*. But the ultimate goal of analysis is to make visible the social relations, in particular relations of ruling behind people's experiences. Others take the argument a step further by suggesting that embodied experiences from subordinated positions can produce particular knowledges that can challenge and transform relations of power and knowledge (Collins 2000[1990]; Hartsock 1987; Davies 1999: 62).

In anthropology, a reflexive turn towards self-criticism started at the end of the 1960s. Here, anthropologists reflect on the relationship between colonial expansion and anthropology, and how anthropologists' ignorance of racism, economic exploitation and colonial contact helped maintain unequal power relationships (Asad 1973; Davies 1999: 9). Furthermore, the construction of the Other in anthropology is analyzed with focusing on other aspects of gender and sexuality (Bell, Caplan and Karim 1993).

Doing feminist research based in women's daily lives

Being familiar with the debates and reflections, I decided to start my research from the experiences and interactions of women in a feminist educational institution, Women's Room. Although the research starts from people's experience, it aims to 'discover the social as it extends beyond experience' (Smith 2005: 10). During my observations I noticed that teachers at Women's Room posed certain questions to migrant women students only. For example, they asked migrant women how they deal with conflicts with their children.[11] Such questions may resonate with migrant women's daily life experiences – i.e., migrant women sometimes experience a difference of attitudes, thinking and behaviour between themselves and their children. However, such questions might come from ethnocentric presumptions of the conflicts mi-

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11 For further discussions of this question, see Chapter 8.

grants face in their shift from tradition to modernity. For example, when I and other feminist educators and scholars from Taiwan first visited Women's Room,[12] we raised similar questions even when we did not have any contact with or knowledge about migrant women in Sweden.

Reflecting on this, I found common speculations by feminists from Taiwan, including myself, about the conditions of migrant women and the specific problems they face, particularly with regards to gender issues. I linked this reflection with my readings on Swedish feminist debates and literatures on migrant women, and used this to re-examine the experiences of migrant women and teachers and the episodes that I observed at Women's Room. By doing this, I intended to explore general assumptions in the ruling relations that influence the daily experiences of women. As Smith describes:

> [Institutional ethnography aims to] explore what lies beyond the scope of an ordinary knowledge of the everyday into the social relations that extend beyond us and catch us up in organization and determinations that we cannot see from where we are. The aim is to create something like maps of how things work beyond the scope of our everyday knowledge (Smith 2005: 206).

Similarly to Smith, I try to situate women's experiences in a broader social and institutional context. Unlike her however, I wish to stay at a level where women interact with each other instead of moving, as Smith often does, toward a level of analysis where these interactions are left behind.

The fieldwork study provided me with a space to observe, describe and analyze the feminist teachings and interactions between teachers and migrant students at Women's Room. In my research, I illustrate processes of doing difference and emphasize not only how the construction of boundaries influences the actors in their life experiences but also how these actors respond to such a construction and representation.

I hope that my skills as a feminist sociologist can be 'useful and relevant to women's organizations for change' (Smith 2005: 28), thus adding to the knowledge that Smith and other feminist sociologists have achieved in their research. It is also important to point out that throughout the project I found doing feminist research on a feminist institution is challenging in many ways. Themes of who is a knower, and which knowledge is important, present themselves here. Therefore, after presenting my research methods, I will continue with reflections on methodology and the locatedness of a 'knower', on interactions in the field, and on post-fieldwork and the writing of the dissertation.

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12 This was a visit to Sweden from Taiwan Gender Equity Education Association (shortened as TGEEA) in 2003. Most of the members in TGEEA are school teachers interested in gender equity education, feminist activists in NGOs and feminist scholars in academia.

Research methods

My fieldwork at Women's Room consisted of nine months of participatory observations, both in the classroom and during daily life activities in and around the school. The settings that I observed included teachers' meetings, classes in four main courses, and informal activities in the canteen or rest area where students met. I also conducted in-depth interviews with students and teachers at Women's Room. Most of my research took place between the summer of 2004 and the spring of 2005.[13]

Women's Room is one of the 148 folk high schools in Sweden. The first folk high schools – i.e., schools for adults – were established during the popular movements (*folkrörelsen*)[14] in the mid-nineteenth century to raise national consciousness and strengthen civic education among the general population in the Nordic countries. Accordingly, folk high schools identify themselves under the tradition of liberal adult education (*folkbildning*).[15] Nowadays, nearly all social movements run their own folk high schools (*Folkbildningsrådet* 2008; Gustavsson 1992; Lagerqvist 2001).

Women's Room was established by a group of feminists and teachers in liberal adult education with some evening courses for women in the 1970s, and became an independent folk high school in 1985. Nowadays, Women's Room has a main school, which is situated in the city centre, and a branch school, which is located in a particular suburb (given the pseudonym of Mellanby) that has over 60% of its inhabitants coming from migrant backgrounds.[16]

There are three-year general courses (which are equated with three-year courses in senior high schools), one-year courses and evening courses at the main school. The first-year general course (shortened by teachers at Women's Room as A1) is only for migrant women and the second- and the third-year general courses (A2 and A3) are mixed with migrant students and ethnic Swedish students.[17] In the branch school, three basic courses are offered only for migrant women. The four main courses I ob-

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13 After fieldwork, I met some of the teachers and students of Women's Room when I returned to the city. In the spring of 2007, TGEEA invited some teachers from Women's Room to hold a conference on adult education for women and two workshops on gender equity education. I was the interpreter in the conference and workshops. Field notes of the first contact with Women's Room in 2003 and of these following up contacts became part of my research materials.

14 There are different English translations of '*folkrörelsen*', such as the 'popular mass movement' (Lagerqvist 2001: 164) and the 'popular movement' (www.tyda.se). This movement began in a historical context in which ordinary people did not have access to education and politics since it was restricted to the upper classes in Swedish society. Dissatisfied with the situation, many people formed study groups in order to have face-to-face discussions and to gain knowledge to change the society. There were many social movements under the popular movement, such as the free churches movement, the temperance movement, the popular sports movement and the labour movement (Enström and Holmegaard 1996).

15 The Swedish term *folkbildning*, according to an offical pamphlets *Facts on Folkbildning in Sweden* (*Folkbildningsrådet* 2008), is considered to be difficult to translate into English: 'It is sometimes translated as liberal or popular adult education. However the specific conceptual foundation of 'folkbildning' extends beyond the term 'adult education'', which is why 'folkbildning' is used in the pamphlet as it is (first page of the pamphlet). Further discussions of liberal adult education, see Chapter 4.

16 Many migrants are clustered in the suburbs of big cities and these suburbs are stigmatized in the Swedish society. I will illustrate this more in Chapters 3 and 4.

17 All the abbrievations in the thesis can be found in Appendix I.

served were A1 and the one-year course 'Feminist Studies' (FS) in the main school, and two basic courses – 'Women in the Development' (*KiU*) and 'Basic Course' (*Grund*) – in the branch school. My focuses were classes for migrant women only (A1, *KiU* and *Grund*), and the main subjects I observed were social science and Swedish as a second language.[18] FS was a class with mostly young ethnic Swedish students and I observed it to learn which feminist theory was taught at Women's Room. I participated in 71 classes in A1, 23 classes in *Grund*, 17 classes in FS, and 14 classes in *KiU* (see Appendix II). All the observations were noted down as field notes.[19]

During the fieldwork, I was not able to follow all of the teacher's classes since my time was divided into four courses covering different subjects. Therefore, it is worth noting that my observations of a certain teacher were only partial and cannot wholly represent her teaching.

I decided to focus on aspects of gender and race/ethnicity because this school's focus on differences among women fascinated me when I read the introductory material, before my first visit to the school in 2003. My research focus arises partly from my theoretical interest of feminist debates on difference and partly related to my reflection in the women's movement. Although there is more freedom for teachers at folk high schools to decide what to teach, there are still certain course requirements as far as their subjects are concerned. Therefore, it happened that I sometimes sat in on a class all day without finding any discussions relevant to the two aspects of gender and race/ethnicity.

The observed episodes discussed in detail in the thesis were selected because they explicitly show the taken-for-granted features of everyday life in the school, and also relate to feminist teaching processes concerning gender and race/ethnicity. For example, some episodes demonstrate how common sense racism operates as part of the relations that constitute our (mis)understandings of migrants, our educational and daily life experiences. I see these episodes as an integral part of the teaching and I therefore do not dismiss them as anecdotal. In my analysis I treat them as essential for my contemplation on the relationship between practices and broader discourse, between actors and the social at this particular school.

Besides observations and interviews, I used various methods which allowed me to gain more information in the field. I decided to gather information on the economic situation of Women's Room after I encountered discussions on this serious topic during a teachers' meeting. The discussion, which centred on economic problems of the institution, took place at the beginning of the fall term in 2004. I asked for further information from my landlady, who was also a teacher at Women's Room and who became one of my key informants. In the interviews I asked teachers how the shift of the economic situation of the school affected their feelings and teaching. I

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18 The first language means mother tongue or home language. For native Swedish people, their home language is also the language used in schools and society. For migrants, there is 'Swedish as a second language' since Swedish is not their first language but this is the language used in mainstream society. For all students, English is a second language that they learn as a foreign language and a third language means foreign languages other than English (such as French, Spanish, German, etc.) that students can choose.

19 All the settings and courses are given in Swedish; the English translations are mine.

then continued by reading literature on the transformation of the welfare state. This reading provided me with further knowledge about the social and historical context around the economic situation of Women's Room. In this example, I made use of what I would like to call a 'snowball method' where rumour, gossip, a formal meeting, materials from that meeting, together with further reading of relevant literature, were all sources of data.

Field notes were consulted many times when I was in the field in order to formulate interview questions. I began to interview students and teachers in the spring term of 2005. I only interviewed teachers whose class I had observed or teachers with administrative responsibility (the three principals at Women's Room). Before I started my fieldwork at Women's Room, I interviewed a head teacher of another folk high school, board members at Women's Room and some academics in order to familiarize myself with not only the historical background of folk high schools and Women's Room, but also the situations of migrants in Sweden. Altogether I conducted 35 interviews: 17 with teachers at Women's Room and 13 with students (see Appendix III). Nearly all interviews of Swedish students and school teachers were in English except three who preferred to be interviewed in Swedish. Swedish was used to interview migrant students since it was the only language in which we could communicate with each other.[20] Interviews with the teachers lasted between 1 to 3 hours and interviews of the students lasted between 20 minutes to an hour. I experienced difficulties interviewing migrant students at the branch school because they were quite occupied and told me they did not have time for an interview. Therefore most of the voices of migrant students at the branch school presented in the dissertation come from in-class discussions and our chats during the break.

The interviews were semi-structured, including some common questions I had designed in advance regarding: backgrounds of the informants; their experiences at Women's Room; their experiences of being a feminist or a migrant woman in Sweden; their viewpoints on the women-only school; and certain issues raised in class such as marriage, homosexuality, sexuality, representations of migrants and discrimination. But other questions were raised in the dialogues between my interviewees and me, such as difficulties in feminist teaching, and comparison of the situation of migrant women in Taiwan versus Sweden.

As I stated earlier, and this will also be shown in the empirical chapters, some of my interview questions were constrained by my feminist worldview. There were also moments when their answers challenged my biased assumptions or broadened my thinking. Lisa's (a student from FS) viewpoint on the Solidarity Day[21] can serve as an example:

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20 I have decided to present the quoted interviews in correct English even for those instances in which neither the interviewee nor the interviewer spoke perfect Swedish or English.

21 Solidarity Day is a special educational theme day (*Temadag*) at Women's Room. Every year they collaborate with a women's project in the Third World (such as building a school, women's centre, or helping women farmers etc.) and each class can design different activities to collect donations for that project.

> Lisa: I don't like Solidarity Day because […] we were like, oh, god, we were good 'cause we were sending off money. But we didn't really think why we needed to send money. We didn't really question this. We were just quite pleased with ourselves actually.
>
> Chialing: It's a little bit like we can save them.
>
> Lisa: Yes, exactly. It's like we are the subjects and they are the objects (Chialing: and waiting for us to save them). Yes, I hate that kind of mentality (interview with Lisa).

When I participated in Solidarity Day, I was excited to see the students' wonderful ideas for collecting donations. However, Lisa's postcolonial critiques of Solidarity Day reminded me of the colonial mentality behind such an educational activity. In the empirical chapters, I will also show how other migrant students' answers conflicted with my presumptions about migrants' problems and how they taught me to rethink the definitions of migrants' problems in Swedish society.

At other times, my problematic questions could have misled my informants in certain directions – problematic in that I departed from the same binary oppositions between tradition/modernity and us/them that many of the teachers embodied. In that case, I will try to analyze myself *in* the writing, to see how my research role contributes to the production of certain representations of migrants in the othering process. I will also examine the feminist worldviews that I shared with the teachers at Women's Room. This means that it is not only the interviewees who are under scrutiny but also that I take a closer look at myself and the role I play in my own analysis. I do want to make it clear that I realize as a researcher I have a privileged position – which means that I can transgress borders in the sense that sometimes I am in the position of learning from the knowledge provided by others and sometimes I step back to analyze their knowledge within a broader social and discursive context, and to examine the interactions among them and between me and them. I will link such a shift in position in the analysis in the following sections where I discuss my roles as a researcher and where I present some of the difficulties I experienced in writing the research product, the text in front of you.

Researcher's roles

Shifting positions, new research questions

I am bothered by 'difference'. As a heterosexual feminist from the majority ethnic group in Taiwan, I have been troubled by the concept of difference. Being familiar with Anglo-Saxon feminist theory, I am quite aware of Western feminist debates on difference, for example the challenge of 'woman' as a category, which stresses the sameness of women's experiences as being oppressed in a patriarchal society and is criticized as white, middle-class and heterosexual-centred. Experiences of participation in the women's movement in Taiwan make me recognize the difficulty in dealing

with politics of difference. For example, indigenous feminists in Taiwan illustrate that there are different priorities in the women's movement agenda. Debates on sex workers have also led to splits among feminists in Taiwan.

In recent years, more and more 'guest workers' and migrant women from Southeast Asian countries have come to Taiwan for employment or marriage.[22] Because of the lack of social services in Taiwan, many female 'guest workers' have to take care of the elderly, the sick and/or children. These women are regarded as carrying out 'the traditional woman's role' that 'liberal' Taiwan women are not willing to take (Lan 2006).[23] Their presence and this new situation have forced me to search for different perspectives in order to help me engage with challenges of difference and the developing construction of 'inferior Others' in feminist scholarship and the women's movement in Taiwan.

In order to develop social welfare and social services in Taiwan, scholars and state feminists started to introduce the Nordic model in the 1990s (Lin 1994; Liu 1997). The Nordic countries are represented as countries with gender equality and a 'woman-friendly' welfare system. Being influenced by these scholars, I participated in introducing Swedish experiences concerning sexuality education, gender equity education and social welfare (Yang 2001, 2002a, 2007a). During the visit to Sweden in 2003, feminist scholars and activists from Taiwan generally regarded Women's Room to be a model school concerned with issues of migration and gender, especially with regards to education and migrant women. Being troubled by the issues of difference, I decided to come to Sweden – a country with gender equality – to get some insights.[24] Some of the questions I asked: How do Swedish feminists react to the challenges of difference? When the category of woman is challenged in Western feminist politics and theory, why does Women's Room still employ woman as the category for solidarity? How do feminist teachers deal with women's differences in this feminist school?

I was an 'admirer' of the Swedish model and this feminist school when I began my research. Nevertheless, when I acquainted myself with feminist debates in Sweden, I soon found that Swedish equality discourses are often employed to construct difference between 'us' (those who have achieved gender equality) and 'them' (those who have 'barbaric' gender values and traditional patriarchy). At this stage, new research questions formed to supplement the earlier research questions: When gender equality discourse is used to construct categories of inclusion/exclusion, what are the relations between feminist teachings at Women's Room and gender equality discourse?

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22 Regulations concerning 'guest workers' are strict in Taiwan and have great negative impact on workers' rights. Therefore, I use the term 'guest workers' in quotation marks in order to show their unequal and difficult working conditions. Many 'guest workers' are women from South Eastern Asian countries but since it is impossible for these women workers to migrate to Taiwan, 'migrant women' refer specifically to women who get married with men native to Taiwan.

23 I do not use the adjective term 'Taiwanese' throughout the whole thesis because of the degraded meaning in linguistics.

24 In 2005 I received the first scholarship created for studying gender studies in Nordic countries from the Ministry of Education in Taiwan. Although it is beyond the scope of this research, I intend to mention here that 'Swedishness' is built upon a reputation – the representation of the Nordic model with its success in gender equality in an Asian country and all over the world.

How do feminist teachers and migrant students at Women's Room resist and/or reproduce constructions of us/them?

The transformation of the research question formulation process in my study is linked to my shifts in my position. For me, someone who belongs to the majority group in Taiwan, difference is something difficult to handle. However, I was also challenged by Collins' words:

> Since not all social groups appear to find difference to be such a meaningful concept, I'm left wondering who is worried about it? Thinking through the meaning of difference hasn't much concerned people of color, poor people, and all the other people deemed "different". […] Attention by oppressed groups to the meaning of difference remains firmly rooted in the question of the use to which differences are put in defending unequal power arrangements (Collins 1995: 494).

As Collins asks: who is worried about difference? Difference does not consist of additional, parallel categories waiting for the majority group to 'deal with'. Furthemore, when I started my study abroad, I became a member of the group deemed 'different' – as M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty illustrate:

> We were not born women of color, but became women of color here. From African-American and US women of color, we learned the peculiar brand of US North American racism and its constricted boundaries of race (Alexander and Mohanty 2001[1997]: 492).

When I became the Other through difference, difference was no longer something outside of me and complicated to handle. I came to see that difference is used to construct boundaries of belonging.

Postcolonial and feminist theory provided me with new insights into this shift in my position. I saw that the criticisms of, for example, Women's Studies scholars in England also related to my experience. I became aware of the imbalanced power relations in feminist knowledge, in which I was supposed to be familiar with 'their' history and theory while the other scholars could safely remain ignorant of the conditions of women in the Third World and Third-World feminisms. What was worse, these scholars constructed an image of me as the Other with a 'backward' gender system of my people/my country. Living in First-World countries (UK and Sweden) made me sensitive to my 'non-whiteness' and also realize the feelings of being placed in a marginal position. I now recall a group discussion with teachers at Women's Room during on-the-job training – one teacher mentioned the first thing she would take note of a person was that person's gender. I said, 'When I was in Taiwan, I also first took note of the gender of a person. However, now it is ethnicity that counts for me. For example, I always sense that "I am not Swedish", "I am not white"' (040913 field notes).

These embodied experiences enabled me to reflect on omissions in certain feminist discussions and research, excluding feminisms from the margins, intersections of race/ethnicity, gender and sexuality, etc. This is also why I was attracted to postcolonial theory since it also speaks to how my situation changed when I started living in

England and Sweden. Throughout this process of research and reflection, I changed my perspective from (in my view a quite unreflective) 'admirer' of the Swedish model of gender equality, to a researcher identifying with some of the model strengths but also conscious of its weaknesses.

Such a perspective change is rooted not in my pre-given identity as a Third-World researcher, but in reflections on the interactions between this Third-World identity and experiences in Western countries. I do not think being a researcher from the Third World gives me a privileged position, and also saves me from falling into ethnocentrism since there are racist and ethnocentric assumptions in anthropology (Moore 1988: 5-10), and, I would add, in other academic disciplines. Reflecting on racism in feminist scholarship is a difficult task and an on-going process that I do throughout the research process. Collins (1991) proposes that black female intellectuals can use their marginality – their 'outsider within' status to produce black feminist thought that reflects a special standpoint on self, family and society. Relating this to the role as a Third-World researcher, it is this changing process that creates my position as an 'outsider' within First-World academia, and gives me a perspective to reflect on what is missing in First-World feminist scholarship.

Shifting one's perspectives and worldviews is a difficult process. Previously, I unlearned much of my previous thinking through the enlightening process of becoming a feminist. Then I began another unlearning process of my own Western feminist training and developed a new angle to examine the feminist teaching at Women's Room. I think it is important to highlight these processes of change in myself in the discussion of methodology since they influenced the formulation of my research questions, the choice of the theoretical framework, the analytical process and the writing of the thesis. In the following, I will go to my other role – that of a female researcher – and discuss how this affects my entry into the field, the research questions and the analysis of the study.

A woman researcher researching women

Before my first visit to Women's Room, I contacted the former principal (Christina) and asked about the possibilities of doing a research project at Women's Room. Later, Christina mentioned that she could not answer my mail because she could not distinguish my biological sex according to my Chinese name. She would not allow a man to do research at Women's Room (030814 field notes). Christina's viewpoint on who can do research at Women's Room is linked to the school's policy of having only female teachers and female students. In this case, my biological sex gave me a privileged access to the research field.

When I was in the field, I found that I often traversed borders. When I sat in the classroom, I was regarded as both a student (a 'migrant' woman learning Swedish) and a researcher. On one hand, in the process of 'learning to be like the natives' – the so-called 'nativized' or 'metamorphosis into the other' (Karim 1993: 250), my self-identity as a feminist teacher, and as one of the feminists who introduced

the Swedish model in Taiwan provided me with worldviews similar to those of the teachers at Women's Room. On the other hand, the experiences of being a non-white woman in Sweden and learning Swedish made me similar to other informants – migrant students at Women's Room. With teachers at Women's Room, sometimes I was regarded as a student since they taught and corrected my Swedish; sometimes I was viewed as an 'expert' who observed their class and was expected to give them comments or suggestions regarding their teaching. At other times the teachers discussed feminist issues with me and regarded me as a feminist sister. With migrant students, sometimes I was regarded as a 'diligent migrant student' who could learn Swedish in a short time; sometimes they discussed with me problems of being a migrant, such as difficulties in learning Swedish and/or finding a job. Sometimes I was treated as their daughter and they prepared a lunch box for me and sometimes I was regarded as an expert from the university writing a book on them.

Although as a woman researcher, I am expected to share the experience of being a woman, the occurrences in the field reveal that it is more complex than that. Different aspects of me, such as race/ethnicity, age, class, educational background and feminist training, create similarities or mark differences between me and my informants in various ways, times and situations.

Ethnographers often describe how they try to transcend differences between themselves and the researched subjects (Abramson 1993; Wade 1993). Nevertheless, similarities between the researcher and the researched – which are often highlighted in the research of women being done by women researchers – can sometimes create certain kinds of blindness in the researcher (Acker, Barry and Esseveld 1983: 432). In my research, because of the closeness of being a feminist teacher, certain topics are presumed as 'universal feminist themes' by me and the teachers at Women's Room. That is, the Western feminist ideas shared between me and the teachers made me neglect to ask of the teachers: 'Why did you choose certain topics as important feminist issues for migrant students?' Feeling the inadequacy of the lack of discussion with my informants on this issue in the field, in Chapters 8 and 9 I explore why certain topics are raised in feminist teaching and how interactions between migrant students and feminist teachers reproduce and/or resist the construction of difference.

Various ethnographers also discuss privileged access or restrictions to the field because of certain identities of a researcher (Bell, Caplan and Karim 1993). I think the effects of a researcher's identities are linked with ideologies in a specific society and this needs to be contemplated further throughout the research project. As Anne-Marie Fortier (1996, 1999) argues, it is not enough to pay attention to the effects produced by gender in the field since the identities of researchers are not fixed. In her words:

> The gender troubles occurred in different instances (femaleness, heterosexualization, desirability, infantilization, wifehood/motherhood) through which I was confirmed as a female and cast on the borders of girlhood/non-sexed being and womanhood/ heterosexually-active-confirmed-female. Processes of inclusion and erasure were simultaneously at play within these instances: I was both part of 'them', as an Italianized, heterosexualized white female, and on the margins as a single, not courting (a man),

student. In this context, my ambiguity was fixed (i.e. both stabilized and mended) through projecting me as a future wife-lover-mother. The multiple guarantees through which the injunction is iterated produce 'failures' (Butler, 1990: 145) such as my ambiguity. An ambiguity that I, as well as they, negotiated, coped with and transgressed (Fortier 1996: 318-19).

Fortier examines the process of inclusion and erasure in the field and links this process to her analysis of Catholic family values of two Italian Catholic community centres, which are the subjects of her study. For Fortier, the self is used to rethink the process of the social without fixing the self in a pre-existent, fixed category.

Relating this to my research project, I think how my 'privileged access' to the field needs to be situated in the Women's Room's claim that these feminist teachers, although they are aware of feminist debates on the category of woman, still believe that women share the same condition of being subordinated. Their views on woman will not only decide who can be a researcher there but also connect to certain Western feminist theory that intend to establish women's experiences of universal oppression as sources of knowledge and political struggle. As a feminist researcher, I believe that knowledge production cannot be separated from political intentions, but at the same time, the political claim of a 'common condition of being women (or black or any marginalized groups)' needs to be examined further since women's experiences are intersected with other power structures and we are located in multiple positions 'which can be occupied in contradiction and ambivalence' (Skeggs 1997: 26). As Nancy Hartsock (1997: 368) states, following Marx's 'two-class model' to translate the concept of the standpoint of the proletariat into feminist terms makes her fail to 'allow [theoretical space] for the importance of differences among women and differences among various groups'. Collins (1997: 377) also emphasizes that 'what we now have is increasing sophistication about how to discuss group location, not in the singular social class framework proposed by Marx, nor in the early feminist frameworks arguing the primacy of gender but within constructs of multiplicity residing in social structures themselves and not in individual women'. In my research project, I reject the presumption of the privileged position of a woman researcher and intend to employ the intersectional perspective to theorize women's difference that is constructed and reconstructed in the intersected power structure.

In this section, I have argued that research roles are not fixed and that research roles influence what needs to be examined. In the following, I will use an ethical dilemma which I faced in the field to reflect further my research role.

Challenges in the field

She was late to class *again* for twenty minutes! When she slowly showed up in class, she started to call the roll and asked students the reason of absence for about 15 minutes. If the students were impatient to listen to other students' reasons of absence, they were scolded by the teacher. When she finally started the class, she left students in the classroom and went back to the office to get the book or to do the copies. When she

led the discussions, she didn't prepare it and had no focus. In my viewpoint, she didn't prepare the class at all! What should I do? I cannot talk with her since the problems in her class are too big for me to handle. Is this a researcher's responsibility to improve an incompetent teacher's teaching? (050118 field notes)

In the early stage of my fieldwork, I found I strongly disliked participating in one teacher's ('X') class in the branch school of Women's Room.[25] These were the field notes from my last observation of X's class. I should have observed her class more since the subject she taught and the class only for migrant women were the focus of my dissertation. But I couldn't escape my unwillingness to be in her class. As a researcher, this was a good chance for me to observe different teachers in a feminist school. I also used the time that she didn't show up to have a chat with the students and to listen to what students talked about with each other. However, I could not help but care for more than only my research and was upset how she wasted students' time. I was also worried how her behaviour would do harm to Women's Room. I spent a long time struggling over whether I should 'report' this teacher to school heads at the main school 'on the students' behalf'.

In anthropology, negative feelings in the fieldwork have often been neglected – an example is the great discomfort that Bronislaw Malinowski's diary (1967) brought to anthropology – or they have been dealt with separately from the analysis (Barley 1983). On the contrary, feminist scholars refuse to ignore affective components of the research process (Fonow and Cook 1991) and try to analyze how these components affected their research, or weave these feelings into their reflections on their research topic. By doing this, these feminist scholars break the dichotomy of rationality and sentiment and make emotions a source of insight in knowledge production. For example, Verta Taylor and Leila Rupp (1991) mention how they encountered negative opinions about lesbians among older feminists and how they tried to analyze the inter-wave periods of the women's movement in a specific historical and social context, and to contemplate what insights the women's movement of these stages could bring to the women's movement today.

Using these feminist research insights to rethink my ethical problems in the field, I examined whether or not I had cast migrant students in the branch school as victims and if this connected with the fantasy of 'feminist heroine saving the "other" women'. After discussing with a key informant, I did reveal my observations in X's class to the school heads. During interviews, I discussed with some informants about my 'action' in the field. Women's Room did not take any action towards X until there were complaints about her from other students. Following the progression of X's case, I realized that migrant women did speak for themselves: some students complained about X's class when they waited for X in the classroom (050118 field notes); some mentioned to another teacher that during the previous semester, no teacher came to class late and they learned a lot (041026 field notes). In other words, the 'subaltern' did speak. Nevertheless, it is essential to examine whether they were really heard (Spivak 1988, 1996) and if the flat structure of the feminist institution at Women's Room really worked in daily practice.

25 I use X, A, B…to refer to informants in some sensitive cases.

Furthermore, when I tried to situate X's situation within the double burden of teaching and administration at the branch school, the case of X could reflect a lack of resources at Women's Room – such as there being no administrative staff at the branch school and teachers needing to rush between the main school and the branch school.

Moreover, X is a teacher with a migrant background and someone who many migrant students could identify with. It would be problematic if such a teacher happened to be authoritarian, which was usually linked to the representation of migrants' original countries and/or their 'culture'. When I interviewed X, I found that she 'infantalized' her students at the branch school and I suggested that this could be related with her training background as a Montessori pre-school teacher. This made me wonder if it was due to a lack of connections between Swedish feminists and feminists with migrant backgrounds that made it difficult for Women's Room to find a suitable feminist teacher with a migrant background. Moreover, discussions with many of my informants illustrated that it was difficult to adhere to the principle of hiring a teacher with experiences in the women's movement, and many of my informants did not have experience in the women's movement nor were familiar with feminist reflection before they worked at Women's Room. Therefore, I also suspect in Sweden as a whole, that there is a lack of teacher training sensitive to gender perspectives.

This case could be used to reflect my research role. Since I shared some similarities such as being a 'migrant student' from a Third-World country, this closeness could fool me into having 'gone native'. Nevertheless, Vicki Kirby (1993: 27) argues that an individual 'being a Third-World anthropologist' cannot automatically 'enjoy a closer relationship to the truth than others' and Hortense Powdermaker's (1966: 116) words also remind me that 'no matter how intimate and friendly I was with the natives, I was never truly a part of their lives'. Judith Stacey stresses difficult contradictions in feminist ethnography:

> During the research process, there are manipulation and betrayal in these interactions; those feelings and tragedies in the fields become 'ultimately data' – grist for the ethnographic mill, a mill that has a truly grinding power (Stacey 1991: 113).

Reflecting discussions in anthropological and feminist methodology, what I am doing now is using academic language to discuss and represent the field, but somehow the anxieties and bitterness in handling the challenges in the field are left out from the sentences. Fortier also made a similar statement:

> Here, my position as scribe and eventual guest-speaker, my return (home?) to Academia, my access to the meta-language through which I can re-present the field-world, and somewhat escape the pains of being there – in that space where I once belonged – allows me to claim existence in what I have become and am becoming (Fortier 1996: 319).

This makes me recognize the limits of academic writing, something I will relate to in the final section of this chapter.

Challenges after the fieldwork

This fieldwork study differs from traditional anthropological research. As a researcher from the Third World, I have conducted my 'studying up' research in a First-World country and the final product will be published in the country of study. Beverly Skeggs (1997: 30-31), a white British scholar from a working class background, introduces the phrase 'ethnography at home' to describe the research she carried out with a group of white working class women from England. 'Ethnography at home' also refers to Skeggs' interactive research methods, where she discusses her analysis with the project's subjects.

I am fascinated with the term 'at home' and view it as a metaphor for my own study. As a Taiwan feminist teacher, 'home' refers to my feminist circle in Taiwan, as well as to the feminist teachers at Women's Room in Sweden. Some of my informants were familiar with feminist theory, so we shared a common language when discussing feminist methodology, pedagogy and theories. In addition, the presumed audience of this thesis includes feminists in the academy and educational institutions, with whom I intend to have dialogues and debates.

But the metaphor of this feminist 'home' troubled me as I analyzed and wrote up my findings. Many teachers I had met were excited about my research on Women's Room, but I was anxious about what would happen when they read it. Would they feel satisfied – or disappointed, or annoyed? How was I going to deal with possible differences in interpretation? I knew this issue was going to pose a special challenge for me, since my informants gave so freely of their time, invited me into their homes, and sometimes became my close friends. Facing these concerns, I tried – and failed – to create a formal dialogue with my informants.

Closeness and distance

The dialogue process I attempted to create with teachers at the Women's Room consisted mainly of two events. The first was a four-hour discussion with six of my key informants about three papers I had written based on my empirical materials (Yang 2007b, 2008a, 2008b).[26] The second was sending the thesis draft for my final panel[27] to the teachers who served as the project's subjects.

It is worth noting that the dialogue process did not include the migrant students with whom I intended to discuss the observations and analysis. I realize that my decision reproduced the power imbalance of the feminist teachers and migrant students at Women's Room, but I nevertheless limited the dialogue to teachers because of practical problems in reaching the migrant students. Furthermore, it has been dif-

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26 These papers developed into Chapters 6 to 8 of this thesis.
27 Final panel (*slutseminarium*) is a seminar held when the thesis draft has been written and an opponent (sometimes also with the presence of the committee members of the thesis) will raise questions and give comments. The PhD student needs to revise the thesis according to these comments, hand in the final version of the thesis for publishing and then have a formal defense.

ficult to maintain anonymity in my research, since Women's Room is one of the few women-only adult institutions in Sweden.[28] Although I avoid mentioning details of my informants' backgrounds, it remains easy to guess their identities, especially for the teachers. Compared to the Women's Room teachers, however, the students do maintain a certain level of anonymity, as they are no longer at the school and will not be there when the dissertation is published. Finally, although these students clearly were involved in the educational and teaching processes at the school, the analysis in my dissertation is ultimately directed toward the teachers and school, in the hope that their educational practices may be improved.

I received some responses from the teachers to my papers and thesis draft, and their comments showed that they had read the texts carefully. I really appreciated the teachers' willingness to use their time during the busy end of the semester to raise questions, discuss details in the texts, and give me comments. During the discussion of my papers, some of the teachers defended their courses, and there were debates amongst them about what I had written. One of them sent me an e-mail about the comments and reactions to my thesis manuscript and remarked that Women's Room planned to use my thesis for on-the-job training courses. If another researcher critiqued me in a paper, I imagined this would upset me and that I would not have the patience to figure out her intention. This was not the case for these teachers. Instead, they discussed their reactions to my text, making notable and generous attempts to understand my perspective. The following is an example from the discussion of the three papers:

> A: My course aim was not to talk about feminist issues!
>
> Nadia: But to have a course aim is one thing, the effects are another.
>
> […]
>
> B: The sentence, 'I will discuss how such feminist teachings ignore the students' experiences and how teachers that identify themselves as feminist fail to learn from different women', made me feel that what we did here totally failed.
>
> Birgitta: But Chialing's aim was to remind us of how we constructed a superior self-image of 'us' and neglected the experiences of the Other (081105 field notes).

Nevertheless, in looking back on the whole process, it was painful for me to realize that my own actions had limited the possibilities for a true dialogue. I mainly asked for the teachers' reactions on completed texts and assumed that, as a researcher, I took responsibility for the analysis. When I faced some strongly negative reactions after their reading of my thesis draft, I recognized that I had not fully taken account of the power involved in writing the final research product. As Stacey (1991: 114) explains, 'The research product is ultimately that of the researcher, however modified or influenced by informants. […] An ethnography is a written document structured primarily by a researcher's purposes, offering a researcher's interpretations, registered

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28 There is another women-only feminist school but it is private and only offers short-term courses in the summer. Although Kerstin Engman (2001) mentions in her article that there are two folk high schools for women only, the other folk high school simply directs its education for women with lower education but does not totally exclude male students.

in a researcher's voice'. Reflecting back on my intentions and the research process, I finally realized that it was unfair to send my informants a manuscript that would neither lead to further dialogue, nor offer them a possibility to influence the content. I had unintentionally created a situation where they were powerless to influence the outcome – what I now see as a fake dialogue process that misled them into believing that their reactions on the first set of papers would lead to changes in the whole research product.

There is always a tension between closeness and distance in feminist research, where researchers intend to create an 'egalitarian research process characterized by authenticity, reciprocity, and intersubjectivity between the researcher and her "subjects"' (Stacey 1991: 112). Despite my feminist objectives, however, the study's focus on certain episodes breaks the ongoing process of education into snapshots, and my analysis inevitably objectifies the researched subjects, no matter how much I recognize their agency. This tension recalls Smith's experience of researching the women's movement:

> Looking at the women's movement as a social movement transformed it into a sociological object. Imposing the social movement frame reconstructed as an object that of which we were part. We became conceptual outsiders. It seemed not possible to take up a topic sociologically without transforming people and people's doings into objects. It wasn't a matter of intention. Once the sociological frame was committed, inquiry and discovery *from within* the women's movement was precluded (Smith 2005: 28-29).

Although I aligned myself with the feminist teachers based on my previous experiences as a gender equity educator, I distanced them through the processes of analysis and writing, thus transforming their feminist teaching as a way of enacting the women's movement into a sociological object. As a researcher, I found I could no longer stand within the movement, since theoretical contemplation and analysis required a certain distance. This inevitable distance and the objectification it creates impede a meaningful dialogue between the researcher and the researched.

Agreeing to disagree

Dialogue is also limited when the researcher and the researched differ on possible interpretations. Joan Acker, Kate Barry and Joke Esseveld (1983: 428-429) note this type of subject-object problem in feminist research. They tried to overcome the distance between themselves and their researched subjects by showing their written work to the women they wrote about and involve the women in processes of dialogue and analysis. While they shared the interviews with most women, discussions and further analysis proved only to be possible with those who shared their worldview. During my research, I shared my writing with the teachers at Women's Room, whom I considered to share a feminist worldview with me. Sharing a similar worldview, however, could not guarantee their agreement with my analysis.

For example, in our discussion I could sense a questioning and even a rejection of my analysis of their teaching, especially regarding ethnocentrism. One way was their suggestion that I had 'selected' certain examples to fit my theory. I think this challenge is correct in one respect. In their teaching, discussions of race/ethnicity, gender and sexuality were based on examples they raised to help students understand a course topic, or based on dialogues with students. Feminist issues or questions of racism were not always discussed here. My research interests admittedly led me to focus on certain episodes, because it was not feasible to describe their entire teaching process.

When I entered the field, I initially did not embrace theories about constructions of difference. Inspired by Smith's (2005: 2) description of 'research as discovery', I rejected testing hypotheses and theoretical explication as analysis of the empirical materials. The theoretical perspective of this thesis was produced by my located-ness. It was the result of an interaction among my identity, my daily life experiences, my readings and thoughts, my (un)learning process with teachers and students at Women's Room and debates in the academy and society. The analysis of certain episodes of feminist teaching reflects both my inner dialogue and my memories of my own similar feminist teaching in Taiwan. The dissertation itself is a product of this transforming research process.

Some anecdotes that I recount in chapter 8 particularly reminded me of a common way of addressing gender issues in Taiwan. As stated earlier in the chapter, I failed to pose questions to teachers at Women's Room on how certain gender issues should be raised with migrant women. I pondered the choice of gender issues and reflected on similar problems when I designed gender courses for indigenous women in Taiwan. Accordingly, the selection of episodes for further analysis can never be a neutral representation of the school as a whole. As James Clifford and George Marcus (1986: 7) state, 'Ethnographic truths are inherently partial, committed and incomplete'. What is important, I argue, is to acknowledge fully the partial representation of the researched throughout the whole research product.[29]

Although I tried to complicate the categories of 'us' and 'them' in my writing, some of my informants still believed I had fixed 'the West' and 'the rest'. In our first dialogue, Nadia even wondered 'if it is possible to do any teaching without constructing an "us" and "them", since it must first be constructed before it can be deconstructed'. Although the teachers' comments made me more careful as I revised the thesis, I am sure that many points remain on which we cannot reach agreement. Skeggs (1997: 30) similarly discussed why she retained some of the analysis where her interpretation differed from her informants'. She argued that a rejection of class as a category of analysis by the working-class women she interviewed heightened her sensitivity to the ubiquity of class relations and made her construct theory to explain their response. As Skeggs concluded:

> Why should I expect them to reach the same conclusions, produce the same analysis? They were not, after all, centred on exploring the construction of subjectivity as a proc-

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29 See also discussions of selective representation in interview research methods (Carlson 2003).

ess. They also had different interpretations from each other. This is not surprising for we are positioned differently in relation to discourses of knowing. I use an academic framework (which is now part of my cultural capital) to explain their experiences; they use the different discourses to which they have access (their cultural capital) (Skeggs 1997: 29).

The teachers were focused on liberal adult education, with their pedagogical aims and certain requirements to accomplish in their teaching. They might not share my interest in the process of othering and relations between Swedish feminist scholarship and the construction of belonging. Nevertheless, I hope that the academic framework I use to explain their experiences and actions grasps the ruling relations behind certain feminist assumptions. Moreover, although I recognize my only partial knowledge of this school and feminist teaching, I believe this thesis can contribute to a rethinking of the intersections between gender and race/ethnicity.

The final version of this thesis further elaborates the teachers' questions and challenges, even if some of my informants do not agree with my interpretation. The anticipated dialogue between the researcher and the researched did not happen, but rather, through the whole writing process, I held an ongoing inner dialogue and a dialogue with many people – with other researchers, with theorists and with potential readers. After my research is published, I plan to continue to seek a dialogue with Women's Room teachers, as well as with activists in feminist teaching and the women's movement. However, such a dialogue – an ongoing commitment to a transversal politics of feminism, or a democratic practice of speaking across difference – requires considerable effort from all participants.

Anxieties in writing

I continued encountering anxieties in writing this research product 'at home'. Firstly, I identified myself as a feminist researcher researching a feminist institution. I hope that my research can also be *for* women. Nevertheless, as Kirby (1993) questions the self-evident value of a purportedly disinterested humanitarian benevolence in feminist belief, I can not guarantee that good intentions will lead to good results. For example, what happens if these analyses are quoted out of context and are used as a 'proof' of the 'failure' of this feminist institution? For another example, I raised several critiques of feminist teaching at Women's Room. After reading the drafted papers, some key informants responded to me, saying they did not know how to teach anymore. To paralyze them from doing feminist teaching is definitely not my aim. On the contrary, what I try to do in this thesis, I hope, is to figure out possible ways of doing feminist teaching without racism, without reproducing the boundaries of self and the Other.

Secondly, during the fieldwork, I enjoyed the time of being a student at Women's Room – I learned how to swim, how to do carpentry and felt confident to speak Swedish there. I believed that there were other migrant students who enjoyed the

fresh experiences at Women's Room and experienced the school environment as a 'free zone' in some way.[30] During a conference and workshops for feminist teachers in Taiwan in 2007, I experienced an equal collaboration. For example, we applied for financial support from both countries;[31] these teachers tried to enhance their knowledge of Taiwan society and related issues in Taiwan before they went to Taiwan. They took attendants' feedback seriously and discussed with organizers in order to improve their contents for further workshops; they learned from study visits of women and ethnic organizations in Taiwan. Nevertheless, the research focus limits the possibilities in exploring these dimensions.

Lastly, as I have stated above, I have changed my perspective throughout the research process and have tried to write myself *into* the analysis to illustrate the change of my worldview during the research process. But somehow my researched subjects were fixed in the time when I did my fieldwork. Although I had some follow-up contacts with some of my informants, the changes in class and/or at Women's Room that they mentioned were not accompanied with observation and interviews. Furthermore, Acker and her associates (1983: 428) mentioned that 'the researcher's goal is always to gather information; thus the danger always exists of manipulating friendships to that end'. Sara Ahmed (2000: 65-71) also criticized friendship and hybridization of the self as techniques of knowledge. Therefore, I decided not to use those follow-up contacts too much as research materials, in order to keep our friendship separate from the research project. I think it is important for readers to be aware that what I discussed in this thesis can not be used to judge or evaluate Women's Room now since the materials were collected several years ago and the focus for analysis and theoretical reflections were selected by me.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have carried out dialogues with feminist methodology and critical anthropology with regards to: the issues of the 'knower'; what can be known; relations between the researcher and the researched; difficulties faced in doing a feminist research project in a feminist institution; and, challenges in the process of writing a feminist research product.

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30 Nadia and Astrid used the concept of 'free zone' to describe the environment of Women's Room for some students, especially for migrant women. Although it can be criticized that behind this illustration is a presumption of 'traditional gender roles' in migrant women's family (which will link to my central argument in this thesis, see Chapter 8), it captures some experiences of the students at Women's Room.

31 When Taiwan feminist scholars met these feminist teachers from Women's Room, these scholars were impressed by the way the teachers cooperated with TGEEA. These scholars mentioned that some First-World feminists and critical scholars demand for the flight with first-class and five-star hotels when invited to Taiwan. It is worth noting that there is hierarchy between academia/NGOs, professors/activists and 'malestream' subjects/feminist scholarship in regards to the finance support of the projects.

This chapter discusses the strength of a fieldwork project that begins with women's life experiences in local actualities, explores the process of doing difference, and the relations between feminist teaching and gender equality discourse. The fieldwork study also moves the analysis beyond the representation of the us/them framework and focuses on the interactions between the construction of boundaries and the response of agencies towards the categories of us/them.

In contemplating the researcher's roles, I reject a presumed privileged epistemological position based on the pre-given identities of a researcher. I argue that it is the transforming process between my identity, daily life experiences, interactions in the field and academic reflections that makes me an outsider within the First-World academy and sensitive to the weakness of certain feminist theory. I make the research process transparent and illustrate how knowledge is situated (Haraway 1991) and that the research questions, the theoretical framework for interpretation and the final research product are influenced by the locatedness of a researcher.

Although I highlighted the efforts that I made in negotiating and communicating with my informants, I also recognize my power in 'authoring' the research product, the limited/impossible space for an open dialogue in the writing process, and interpretations of daily life experiences that may differ between my informants and me.

There are limits to academic writing and my description and interpretation of feminist teaching at Women's Room in this thesis is inevitably partial. My feminist intention to do this research is to make clear the social relations that influence the everyday world and hope this knowledge production can in turn contribute to the actions of activists and their feminist practices. But it is my researched subjects (and also the readers) who have the power to decide if this intention is realized in the thesis.

Theoretical framework

How does difference designate the 'other'? Who defines difference? What are the presumed norms from which a group is marked as being different? What is the nature of attributions that are claimed as characterizing a group as different? How are boundaries of difference constituted, maintained or dissipated? How is difference interiorized in the landscapes of the psyche? How are various groups represented in different discourses of difference? Does difference differentiate laterally or hierarchically?' (Brah 1996: 114)

This chapter aims to locate my research within a broader theoretical map. Firstly, I situate my analysis within theoretical debates on difference in social and feminist theory with a special focus on the concept of intersectionality. Secondly, I introduce the term gendered/sexualized racism which I will use in this thesis, acknowledging its power to grasp social inequalities based in multifaceted and intersected social relations.

Theorizing difference

Difference in terms of inequalities has been at the core of sociology. Different authors have made use of concepts of class, gender and race/ethnicity to theorize inequalities in society and social relations. For example, Karl Marx and Friedrich von Engels (1848) analyze relations to the means of production and discuss class conflicts based in economic inequality between the two main classes of workers and capitalists.

Feeling the inadequacy of applying Marxist theory to explain women's oppression, socialist feminists developed dual systems theory to illustrate that women's oppression arises from two distinct and relatively autonomous systems of patriarchy and capitalism (see, for example, Chodorow 1978; Eisenstein 1979; Hartmann 1979; Mitchell 1974).[32] Iris Marion Young (1980) criticizes dual systems theory for un-

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32 According to Iris Marion Young (1980), there are two approaches of dual systems theory. The first understands the system of patriarchy as an ideological and psychological structure independent of specific social, economic and historical relations. This version of dual systems theory inappropriately

critically supplementing Marxist theory of capitalism with the feminist theory of a system of male domination without challenging Marxist theory as a whole. Young (1981) suggests a feminist historical materialism where gender division of labour is utilized as a central category. Although discussions of class and gender are at the core of Western feminist scholarship, black feminist theorists criticize the failure of accounting for the experiences of black women in Western feminist theory. Black feminist theorists propose to employ 'triple oppression' of gender, race and class experienced by black women (Carby 1982) and the concept of 'matrix of domination' (Collins 2000[1990]) to re-examine key concepts in Western feminist thinking about, for example, patriarchy and capitalism and their relation to family, the labour market, production, sexuality and reproduction.

The above mentioned social theory focuses on economic, social and political structures that are central to race, class and gender relations. However, there is another approach to theorize difference in terms of distinction, knowledge and power. For example, Michel Foucault (1979[1975], 1978, 2001[1961]) explores the relations between power and knowledge. He illustrates how difference is used to construct the boundaries between insanity/civilization and sexual deviance/normality. He further rejects the assumption of the exercise of power only in forms of repression and demonstrates the diffusion of power through obsessions over sexuality and society's approval or disapproval of specific actions.

Pierre Bourdieu (1984[1979]) discusses class divisions in terms of different forms of capital, distinction of taste and habitus. Bourdieu and Jean-Claud Passeron (1996[1970]) also examine how the culture of the dominant class is reproduced in education, and this sustains the structural reproduction of disadvantages and inequalities.

In the above mentioned theoretical frames, difference is conceptualized as a mechanism for maintenance of boundaries, which contributes to the exclusion of certain groups and social inequality. Postcolonial theory also examines the relationship between power and knowledge, and directs discussions of processes of doing difference by emphasizing the power relations between the West and its Others. Postcolonial theory illustrates how scientific knowledge and representations of Others are articulated in Western scholarship and how they are used to confirm the superior Western self and to legitimize the techniques of colonial governance. For example, Edward Said (2003[1978]: 47-49) examines the constructions and representations of Orientalism, especially under the imperial encounters between British/French empires and their Arab-Oriental subjects and finds that the Orientals are constructed as those who are everything the Westerners are not, and as 'have-nots'.

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dehistoricizes and universalizes women's oppression and overlooks the gender-specific ways that women participate in the social relations of production and other social relations. The second one suggests a model of separate spheres where the family is the locus of the women's productive sphere and social relations outside the family as the locus of men's. The main problem of the second approach is that it does not give the alleged system of patriarchy equal weight with and independence from the system of production. Moreover, there is a false separation of the domestic/affective sphere and public/economic sphere.

Following through and criticizing postcolonial theory, postcolonial feminist scholars, on the one hand, point out the gender-blindness and the neglect of women scholars' contribution to the field of postcolonial theory. On the other hand, postcolonial feminist scholars expand postcolonial theory through their focus on gender dimensions (Lewis and Mills 2003). Anne McClintock (1995), for example, follows the tradition of postcolonial theory and analyzes how imperial power emerged from a process with alternative forms of authority, knowledge and power. However, McClintock (1993: 61) criticizes the under-theorized gendered dynamics of male theorists in the maintenance of nationalism and imperialism. She argues that representations of national power depend on the construction of gender difference, and can for example be seen in discourses where women are seen as bearers of national traditions and men as progressive agents of national modernity. Therefore, she claims that 'all nationalisms are gendered'.

The above mentioned theoretical frames reject the viewpoint of difference as an essence, or a natural phenomenon, whose meanings are fixed and based in biological assumptions – such as gender difference between women and men or racial difference between ethnic groups. In other words, difference in terms of inequality is not static or personal characteristics. Rather, difference is embedded in power relations that involve differential access to material and symbolic resources, processes of exclusion and inclusion and/or oppression and domination.

I am especially inspired by postcolonial theory. As Ella Shohat (1992: 107-108) argues, 'Postcolonial theory has dealt most significantly with cultural contradictions, ambiguities, and ambivalences. Through a major shift in emphasis, it accounts for the experiences of displacement of Third-World peoples in the metropolitan centres, and the cultural syncretisms generated by the First/Third Worlds intersections'. Accordingly, postcolonial theory is useful to analyze dispositions of power and especially the different ways that encounters between the colonizing societies and their Others take place – 'though not always in the same way or to the same degree' (Frankenberg and Mani 2001[1993]: 484). I think postcolonial theory can provide its analytical strength in my research in demonstrating the 'in-between' situations of the 'Third/Fourth Worlds within the nation borders' (Mohanty 2006: 226) and 'colonial complicity' (Vuorela 2009) in Sweden.

Nevertheless, although there is a common stance in these sociological discussions of focusing on inequality in social relations, there seems a tension between the two approaches of theorizing difference: one highlights economic, social and political structures while the other focuses on discourses and representations. For example, the above mentioned criticism towards dual systems theory is that patriarchy is conceptualized as an ideology while capitalism is regarded as structure.[33] For another example, postcolonial theory is criticized for losing political strength through its focus on representations (instead of categories of political-economy, labour market, social institutions). This critique towards theories highlighting representations instead of

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33 Similar debates also happen in theorizing the concept of racism as ideology or structure, see discussions on racism later in the chapter.

institutional structures and social policies also shows in the writings of certain black feminists. In Patricia Hill Collins' words:

> What types of directions emerge from theories stressing representations over institutional structures and social policies as central to race, class, and gender relations? Already, I see far too many students who see resistance to oppression as occurring only in the area of representation, as if thinking about resistance and analyzing representations can substitute for active resistance against institutional power (Collins 1995: 494).

Although this quotation is from Collins' reply to the article 'Doing difference' (West and Fenstermaker 1995) and her critique is mainly of postmodern theory, this can represent her insistence on theorizing interlocking systems of oppression – that is, the macro level connections linking race, class and gender. In this quotation, she suggests a contrast between representations and institutional structures and powers.

However, I do not think Collins excludes the possibilities of analyzing both representations and institutional structures. For example, in *Black Feminist Thought*, Collins (2000 [1990]: 4-5) illustrates black women's oppression in terms of economy, the political dimension and ideological representations. In a similar vein, the concept of capital in Bourdieu's theory also includes economic, cultural, social and symbolic capital. Within the model of capital, there is a linkage between economic/ social structures and cultural/symbolic structures.[34] This resonates with what Nira Yuval-Davis (2006a: 198) states when she writes that 'each level of analysis has both material and symbolic production and effects'.[35] The problem of contrasting between material structures and symbolic representations will be further discussed in sociologist Avtar Brah's (1996) theorizing difference as well as the discussions of intersectionality in feminist theory.

Feminist theorization of difference

My reading and presentation of difference in feminist theory is inspired by Brah's (1996: 114-211) four ways of conceptualizing difference: difference as experience, difference as social relation, difference as subjectivity and difference as identity.

The first way of conceptualizing difference is to see difference as experience. Brah presents experience as a key concept within feminism and the women's movement. The everyday gendered relations ranging from housework and child care, low-paid employment and economic dependency, to women's exclusion from key centres of political and cultural power, have been given a new significance through consciousness-raising groups in the women's movement and theorizing of women's experiences in feminist scholarship. However, Brah argues that experience does not reflect

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34 This model also tries to combine another dilemma faced in social theory: distinctions between structure and agency.

35 See also debates of politics of differences between Nancy Fraser (1995) and Iris Young (1997) where Young rejects a contrast between cultural and material.

a pre-given reality, but is a cultural construction, a practice of making sense and interpretation, and also a site of contestation: 'a discursive space where different and differential subject positions and subjectivities are inscribed, reiterated, or repudiated' (ibid.: 116; see also Scott 1992).

The second way of perceiving difference suggested by Brah is to regard difference as social relations.[36] Brah (1994: 812) suggests an examination of the axes of differentiation and how these 'refer to a myriad of economic, political and cultural practices in and through which power is constituted and exercised'. By doing so Brah (1996: 119) sheds claims of privileging 'structural' as the command centre of a social formation.

The third dimension of difference presented by Brah concerns the formation of the subject, especially in regards to bringing the unified and rational Western male subject into question. This dimension can be exemplified through challenges from feminist scholarship's critiques of Man as the Subject and the knower (for example, Collins 2000[1990]; de Beauvoir 1997[1949]; Harding 1987; Smith 1987); theorists of anti-racism and postcolonialism's questioning the Western White Man (for example, McClintock 1995; Said 2003 [1978]) and poststructuralists' argument of fragmented subjectivity (for example, Flax 1990). However, although theories of poststructuralism, feminism, anti-colonialism, anti-imperialism and anti-racism challenge universalizing truth claims of grand narratives of history which place the European Man at its centre, these theories do not engage with one another (Brah 1996: 119).

Lastly, debates on difference relate to 'struggles over different modes of being: different identities' (ibid.: 122). As Brah argues, 'questions of identity are intimately connected with those of experience, subjectivity and social relations' (ibid.: 122-123). Since experiences are diverse and subjectivity is in a formation process, identity is not fixed.

In her four ways of conceptualizing difference, Brah directs her theoretical dialogues in different dimensions, such as a pre-given reality vs. a cultural construction; individual/personal vs. group/collective; economic, social and political structure vs. systems of signification and representations; agents vs. structure; and personal change vs. social change. Brah suggests viewing these four dimensions of difference as connected with each other. For example, she pays attention to the distinctiveness of collective 'histories' and personal experiences while noticing the linkage between the four dimensions in complicated processes of subject and identity formation.

The discussions of difference in feminist and social theory are important for my thesis in several ways. As illustrated in the previous chapter, although I initially rejected the innate difference based in biologism in social categories, I did regard difference as static social categories that exist among women, such as class, race/ethnicity, age, sexuality, disability etc. I became aware however, that difference in such an 'etc.-clauses' (Butler 1990) becomes something for me and other women to encounter. The stress on social relations can help me to examine gender relations and the racial

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36 See also Collins 1995; Maynard 1994; Ng 1993; Omi and Winant 1993; Zinn and Dill 1996.

formation processes within social norms and structures, and capture the dynamic and relational aspects of these social categories.

Secondly, the critiques of the universal subject and binary oppositions in the Western philosophical tradition are of help in processes of my analysis (see also Scott 1988). For example, Max Weber (1978: 926) starts his discussion of social divisions with stress on the fragmentation of the ruling and the working class. Stuart Hall (1996: 247) argues that differences between colonizing and colonized cultures 'have never operated in a purely binary way and they certainly do so no longer' and furthermore that 'it obliges us to re-read the very binary form in which the colonial encounter has for so long itself been represented'. The stress on the interdependence of the dichotomous categories in postcolonial theory is important for me to analyze the interdependence of the colonized and the colonizer (the dominant and the oppressed) and the complexities within both categories.[37]

Reading the debates on difference in feminist theory, I identify two problems of the emphasis on diversity of experiences. The first problem is that the 'add-on' approach or the 'etc.-clause' is often used to include neglected experiences without decentring the position of white women and men in scholarship and practices (Bhavnani and Coulson 1986; Bhavnani 2001; Maynard 1994). This can be shown in research that adds gender and race as variables without shifting the research framework as a whole or the curriculum that adds female and/or black authors without challenging the positioning of 'dead white men' in the centre.

The second problem is, whose experience is to be added? For example, the educational research with the emphasis on exploring experiences of students with different ethnic and class backgrounds often tend to focus on the male black or male working-class students in regarding to the discussions of particular formations of masculinities, male students' achievement and resistance (Willis 1977; Wright, Weekes and McGlaughlin 2006[1999]). Such a problem is linked with the asserted hierarchies of oppression and authenticity of personal experience – that is, oppressions are regarded 'as separate elements that could be added in a linear fashion' and 'the more oppressions a women could list the greater her claims to occupy a higher moral ground' (Brah 1996: 107; see also McCall 2005).

The latter problem of 'whose experience to be added' is linked to the problem of prioritization of a single social category in social theory. The above mentioned social theory on inequality is an example, where Marxist theory focuses on male workers' relations to production, feminist theorists prioritize women's oppression as the fundamental form of social oppression and black feminists highlight experiences of black women.

I would like to further use studies in citizenship and education as examples of the problems in prioritizing a single social category. Feminist discussions on citizenship often focus on the dilemma between private and public spheres, and question the presumed male subject in citizenship. On the other hand, studies with a focus on ethnicity discuss rights for different ethnic groups and multicultural citizenship. For

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37 In next chapter, I will link my discussions of critical and feminist pedagogy with this question of binary oppositions.

an example from the field of education, the critical pedagogue Paulo Freire (1972) bases his discussions on class divisions. Although Freire (1993: x) mentions race and gender in his later work and states 'multiple and contradictory instances in oppression', this does not shift his fundamental framing of oppression in class terms.[38] The same is true for other critical pedagogues. Although anti-racist scholars intend to bring race and whiteness in critical pedagogy (see, for example, Lee Allen 2004; Lynn 2004; Scatamburlo-D'Annibale and McLaren 2004), other dimensions of difference (such as gender) are overlooked.

This prioritization of a single social category reminds me of what Brah illustrates:

> The problem of 'primacy' was not confined to class: the absence of gender in the field of 'race and ethnic relations'; the amnesia about 'race', ethnicity and class in canonical feminist works of the early phase of second wave feminism; a lack of sufficient attention of gay and lesbian studies' (Brah 1996: 216).

Regarding to the problem of the 'add-on' approach and the prioritization of a single social category in theory, I will introduce the concept of intersectionality as a possible path to rethink these problems in the following section.

Rethinking inequalities

Intersectionality is suggested as an alternative and a way for understanding complexities of axes of differentiation.[39] In discussions of intersectionality, it has been suggested that differences are not homogeneous categories. Although different social divisions (such as class, ethnic and racial divisions) have an autonomous ontological basis and each of the divisions prioritizes different spheres of social relations, these categories (such as class and race/ethnicity) and their boundaries are not fixed and their social and political meanings can vary in different historical contexts, and can be challenged and restructured both individually and socially (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1983, 1992; Yuval-Davis 2006a). Furthermore, differences are not separate categories but are interwoven with each other in a complex way. This allows a paradigmatic

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38 Kathleen Weiler (2001) criticizes Freire's response to feminist challenges since Freire only concentrates on, for example, the masculinist usage of 'he' and changed such a usage into a more inclusive way of 'he/her' and misses the other dimensions of feminist critiques.

39 The term 'intersectionality' was introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989, quoted in Phoenix and Pattynama 2006; see also Crenshaw 1995). Before this term came into use, feminist theorists have employed this concept to examine how women are simultaneously positioned in terms of class, race, sexuality etc. There are debates about the use of intersectionality or the interlocking systems of domination (Collins 2000[1990]). I do not intend to go into these debates but highlight the importance to analyze difference as intersected and interwoven with each other in and through social relations.

shift in knowledge which is not possible in the 'add-on' approach. In McClintock's words:

> Race, gender and class are not distinct realms of experience, existing in splendid isolation from each other; nor can they be simply yoked together retrospectively like armatures of Lego. Rather, they come into existence *in and through* relation to each other – if in contradictory and conflictual ways. In this sense, gender, race and class can be called articulated categories (McClintock 1995: 5, original emphasis).

Using the intersectional approach to examine the discussions on difference in social theory can give new insights. For example, although black feminist scholarship tends to highlight the 'triple oppression' (Carby 1982: 212) of gender, race/ethnicity and class that black women experience, such a notion is problematic as 'it treats forms of subordination and oppression through race, sex, and class as cumulative rather than as articulating or intersecting together to produce specific effects' (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992: 100; see also Brah 1996: 107).

Similarly, although many educational studies stress 'inter-relation between race, gender and class' or highlight 'schooling as a gendered and racialized process', these studies either employ 'double/triple oppression' of a group of people, or regard difference as separate categories that can be compared. For example, in a study focusing on male and female black students' resistance in school, the authors state the following:

> Though there were clearly some important gendered differences in the way black pupils adapted to school, the more prominent differentials and similarities were based on 'race' (Wright, Weekes and McGlaughlin 2006 [1999]: 157).

Although the authors notice the problem of the focus on male black students' masculinities in previous educational studies, their research still examines separately gendered experiences and racialized experiences of black pupils, regarding race as a more prominent variable than gender.

In contrast to such a viewpoint of difference as cumulative and separable categories, I employ the intersectional perspective in my thesis. In order to analyze the interwoveness of gender and race in feminist teaching process, I further employ the concept of gendered/sexualized racism as my theoretical framework. In the following section, I will discuss firstly the concept of race/ethnicity and racism and secondly situate gendered/sexualized racism within feminist debates.

Central concepts

Race and racism

Regarding the concept of race and racism, the main debates have been in Britain and the U.S. For example, should race be retained as an analytical concept or will the use of race reinforce it as a biological category? Should racism be conceived as an ideology, practice or structure? (Gilroy 1987; Miles 2003[1989]; Omi and Winant 1986, 1993)[40] Nevertheless, it is generally agreed that race is a social construction. The markers as signifiers (such as colour, gene pools or culture) and the meanings of race change within various social, historical and political contexts. Certain forms of racism highlight biological difference while other forms stress cultural difference. As Brah (2001: 210) states, 'racism constructs "racial" difference'.

The type of racism that is based in cultural difference is named 'new racism' by Martin Barker (1981). Although old racism based on biological difference still exists, the concept of new racism is widely implied in examining racism based on cultural difference, especially within the European context. As Brah (2001: 219) argues, the concept of neo-racism is analytically useful to examine the plurality of racisms in Europe since 'the distinctiveness of this specific brand of cultural racism resides in its emergence in the metropolitan in a post-World War II era where it articulates with a New Right discourse'.

For example, in Britain, the New Right discourse articulated in the ideological matrix of Thatcherism employs the notions of 'nation', 'family' and the 'British way of life' to construct pathologized Others who are not only different from, but also a threat to British culture and values (Carby 1982; Lewis 2005; Phoenix 1987). To take another example, the increase of anti-Muslim racism (or Islamophobia) in Western European countries relies on the notion of the 'non-civilized' and supposedly inferior and undesirable character of the Islamic religion and way of life (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992: 12).

The concept of difference here is different from what I discussed earlier in the chapter. Such a view of difference emphasizes the innate and naturalized difference within social categories that is used in sustaining unequal social positions. It corresponds to the second approach of theorizing inequalities with a focus on the process of doing difference, for example: insanity and sexual deviance being considered as diseases (Foucault 2001[1961]); the working class as a category from which the middle class intends to distance itself (Finch 1993; Elias 2000; Skeggs 1997); and Others in contrast to Westerners. The central questions to the theory are: 'Which groups are designated as different or deviant?' and 'How do the processes of boundary-making contribute to exclusion and inequality?'

The choice of focusing on processes of doing difference in my research is situated in the Swedish context, where 'culture' became an important term in Swedish public

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40 The review of the debates of the concept of race and racism, see Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992; Brah 2001.

discourse along with the rise of ethnic inequality in the 1990s. It is used to distinguish migrants from Swedes, thus making for a particular Swedish form of cultural racism (Ålund and Schierup 1991). In the book *Even in Sweden* (Pred 2000), the author contests the image of Sweden as a country of 'solidarity and equality' and suggests that cultural racism reduces all forms of difference to cultural difference and also that this creates static categories of 'us Swedes' and 'them':

> Through the metonymical magic of cultural racism, through its visible logic, through the working of its common-sense discourses, individual transgression becomes collective guilt, becomes a confirmation of what the Other does *and what we do not do*, of who all of Them are *and who We are not* (Pred 2000:75, original emphasis).

The cultivation of difference constructs the polarized categories of 'us' and 'them' and a connotation of the superior image of 'Swedishness'. As a Swedish postcolonial scholar, Alexandra Ålund, argues, such culturalism creates a Eurocentric system of hierarchical classification, a cultural hierarchy and a static view of culture. In her words:

> 'Cultural encounters' between immigrants and Swedes are commonly described in terms of a cultural conflict between civilized/modern and primitive/traditional cultures. By emphasizing and polarizing cultural difference, general political arguments about suitable/unsuitable refugees and immigrants are reinforced, depending on the extent to which refugees and immigrants are conceptualized as adaptable or how 'foreign' they are (Ålund 1999: 49, my translation).

Cultivating difference in terms of culture is not only used in public discourse to legitimize the selection of people and to strengthen external barriers – creating a 'Fortress Europe' – but also to rationalize internal constraints, such as discrimination in the job market, segregation in housing areas, political marginalization and a growing racism in everyday life (Ålund 1996: 93; Kamali 2009). For example, segregation in housing areas in certain suburbs of big cities is explained in terms of 'cultural difference' without examining the issues of poverty, discriminatory structures in housing and rental markets and institutional exclusion (Ålund 1996: 90, 1997: 129; Molina 1997, 2005).[41]

Swedish postcolonial feminists further point out how cultural racism is combined with gender to construct 'us' and the Other (de los Reyes, Molina and Mulinari 2002; Keskinen et al. 2009; Ålund and Schierup 1991). Here I find the concept of gendered/sexualized racism useful in examining the combination of gender issues and racism in the process of boundary making.

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41 Those suburbs with a majority of habitants with migrant backgrounds are the so-called 'one million program' neighbourhoods that were part of a government-subsidized drive to build a million new apartments over a ten-year period in the 1970s (Molina 2005). Despite the good intention of the government, these suburbs are characterized by 'a shortage of private and public services, an impoverished physical environment' (Jederlund and Kayfetz 1999: 3) and are often described in media and public discourses as locales with crime, poverty and a high level of dependence upon the welfare state.

Gendered/Sexualized Racism

The term gendered/sexualized racism is used by Philomena Essed (1996, 2001) and Brah (2001). Gendered racism in Essed's studies refers to her use of the intersectional approach to examine everyday racism in the U.S. and the combination of racism and sexism towards black women. Examples of this include sexual harassment situations in which black women are viewed as hypersexual, or regarding black women as suitable for cleaning work.

In Brah's (2001: 211) article, gendered racism refers to the argument that 'racism is always a gendered and sexualized phenomenon'. For example, the male from a subordinated group may be racialized through the attribution of feminine equalities, while the female may be represented as embodying 'male' qualities. Gendered/sexualized racism also embeds in racism not only a history of exploitation, inferiorization and exclusion, but also ambivalence of admiration and desire, such as the desire for the mystique and exotic Other:

> The fetish or stereotype gives access to an 'identity' which is predicated as much on mastery and pleasure as it is on anxiety and defence, for it is a form of multiple and contradictory belief in its recognition of difference and disavowal of it. This conflict of pleasure/unpleasure, mastery/defence, knowledge/disavowal, absence/presence, has a fundamental significance for colonial discourse (Bhabha 1983: 27).

My interest to employ the concept of gendered/sexualized racism lies especially in its analytical usefulness in the examination of the interplay between feminism and racism. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, the mutual constitution of gender, sexuality and race and the examination of the role of feminist scholarship, racism and imperialism have been at the core of feminist scholarship. The discussions of Western nuclear family structures are examples already mentioned in the chapter. Other examples can be demonstrated in the following: racist experimentation with contraceptives and enforced sterilizations that make issues of sexuality and reproduction rights more complicated (Carby 1982: 219); racist and patronizing attitudes of white women reformers towards black feminists and black women (hooks 2000). Moreover, black feminists point out examples of racism in the women's movement. For example, the gaining of the women's suffrage movement in the U.S. was at the expense of black people's rights (ibid.). In Britain, feminist collective actions such as Reclaim the Night marches in black areas reinforced stereotypes of black men as rapists and led to strong policing on black men (Amos and Parmar 1984; Bhavnani and Coulson 1986). In the examination of some feminist discourses, postcolonial feminist scholars illustrate how the image of liberated Western women is confirmed through the representations of 'oppressed' black women/Third-World women (Mohanty 1991; Ong 2001[1988]; Trinh 1989). McClintock (1995: 6) addresses relations not only between the colonizer and the colonized, and between women and men, but also between women and women. For example, she examines the actions of white women and demonstrates that these women 'were ambiguously complicit both as colonizers and colonized, privileged and restricted, acted upon and acting'.

Moreover, gendered/sexualized racism is used in this thesis to examine the ways that gender issues are racialized and how such racialized gender issues contribute to processes of doing difference. As Anthias and Yuval-Davis argue:

> Where the dowry or arranged marriages are condemned by White feminists without acknowledging their ethnocentrism and without locating the struggle in terms that are appropriate with a racist milieu, then the issues can become racialized (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992: 128-129).

In a similar vein, debates on forced and arranged marriage in Norway have led to considerable surveillance of migrant communities, restrictions on immigration and a tightening of the nation's and Europe's border. Sherene H. Razack (2008) names such racism as 'racism in the name of feminism'. In Denmark, forced and arranged marriages are constructed as problems and are mainly dealt with by means of immigration control. For example, there are strict requirements for family reunification, requirements regarding housing and maintenance, and a stipulated minimum marriage age of 24 for both spouses - much older than the consensus age of marriage with people with Danish background (Borchorst and Siim 2008; Keskinen 2009; Siim and Skjeie 2008). In Sweden, so-called 'honour killing' is the focus of the debates. These examples illustrate the risk of appropriation of some feminist issues in maintaining boundaries of national belonging.

Conclusion

This chapter situates my research within some of the theoretical efforts to understand difference in social and feminist theory. I have introduced the framework in the thesis by presentation of concepts of doing difference, intersectionality and gendered/sexualized racism.

The concept of doing difference regards difference as social relations, and views difference as a mechanism for exclusion and inequalities. It rejects the perception of difference as static, fixed and natural. This concept is essential to identify processes of boundary making with regard to nationhood and belonging, a research question at the core of my project.

Intersectionality is a concept proposed by feminist scholars as an alternative way of understanding difference in order to rethink: the tension between theorizing difference within macro structures or within representations and discourses; the problems of the 'add-on' approach; and, the prioritization of a single social category over others. Intersectionality highlights the interrelated, intermeshed social categories in an elaborate way and will prove useful in analyzing diversity, identity, discrimination and inequalities in my study.

Gendered/sexualized racism departs from an intersectional understanding of social relations and explores the interconnection between gender, sexuality and racism. The concept is relevant to explore the processes through which cultures are naturalized as innate differences among various groups of people and where different forms of racisms are articulated in the New Right discourse.

In the next chapter, I will introduce scholarship that analyzes the neoliberal shift in the Swedish welfare regime and examine its influences on the change of labour policies and education. I will further situate the above mentioned debates on 'honour-killing' in a context where gender equality discourses and welfare state practices are linked together in producing gendered/sexualized racism.

The Swedish context

This chapter serves as a link between the theoretical framework and the empirical chapters. It is divided into two parts. First, I will explore some of the transitions that have occurred within the Swedish welfare state after the late 1970s. This will provide a broader context to understand the researched subjects. Second, emphasis is given to reflections on earlier research on Swedish adult education. I will re-read adult education through a dialogue with the areas of critical and feminist education.

Paradoxes of the Swedish welfare state

Sweden has been identified as a social democratic welfare regime (Esping-Andersen 1990) and also a model country for integration policies regarding migration in EU countries (Schierup and Dahlstedt 2007). Amongst other things, scholars have illuminated the forms of class solidarity between the middle class and the working class, peaceful labour relations between the workers and the employers and minimum wage differences between classes in the Swedish welfare state (Esping-Andersen 1990; von Nordheim Nielsen 1988; Weiss 1998). Moreover, feminist interventions in welfare studies often regard the Swedish welfare state as a positive example concerning the influence that the welfare state may have on gender ideologies and gender relations (Daly and Rake 2003; Ellingsaeter and Leira 2006). For example, family policies that encourage men to participate in childcare in the family and the universal provision of social services make Nordic countries belong to a dual-earner support model that tends to empower the position of women (Korpi 2000).[42] Feminist scholars argue that such a welfare state in Nordic countries brings women closer to full citizenship (Pateman 1992) and thus creates potentially women-friendly societies (Hernes 1987).

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42 There are differences concerning gender and welfare state within Nordic countries (Borchorst and Siim 2002; Borchorst 2008). Using Nancy Fraser's typology of welfare states, Sweden is characterized by Anette Borchorst (2008) as both a universal-breadwinner model based on moving care work from the family to the state and a universal-caregiver model based on shared parental roles of care and breadwinning.

The above mentioned research constituted my image of the Swedish model before I undertook my research in Sweden. Through my research I came to recognize that there is a paradox of the Swedish welfare state. On the one hand, the ideal of People's Home[43] aims to provide welfare for all people and Sweden is distinctive in its inclusiveness and equality in terms of gender, class and ethnicity. On the other hand, there are deepening structurally and institutionally grounded ethnic, gender and class divisions and social exclusion in Swedish society (Schierup and Dahlstedt 2007; Schierup, Hansen and Castles 2006) and elements of control and discrimination within this welfare state (de los Reyes 2006a). These tensions between inclusion and subordination were reinforced in the context of shifts in politics that have occurred in the last thirty years. These shifts are described by some scholars as a shift towards a more neoliberal inspired frame (Schierup and Dahlstedt 2007; Schierup, Hansen and Castles 2006).

The transition of the welfare state and the conditions of migrants in Sweden were topics that I learned about both not only from my research but also through my everyday life experiences in Sweden. In the following, I will explore some of the central transitions in the welfare state after the late 1970s, with a special focus on migrants' situations. By doing this, I can situate my research in the Swedish context and help readers to contexualize the situation of Women's Room as an adult educational institution and as the place where migrant women meet and face feminist and equality discourses.

Transitions of the welfare state

According to Linda Weiss (1998: 86-87), the three key features of the Swedish Model are the following: (1) the Rehn-Meidner Program (with three principal features: a solidaristic wage policy, an active labour-market policy and a restrictive demand policy to curb inflation and high profits); (2) the long-term political hegemony of the Social Democratic Party and (3) a universalistic welfare state. Nevertheless, the Swedish model encountered problems beginning in the mid-1970s when there was a shift from cost-driven competition to the dominance of innovation-led competition in the advanced post-Fordist economies. An economic crisis between the mid-1980s to the early 1990s followed and led to the restructuring of the Swedish economy from industrial to post-industrial based economy.[44]

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43 The idea of People's Home (*Folkhemmet*) was raised by Per Albin Hansson, the state minister from the Social Democratic Party, in the parliament in 1928: 'The good society is a society which functions like a good home'; 'in this home, there are equality, thoughtfulness, cooperation and helpfulness' (Stjernø 2005: 115).

44 Weiss (1998: 109-110) argues that the Swedish Model was not suited to accomplish such a shift that the full employment policy is not corresponded with a policy to influence the structure and development of industry and the active labour-market is not accompanied with an active industrial policy.

From the beginning of the 1980s, the Social Democratic Party started to lean towards internationally dominant neoliberal economic doctrines and many key components of the Swedish Model were jeopardized. For example, deregulation of the national credit system and ill-planned tax reform in the 1980s led to recession and collapse of Swedish monetary system in the beginning of the 1990s; decentralized bargaining and collective union-employer agreements created fast-growing income inequality; and the influence of EU directives caused the power of the unions to influence labour market regulation to fade and led to the 'racialized casualization' and the racialized informalization of the labour market (Berggren et al. 2007; Schierup 2000; Schierup, Hansen and Castles 2006: 202-216). Although the Swedish welfare state still aims to provide social welfare for all citizens, there have been some changes within the public service sector, such as 'outsourcing' social services to private companies (Harvey 2006; Schierup and Dahlstedt 2007: 36).

Moreover, there has been a shift in welfare state discourses and practices, the most important change being the neoliberal turn. For example, Thomas H. Marshall's theory of social rights, which provides the basic ideology for the Swedish model and the high level of decommodification in the social democratic welfare regime, has been changed to a workfare regime – that is, instead of regarding social welfare as a basic social right, the neoliberal turn and the shift towards a Third-Way welfare ideology focuses more on personal duty to work and personal responsibility for one's social and economic situation, which is distinctive in the liberal social welfare regime (Esping-Andersen 1999; Harvey 2005; Jessop 1999). According to Carl-Ulrik Schierup, Peo Hansen and Stephen Castles (2006: 206), the work strategy of the Old Swedish Model was premised chiefly on rights and (working class) self-help, while the New Swedish Model promotes an ideology and discourse more focused on control and discipline (see also Jessop 2002).[45]

The transitions in the discourses and practices of the welfare state have had serious impacts on vulnerable groups (Andersen and Siim 2004; de los Reyes 2006a; Knocke 1996). In the following, I will illustrate the impacts of transformations of the welfare state on migrants, with the focus on labour market policies, gender equality discourses and education.

Changes in the labour market and its impacts on migrants

From at the bottom to outside of the labour market

Sweden has been a country of immigration for many centuries (Svanberg and Tydén 1992, quoted in Kamali 2009: 144; Knocke and Ng 1999). But it was not until the 1930s that Swedish immigration became larger than emigration. In 1946, the Social Democratic government and LO agreed upon immigration as the quickest way to solve Sweden's urgent labour shortfall. These migrant workers assumed jobs in the

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45 Schierup and his associates (ibid.: 204) employ the term of New Swedish Model to distinguish the Old Swedish Model after the regime change.

expanding industrial sector and in the rapidly growing public service sector of the 1960s (Knocke 2000: 362). Although many of the migrants were skilled workers or had good educational credentials since the start of foreign labour recruitment in the 1940s until the early 1980s, a majority of migrant workers ended up in low-skilled industrial jobs and in low-level public sector service jobs in the ethnically and gender-segregated labour market. Such a situation has been conceptualized by researchers as a 'vertical mosaic' (Ålund and Schierup 1991) or 'subordinated inclusion' (Mulinari and Neergaard 2004).

Graphs in Figure I gives a picture of changes in labour market participation in relation to ethnicity and gender.

Figure I: Age-standardized employment rates for foreign-born and native-born aged 16-64 according to gender, 1960-2000 (%)
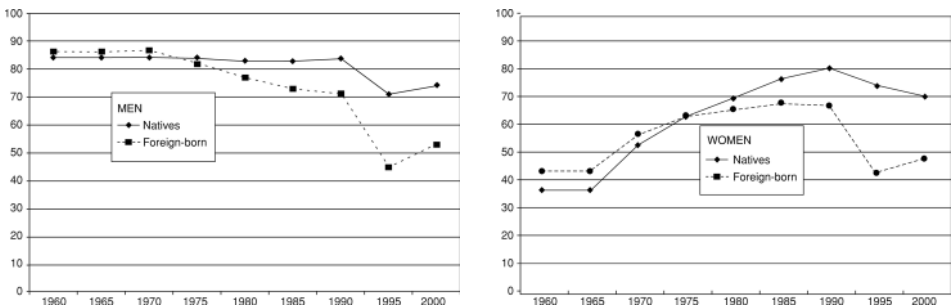
Source: Bevelander (2004: 16)

Figure I illustrates that firstly, from the 1960s to the beginning of the 1970s, a higher percentage of both migrant men and women participated in the labour market than ethnic Swedes. Nevertheless, from the second half of the 1970s when Swedish-born women entered the labour market in large numbers, there was an opposite trend in the participation rate of the paid work for migrant women (Bevelander 2005: 174). Several distinct events happening in the 1970s can explain this change. Firstly, while the expansion of the public sector and reform of laws opened up possibilities for many ethnic Swedish women to participate in the labour market, migrant women's strenuous jobs in industry and services led to early sickness-related retirement (Knocke 1991: 483; Schierup, Hansen and Castles 2006: 207). Secondly, there were structural changes in the labour market from 1970s and onwards, which meant that many industrial workers – many of them with migrant backgrounds – were made redundant (Davies and Esseveld 1988).

Moreover, structural racism in the labour market made it more difficult for these unemployed migrants to re-enter the labour market, and also contributed to new groups of migrants – refugees from Africa and Asia, who began to arrive in Sweden in the 1980s, had difficulties entering the labour market (de los Reyes 2006b).[46]

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46 Research shows that non-Swedish names can make migrants less likely to enter the labour market, earn less or have less chance for promotion (Arai and Thoursie 2006; Bursell 2007; Knocke 1996, 2000).

Structural racism in the labour market can be shown in the two following examples. First, during the years of economic boom at the end of the 1980s, unemployment for migrants was twice as high as for the native Swedish population (Bevelander 2005: 174; Knocke 1996: 7). Second, the economic crisis in the early 1990s affected migrants more heavily than it did natives (Knocke 2000: 365; see also Martinsson 2001:3).[47]

Not only first-generation of migrants, but young people with at least one parent born abroad are disadvantaged in the labour market as well. Young people of non-European background are almost four times more at risk of being unemployed than individuals with two Swedish-born parents (1998 figures, quoted in Schierup, Hansen and Castles 2006: 214; see also Knocke and Hertzberg 2000).

Policies and discourses about unemployment

The traditional Swedish social democratic responses to unemployment and to improve work opportunities are active labour market measures, such as labour market training and different employment programs. Nevertheless, studies show that such a labour market functions less well with unemployed people with migrant backgrounds – fewer migrant than Swedish participants had managed to get a job or find a job equivalent to their qualifications after completing training or after learning Swedish and pursuing supplementary studies (Frank 2003; Knocke 1996, 2000; Schierup 1994). Furthermore, 'with a changing orientation of the active labour market policy, strong pressure to take any job available has followed, including casual part-time or occasional agency work and various forms of precarious "self-employment"' (Schierup, Hansen and Castles 2006: 209). As a result, there is a growing racialized casualization of the labour market and an overrepresentation of individuals born in certain regions and countries (such as Turkey, former Yugoslavia, middle East and Africa) living below the Swedish poverty line (ibid.: 209-210).

The statistics correspond to the shift of welfare state discourses and practices mentioned earlier. In the workfare regime, paid work is regarded as the only possibility for social inclusion (Levitas 1996; Schierup and Dahlstedt 2007). For example, in 1989 the Social Democratic prime minister, Ingvar Carlsson, promised that 'government will propose measures that enable immigrants to more quickly begin to work' (quoted in Kamali 2009: 156). The leader of the Moderate Party, Bo Lundgren, wrote in the party press that 'We have to dare to be demanding. Those who can work should not live on contributions' (quoted in ibid.: 157).[48] These examples of political

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47 There was a loss of 500,000 job opportunities between 1989 and 1994, and this affected migrants more heavily than it did natives, especially non-Nordic migrants: 'the unemployment rate for non-Nordic immigrants was 4.9 percent in 1990, compared to 1.4 percent for the entire labour force aged 16-64. For the non-Nordic labour force it had by 1995 risen to 29.8 percent compared to 6.9 percent for the rest of the population' (Knocke 2000: 364-365).

48 Notice that 1989 was also the same year when the two Swedish xenophobic populist parties, the New Democratic Party (*Nydemokrati*) and the Swedish Democratic Party (*Sverigedemokraterna*), were established (Kamali 2009: 156). See further discussions in the following sections in this chapter.

rhetoric imply that migrants live off social welfare and blame migrants for not making sufficient efforts to enter the labour market.

Such a political discourse shaped by demands and suspicion may find some similarities that correspond to a xenophobic discourse in Sweden, where employment and welfare issues are used as important frames to construct 'the threat and the problems' that migrants have brought to Swedish society. For example, the party program of the New Democratic Party[49] refers to the matter of costs of migrants in the following:

> The economic burden of immigrants, such as the travel costs, education, medical care, more work for the police and the juridical system, costs of the prisons, is too high for our society. The total sum of the costs is approximated to be 100 milliard kronor per year and will be so many years ahead. […] The costs lead to reductions in the welfare and we get less and less welfare for our tax money (quoted in Kamali 2009: 145).

This quotation implies that migrants are more likely to become criminals than ethnic Swedes. As shown in the previous chapter, the problem of segregation in Swedish big cities is explained in cultural terms in hegemonic media representation and this forms, I suggest, a kind of cultural racism. The quotation demonstrates how law and order issues that link criminality with migrants strengthen cultural racism and form a kind of rhetoric to stigmatize migrants and the suburbs where many migrants live. Moreover, in the quotation I detect a strong linkage between the identification of the Swedish welfare state and common sense racism – that is, the image of the nation as a successful 'People's Home' becomes an important marker of Swedishness, and Others are represented as scapegoats for the deterioration of the welfare state, those who will 'eat up' 'our' welfare system. As shown in the previous chapter, the rise of new racism in Western Europe is articulated in the New Right discourse. A similar situation can be seen in the rise of xenophobic populist parties and discourse in Sweden. Such racist discourse, together with the New Right discourse, individualizes one's 'failure' in being unable to participate in the labour market and/or integrate into the society. It regards being unemployed as a personal choice made by those who take advantage of the state and prefer to receive subsidies and allowances instead of working (Rydgren 2002, 2005).

Besides the successful nation image of the welfare state, several scholars argue that gender equality is a marker of the Swedish state identity, which is used to distinguish Sweden/Swedes from the rest of the world as well as migrant populations in Swedish society (Arora-Jonsson 2009; Hellgren and Hobson 2008; Mulinari and Neergard 2004; de los Reyes, Molina and Mulinari 2002). In the following, I will link the development of gender equality politics and discourses with the development of the welfare state and discuss the context where gendered/sexualized racism happens.

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49 The New Democratic Party won parliamentary seats with 8% of the vote in 1991 and the Swedish Democratic Party gained representation in 144 of 290 municipalities in 2006 (Erlingsson, Loxbo and Öhrvall 2009; Kamali 2009). It is worth noticing that the establishment of xenophobic populist parties and their success in the election was in a time of increasing employment and a stable economy in Sweden (Kamali 2009: 63).

Changes in women's situation and gender equality discourses

Dual-earner model and the representation of migrant women

Accompanying the expansion of the public provision of social services, the change of parental leave policy and family policy in the 1970s, there was a growth of women's participation in the labour market in Sweden. Such a change, together with increased representation of women in politics, is considered the primary route to gender equality (Hernes 1987; *Integrations och Jämställdhets Departmentet* 1999; SCB 2008). This is also shown in the following quotation – 'Sweden's path to gender equality has been through the labour market, and women's presence in the labour force has been an accomplishment' (Arora-Jonsson 2009: 217).

Many scholars (Bergqvist and Findlay 1999; Borchorst and Siim 2008) attribute the increase of women's participation in the labour market to the debates on the dual-income model in the 1960s (Moberg 1961), an epoch characterized by 'passion for equality'. This dual-income model is not only needed for sustaining the high cost of the Swedish welfare state, but also constitutes normative perspectives and visions of gender equality (Borchorst and Siim 2008: 211).

Nevertheless, according to Paulina de los Reyes (2002), in the era of the development of the dual-income model, there was a growing representation of migrant women as dependent and constrained in the traditional women's role in the family. A statement from an official government report from the Equal Opportunities Commission (SOU 1979: 89) of the era can serve as an example:

> Many immigrant women were raised and imprinted with a traditional women's role. This often places them in a subordinate and dependent position in relation to men. […] When she comes to Sweden, she must try to understand what the new living conditions in Swedish society mean to her. The changes required of her are that she must handle both family and work; that she must feel a sense of existence and have her own identity; that she, while preserving her culture of heritage, must feel herself at home in Swedish society and build a community with Swedish women; that she must grow into Swedish society, understand the quest for equality between women and men in the family and at work (SOU 1979: 89:155, 164, quoted in de los Reyes 2002: 39, my translation).

The quotation above suggests that the traditional role of women was something a migrant woman was imprinted with through the processes of socialization in her 'homeland'[50] and that she brought with her to Sweden. To be familiar with the value of gender equality, enter the labour market and relinquish the traditional women's role means to become like Swedish women, who find balance between family and work life. Such a change is regarded as a growth for migrant women. This kind of

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50 I take note of the problematic term of 'homeland' (Ahmed, Castaneda and Fortier 2003) since it falls into the dichotomy of 'homeness/strangeness' and presumes that Sweden is not 'home' for migrants. Throughout the thesis, sometimes I use 'original countries' but sometimes I continue to use this shorter term without quotation marks. Nevertheless, it does not mean my critiques of the problematic term have shifted.

gender equality discourse that highlights the importance of entering the labour market, in my viewpoint, is combined with the neoliberal discourse mentioned above, where getting a paid job is regarded as the only way for integration.

However, as shown in Figure I, from the 1970s and onwards, there were structural causes that led to unemployment of migrant women. The monolithic representation of 'traditional' migrant women in public discourses serves a cultural explanation of migrant women's unemployment. The culturalization of migrant women's unemployment not only makes structural racism in the labour market invisible, but also creates cultural and gendered racism (see also Essed 1991).

Moreover, the expectations for migrant women to learn from gender equality in Swedish society make the achievement and value of gender equality exclusively 'Swedish'. Similar pride over the achievement of Swedish gender equality can be found in the heated debates of 'honour killing' in Sweden.

Discourses and welfare state practices concerning 'honour related' violence

In Sweden, an incident involving a young Kurdish woman (Fadime Sahindal) murdered by her father in 2002 was framed in public debate in terms of integration problems, 'cultural difference' and dilemmas about gender equality (Hellgren and Hobson 2008; Keskinen 2009; Larsson and Englund 2004). Within feminist debates the arguments polarize into two positions: one regards this tragedy as an example of universal violence against women under patriarchal oppression (Schyman 2002) and the other interprets the 'honour-related' violence as rooted in specific migrants' culture (Hirdman 2002).

Swedish postcolonial feminists examine these debates and examine how gender inequality is restricted to specific culturally coded national spaces and how these restrictions construct national boundaries (Bredström 2003; de los Reyes et al. 2002). By constructing migrants' culture as 'barbaric', 'traditional' and 'patriarchal', these debates obscure men's violence towards women and patriarchal problems in Sweden and construct gender equality as something for Swedes only. In other words, gender issues such as a certain type of violence against women are racialized, and gender equality becomes a marker for boundaries of difference.

After intense public attention to the issue of 'honour-related' violence, the term 'vulnerable girls in patriarchal families' was introduced in Swedish child welfare policies during the 1990s and early 2000s (Eriksson 2003, quoted in Keskinen 2009: 260). For example, the Swedish National Agency for School Improvement (*Myndigheten för skolutveckling*) presented an educational project designed 'to support girls from patriarchal families' to members from TGEEA in 2003 as a response to the murder of Fadime Sahindal in 2002. These projects are problematic in several ways as they locate migrants in a monolithic category that not only criminalizes them but also hides the possibility of identification of violent practices among both Swedes and migrants alike.

Several Swedish scholars (de los Reyes 2002; Eduards 2007; Knocke 1991) argue that some Swedish feminists uncritically identify with the women-friendly state and

this creates a continuum between how the state represents migrants and how feminist activists understand migrant women.[51] Examining Swedish feminist scholarship, de los Reyes and Diana Mulinari (2005: 82) point out a hierarchical relationship between different feminisms in Sweden, where 'some feminist interventions [become] marginal, invisible or impossible'. Swedish hegemonic feminist scholars are defined by the authors as those who are interested in gender equality projects, who identify themselves with the nation and Swedishness, and who do not focus on differences among women.[52] This hegemonic feminism is identified in my thesis as mainstream Swedish feminist scholarship. Although mainstream Swedish feminist scholars criticize gender equality when it is not functioning,[53] these critiques are limited to native Swedish women's experiences, who identify strongly with the achievement of the Swedish women's movement and the goal of gender equality (see also the analysis in de los Reyes 2002; Eduards 2002b, 2007).

The above mentioned debates on 'honour killing' demonstrate that gender issues can never be analyzed only in terms of gender. According to Zenia Hellgren and Barbara Hobson (2008: 386), 'gender equality is often used as a proxy for other agendas, to gain support for restrictive immigration or to promote hard integrationist policies'. In the Swedish context, during the heated debate of 'honour killing', the integration Minister at the time, Mona Sahlin, who is also currently the leader of Social Democratic Party, claimed that the 'Swedish values were to be accepted, whether one liked them or not, and if some groups refused to adapt themselves it would be necessary to find ways to force Swedish values on them' (quoted in Keskinen 2009: 259). Xenophobic populist parties consider the existence of migrants as a threat to Swedish identity, place the responsibility of integration on migrants and make claims for an urgent need for the preservation of 'Swedish values', such as 'equality between genders', 'freedom of religion' and 'respect for the laws and rules' (Kamali 2009: 148).

Education is a site which is considered as an important arena for enhancement of basic values. In the following, I will situate education within the transition of the welfare state.

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51 For example, although Yvonne Hirdman (2002) argues that gender systems differ in various societies and cultures, she regards the changes of the gender system/gender culture in Sweden as a lineal progressive process. She also contents that the gender system in Sweden 'is something to be proud of' and something to 'defend and prefer in relation to a gender order that lies behind daughter murder' (Bredström 2003: 82-83, Bredström's translation). Similar phenomena can be found in other Nordic countries, see Razack 2008; Siim and Skjeie 2008; Tuori 2009.

52 Hegemonic feminism in Sweden, according to the de los Reyes and Mulinari (2005: 82), is constituted by the interaction of feminist articulations in five different spheres: (1) legitimate scholarly practices (gender studies); (2) popular culture (media feminism, popular science); (3) welfare-state bureaucracies (gender equality state policies); (4) organizations that take their point of departure in a critique by male dominance (women's shelters etc.); and (5) social movements that work from a feminist perspective (my translation is based on Mia Liinason's (2009: 35) translation).

53 Those critiques correspond to the main focus of the Swedish gender equality politics, such as women's taking most responsibilities at home (Lorentzi 2004), the gender segregation and wage difference in the labour market (Alfredsson 2005; Fürst 1999; Hirdman 1994a, 1994b).

Transitions in education and its impacts on migrants

Education is an essential space for creating social equality, for provision of equal opportunities and possibility of social mobility, and for educating students to become active citizens with basic values of democracy, individualism, freedom and independence in society. Nevertheless, education can also be a space where social norms, existing social categories and social positions and power relations are reproduced.[54]

The neoliberal shift of welfare state discourses and practices influences how education is regarded in Swedish society. According to Tomas Englund (1993), education was initially regarded as an institution for creation of a non-segregated and equal society, and for public good. However, it is today viewed as private good that focuses on individual free choice, parents' responsibility for education, effectiveness and competition. The trend of 'free-choice' in educational policies did not take economic and social resources into concern and this has led to increased geographic and ethnic segregation based on existing class divisions and power structures (Arnman, Järnek and Lindskog 2004; Hertzberg 2007; Kallstenius 2007; Moldenhawer 2007).[55]

Within adult education, in the period 1970-1976, reform of municipal adult education was conceived as a means to minimize socio-economic and cultural gaps between different classes. However, emphases on the commitment to equality, social change and redistribution of social resources in the early reforms have been toned down in the last decade. Instead, investment in education in general and adult education in particular is now perceived solely as an essential ingredient for economic growth and flexibility in the labour market (Abrahamsson and Rubenson 1986: 15-18).

For example, the 'knowledge lift' project (*kunskapslyftet*), a program for the 'special build-up of adult education', was implemented between 1997 and 2002 in order to address high unemployment in the 1990s. It aimed to upgrade the education level of the population in general, including measures targeted particularly at migrants whose education had become outdated due to long-term exclusion from the labour market (Paldanius 2000; Schierup, Hansen and Castles 2006: 205). The ideology behind such a project is based on the theory of human capital, and education is regarded as an investment of human capital. The theory of human capital became important in the 1950s and was later highlighted in neoliberalist ideologies and policies, such as the vocational progressivism in Margaret Thatcher's government in Britain and the neoliberal turn in Sweden in the 1990s. Such an ideology is criticized

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54 These two views are classified as transformative approaches vs. reproductionist approaches in the education of sociology (Rezai-Rashti 1995: 5). These two aspects are discussed especially in regarding the role of education and its impact on class, gender and race/ethnicity (see, for example, Bowles and Gintis 1976; Dillabough 2006[2001]: 17-20; Dillabough and Arnot 2001: 34-39; Dixon and Rousseau 2005; Sadovnik 2007; Troyna 1987).

55 See also report from the Ministry of Education (Skolverket 2009: 24, 32) that students within the same school became more homogenous while differences in students' study results became bigger between schools. There is an increased tendency that parents and students tend to choose schools where majorities of students have ethnic Swedish parents with high educational background. The problem of segregation has changed the former description of Swedish school system as a rather equal one in comparison with other countries (ibid.: 18).

for reducing education to a commodity (Carlén 1999: 66-69; Gustavsson 1997: 25-29). In other words, the marketization of adult education indicates a realignment of education to economic and labour market needs and adult education is expected to solve the problem of unemployment (Paldanius 2002).

Swedish language courses in adult education can serve as another example. Swedish mainstream political parties[56] use the discourse of a 'nearly perfect knowledge of Swedish language' as the only way for migrants to enter the Swedish labour market (Kamali 2009: 156). As a result, although research results demonstrate that the disadvantaged position in the labour market for migrants is only to a very small degree explained by differences in education or by proficiency in the Swedish language (Knocke 1996; Schierup, Hansen and Castles 2006: 214), Swedish language instruction is employed in the active labour market measures for migrants in order to combat the problems of unemployment or segregation (Jederlund and Kayfetz 1999; Paldanius 2002). Annick Sjögren demonstrates how learning Swedish language becomes a life-long responsibility of migrants:

> The Swedish language has for a long time functioned as a strong symbol in Sweden. […] Now it is the authorities, once again, who are pointing out that Swedish language is the glue that holds multicultural Sweden together, and who also demand that immigrants must learn Swedish [language] as perfectly as possible and see it as a lifelong responsibility (Sjögren 1997: 22, quoted in Osman 1999: 26; see also Sjögren, Runfors and Ramberg 1996).

Similar phenomenon can be found in another study in two adult educational institutions in Sweden:

> The emphasis on the official language (Swedish) by the teachers in the two schools, and by the native student is constructed from the multicultural discourse in Sweden, a discourse which attributes the marginalisation of the 'other' to their ability in Swedish. Hence, the political and expert knowledge or discourse in this context calls for more language. Language in this discourse is portrayed as the magic wand which can solve the problem of the marginalisation of the 'other'. The rationale goes like this: if all immigrants can learn to speak Swedish perfectly, preferably without an ethnic accent, then their employability would be high and their marginalisation would be considerably less (Osman 1999: 216).

The demand of 'good' Swedish language and the linkage between Swedish language ability and the possibilities for entering the labour market is embedded in the neoliberal ideology where attending life-long education in order to enhance one's employability becomes the responsibility of individuals. This makes labour market measures

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56 According to Masoud Kamali (2009), the mainstream political parties in Sweden means the four right-wing parties (the Liberal Party, the Moderate Party, the Central Party and the Christian Democratic Party) and the three left-wing parties (the Social Democratic Party, the Left Party and the Green Party). Kamali's argument is that although xenophobic populist parties have been largely absent from the centre-stage of Swedish politics compared to other European countries, such rhetoric can be shown in the mainstream political parties and in daily life racist discourse (see also Hellgren and Hobson 2008).

a way of social welfare state control – for example, unemployed people need to prove that they are either in training courses or actively searching for new jobs in order to get unemployment benefits. As a result, some courses in adult education become a means of control of unemployed people by the welfare state, and especially of unemployed migrants (Paldanius 2000; Schierup, Hansen and Castles 2006).

The critiques of the transitions of education in the welfare state come mainly from the educational research with a focus on difference, especially in regards to class and race/ethnicity. In the following, I would like to investigate how difference is discussed in Swedish educational research and I intend to direct my theoretical dialogue with critical and feminist pedagogy as well as with the binary oppositions already mentioned earlier in the chapter.

Difference, education and the welfare state

Swedish education research has investigated how class, gender and race/ethnicity are reproduced in educational contexts. For example, gender and education research tend to focus on the dimensions of students' experiences, interaction processes in classrooms, school life, teaching materials and power structure in schools (see, for example, Evaldsson 2002; Wernersson 1991; Öhrn 2002).[57]

The above mentioned research area in Swedish gender and education is similar with feminist education research in U.S. between the 1970s and the early 1980s, which focuses on class participation, interaction and curricular presence (Luke and Gore 1992: 8). However, I find that gender and education research in Sweden differs from the way debates on difference influence feminist pedagogy in Anglo-Saxon countries. For example, in the debates between feminist and critical pedagogy in U.S. academia, scholars in feminist pedagogy challenge the critical pedagogy notion of 'empowerment' and its linkage with rationalism, which excludes 'the socially constructed irrational Others – women, people of color, nature and aesthetics' (Ellsworth 1992: 96-97). In tracing the main ideas of critical pedagogy in Western thinking, Carmen Luke (1992: 27-33) argues that critical pedagogy employs liberal conceptions of equality and participatory democracy based on the division of public/private, male individualism, power and public speech. The concept of the Other is employed to examine critical and feminist pedagogy not only on the discursive and ideological level, but also on the level of practices in educational processes (hooks 1994; Ng, Staton and Scane 1995; Sleeter 1996; Sleeter and McLaren 1995).

Swedish research on gender and education, in my viewpoint, lack a connection with critical and feminist pedagogy and their inclusion of anti-racist thinking and

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57 Regarding Swedish research on race/ethnicity and education, see, for example, Kamali 2005: 71-87, 2006; Lappalainen 2005: 209-251; Tesfanuney 1998, 1999. There are also intersected discussions of class, gender and ethnicity in gender and education research (Ambjörnsson 2004; Cederberg 2006; Eilard 2004; Nyström 2007; Wernersson 1980).

practices that are at the core of international studies. Gender and education research in Sweden, in my viewpoint, is located in a modernistic understanding of gender equality, which often assumes gender equality as something good and worth striving for in educational practices without further examination of the ideology behind the gender equality discourse and policies. I would like to argue further that gender and education research in Sweden, similar with the state feminist scholarship, collaborates with the state in mainstreaming and promoting gender equality projects in schools.[58] While gender equality is considered normal, natural and right within the state and school boards, anti-racist education has not the same level of acknowledgment.

In contrast to the research of gender and education, studies of race/ethnicity and education in Sweden employs a poststructural perspective to examine the goal of education as a site for the creation of national identity and the transmission of basic values. Postcolonial scholars react towards an increasing tendency towards the identification of Swedish (and European) core values. Such a tendency can be identified in the field of education in the New Curriculum 1994 (*läroplan 94*), which includes the argument that schools should mediate Christian values and Western humanism. Within the logic of this policy, migrant students' worldview, cultural capital and life experiences are either excluded or regarded as something wrong and in need of change. For example, teachers and staff in schools, who are often from the ethnic majority population, connect the notion of 'basic values' to an 'exclusive Swedish phenomenon and quality' and, accordingly, migrant students are regarded as 'objects that need to be changed', who lack the necessary capacity to live in a democratic society and to have certain basic values (Sawyer and Kamali 2006: 14-15).[59]

In a similar vein, Marie Carlson's (2003: 81) study of the 'Swedish for migrants' course (*Svenska för invandrare*, shortened as SFI course) demonstrates that SFI instruction seems to have taken a disciplinary role in educating 'them' about 'Swedishness'. Much like the previous studies that demonstrate how migrant students are regarded as objects in need of change, there is also a discourse of 'lack' that portrays migrant students in SFI with deficiencies who do not fit into a standard 'Swedish' model (ibid.: 227).

Carlson mentioned that her critical perspective in SFI course was often questioned since 'education in itself is good and therefore cannot and should not be questioned' (ibid.: 60). In a similar vein, folk high schools, as mentioned in Chapter 2, have strong connections with social movements in Sweden and are regarded as a kind of 'progressive' education. The following quotation is an example of how liberal adult education, which includes folk high schools and study associations, is introduced by the National Council of Adult Education (*Folkbildningsrådet*):

58 Much of the gender and education research in Sweden is done under the framework of gender equality and much research is published by the Swedish government in relation to gender equality polices (Eidem and Halsius 1994; Forsberg 1998; Wernersson 1995, 2006; Öhrn 2002). There is a literature list of equality in school, see website of the Ministry of Education (www.itis.gov.se/.../Litteraturlista%20j%E4mst%E4lldhet%20090715.pdf, accessed 091016); see also Nyström 2009.

59 See also Paul Lappalainen's (2005: 219) notion of 'helping migrant students to become "normalized"'.

> Every year, several million Swedes gather to participate in Swedish liberal adult education, folkbildning. […] People want to learn and grow. […] Swedish folkbildning meets this need. […] But folkbildning also has an intrinsic value because knowledgeable and active citizens constitute the core of a democratic society. […] Folkbildning became the answer to people's longing for knowledge and desire to influence societal development (*Folkbildningsrådet* 2008: 4-5).

The highlight of democracy, equality and the use of knowledge as resources for social change in this citation make liberal adult education different from the 'traditional' education. In the following, I would like to use the work of two researchers on liberal adult education – Ali Osman's (1999, 2007, 2009) and Berit Larsson's (2001, 2009)[60] research, to examine how liberal adult education research can be approached differently.

Research of 'progressive' education

Osman's thesis in 1999 focuses on the othering processes in two adult educational institutions and situates such processes in a broader multicultural discourse in Sweden. One of his recent studies (2009) analyzes the vocational program in a folk high school and Osman situates such a program in the context of the transition of discourse in education and the marketization of adult education. Another of his recent studies (2007) analyzes the collaboration project of integration between ABF (*Arbetarnas Bildningsförbund*, the Workers' Educational Association) and migrant organizations.[61] Osman situates his analysis of courses at ABF within the politics of integration. Similar with the research mentioned earlier, the ideal of democracy within liberal adult education is examined critically in Osman's research (ibid.: 329-330).

Research from a gender perspective on liberal adult education follows the similar focus of gender and education research regarding the examination of women's experiences and power structures in folk high schools and the promotion of the use of a gender perspective in liberal adult education (Nordberg and Rydbeck 2001). Compared with these studies on gender and education, Larsson's research takes a different starting point. For example, Larsson (2001) criticizes the binary opposition of nature/culture in the division of biological sex and social gender (see also Gothlin 1999). Similarly, Larsson (2009: 65) questions Swedish gender equality for

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60 Larsson is a teacher at Women's Room and she is also one of my interviewees in my research. Although Larsson has written different articles about Women's Room, I limit my citations of Larsson's research only with those where the real name of Women's Room does not appear in the title of her work.

61 Osman's three studies focus on various adult educational institutions, including municipality adult educational institutions (*Komvuxutbildningen*, shortened as *Komvux*, with provision of basic and high school education for adults), folk high schools and ABF. Among them folk high schools and ABF (one of the study associations) are defined as belonging to liberal adult education (*Folkbildningsrådet* 2008) and have connections with social movements while *Komvux* does not belong to the tradition of liberal adult education and is perceived only as a public educational institution run by municipalities.

its heterosexual matrix and its emphasis on relations between women and men only. Furthermore, Larsson (2001) also challenges the universal male subject behind the gender neutral term 'people' (*folk*) and 'citizen' in liberal adult education and argues such a use of 'people' constitutes the category of 'us' and marginalizes the 'deviant' with difference.

However, I find some problems in Larsson's study. Although Larsson criticizes the ideas of people and citizens, the ideal of democracy in liberal adult education remains untouched. I would like to add further that the Swedish word '*bildning*' (education, which also means enlightenment; see also Bergstedt 2005: 46-47) is not further examined, either.[62] This can be found in Larsson's quotation of Bernt Gustavsson's definition of the concept 'education' (*bildning*):

> Education (*bildning*) is a dialogue with others in order to open oneself for differences and something unfamiliar. By doing so, one can enrich oneself and one's world, and find one's own community. Justice and the good life are included in such an educational perspective (Gustavsson 1996: 81, quoted in Larsson 2009: 220, my translation).

Dialogue is a specific pedagogy highlighted in liberal adult education. Larsson (2009: 180-185) agrees with the strength of this pedagogy and asserts that Women's Room employs it to create a democratic dialogue between women, which can make women encounter/visit differences among women and provide them with new perspectives. Larsson further argues that the dialogues between women can prevent imposition of a hegemonic feminist ideal on women with different experiences and backgrounds. Accordingly, folk high schools as liberal adult education remains 'progressive' education where feminist teachers at Women's Room can practice 'antagonist feminism' to challenge the ideology of gender equality and to consolidate women in transversal politics.

Larsson's approach, in my viewpoint, resonates well with Paulo Freire's (1972, 1998) description of 'practices of freedom' and bell hook's (1994) notion of feminist education praxis as an act of transgression. The teachers in Larsson's are critical teachers with a 'determination to combat racial, sexual, and class discrimination' (Freire 1998: 12) as well as intellectuals with dialectical thinking that can create possibilities to counteract hegemony (Gramsci 2001[1929-1933]).[63] In contrast to Larsson, Osman makes use of a Foucauldian perspective where 'progressive' and 'traditional' education are analyzed together. According to Osman, the state/government exercises power in both types of institutions in order to shape and control citizens. Research on folk high schools, I suggest, fall into two poles – researchers either regard folk high schools as not different than other types of educational institutions or regard them as merely a site for emancipation.

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62 Bosse Bergstedt (2005) employs a postmodern and deconstructive perspective to analyze the central concepts in liberal adult education: education (*bildning*), life enlightenment (*livsupplysning*) and democracy. Compare with the above mentioned that the ideals of critical education are examined in feminist pedagogue's work in the U.S. (Luke 1992).

63 Henry Giroux (1986: 36-37) bases on Gramsci's idea to refer to 'transformative intellectuals'.

I would like to link the problematic binary opposition of 'progressive' and 'traditional' education to critical and feminist pedagogy. Moreover, the opposition between the oppressors and the oppressed in both kinds of pedagogy is the second dimension that I intend to present in further dialogues below.

Oppositions in critical and feminist pedagogy

The critical pedagogue Freire (1972: 53-58, 1998: 22-27) contrasts 'banking education' with 'problem-posing education'. From Freire's point of view, solidarity requires true communication, critical reflection on action and trust in the oppressed and their ability to reason. Together with a 'rigorous ethical grounding' for teachers and a 'conscientization' of students, students can learn 'to perceive social, political and economic contradictions, and to make action against the oppressive elements of reality' (1972: 15).

Although I agree with Freire's placing education within broader contexts of imperialism and neoliberalism, I find that the opposition between 'traditional' and 'progressive' education, and between oppressors and oppressed, to be problematic.

I earlier mentioned that feminist pedagogues in the U.S. make visible ethnocentric assumptions in critical pedagogy. They also show the exclusion of Others in feminist classrooms. Others (for example, Anita Harris' research 2004) examine various educational programs for young girls in Western countries and find that in these educational programs, the notions of girlhood with self-invention, personal responsibility and individual economic empowerment are closely linked to the ideologies of neoliberalism. Furthermore, the image of successful migrant young girls is embedded in multicultural discourses that emphasize 'unthreatening and assimilable migrants' (Harris 2006[2004]: 279). As a result, Harris argues that the concept of gender equality in these programs needs to be examined whether or not such kind of liberation really benefits young girls. Taken together, these studies illuminate the complex inter-relations between gender and race within a broader discursive, historical and social context and demonstrate the nuances in 'progressive' education.

Similarly, descriptions of oppressed groups and liberatory teachers in critical and feminist pedagogy, I would argue, homogenize both groups. For example Kathleen Weiler (2001: 75-76) states that there is a lack of location in Freire's work. The oppressed as a general category in Freire's theory lacks an acknowledgement of the complexities and differences among real people. Although liberatory teachers as subjects of resistance are embraced differently by various theorists, according to Weiler, 'Freire's continued presentation of the liberatory teacher as "transparent", his failure to locate the teacher or to consider the various ways in which the teacher is imagined and positioned because of race or gender, remains troubling'.[64]

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64 For example, bell hooks (1994) was inspired by Freire's notion of liberatory teacher. However, when Weiler (2001: 76) traced Freire's image of the liberatory teacher, she found that such an image was related with Freire's experiences in the 1970s in Africa and Latin America and was connected to the celebration of revolutionary heroes who were male and existed solely in the public world in leftist critics of this period.

I agree with Weiler's criticism of Freire's abstract description of the oppressed and liberatory teachers. Relating the above mentioned problem of oppositional categories in critical and feminist pedagogy to postcolonial and black feminist theories discussed in the previous chapter, I wish to make clear that there also lies a danger in contrasting the Western self and its Others in postcolonial theory or black/white women in black feminist scholarship. For example, Leela Gandhi criticizes how postcolonial scholars idealize and essentialize the Third-World woman while homogenizing the intentions of different Western feminist scholarship. In her own words:

> Trinh, Talpade Mohanty and Spivak each idealise and essentialise the epistemological opacity of the 'real' third-world woman. By making her the bearer of meanings/experiences which are always in excess of Western analytic categories, these critics paradoxically re-invest the 'third-world woman' with the very iconicity they set out to context. This newly reclaimed figure is now postulated as the triumphant site of anti-colonial resistance. […] In refuting the composite and monolithic construction of 'native women', Spivak et al. unself-consciously homogenise the intentions of all Western feminists/feminisms (Gandhi 1998: 88).

I take a different position from Gandhi and think that the concepts of Third-World women/First-World women (and I would add oppressed/oppressor and black/white women) should not be regarded as fixed, essentialized and oppositional categories. Rather, these concepts should be regarded as analytical frameworks that the three authors mentioned in the above quotation employ to examine Western feminist theory, suggesting the theory is embedded in a specific society or academic terrain, whether it is women in development studies or gender studies.[65] Nevertheless, what I share with Gandhi is to highlight the importance of probing the complexities within the groups of oppressed/oppressor, Third-World women/First-World women and black/white women and situate them within specific contexts. By doing so, we can prevent a romantic description of the power of resistance from the oppressed, Third-World or black women.

To situate my research within the tensions in researching 'progressive' education, I share Osman's interest in challenging the 'good will' behind 'progressive' education and his examination of processes of othering in adult education. Although folk high schools are different from other types of adult educational institutions (for example, *Komvux*) in terms of their pedagogy and their connections with social movements, folk high schools cannot be exempt from being sites where the state intends to institutionalize social movements.[66] Therefore, it is worth paying attention to the role folk high schools play in the formation of citizens, in processes of boundary making, and in their maintenance of existing power structures in Swedish society.

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65 See also Avtar Brah's (1996: 110) argument to regard 'white' and 'black' feminism in Britain as 'fields of contestation inscribed within discursive and material process and practices in a postcolonial terrain' so that both categories of women do not become essentially fixed oppositional categories.

66 Similar tension can be found, for example, in the institutionalization of gender studies in Sweden (Liinason 2010; Rönnblom 2003).

However, as Larsson's research shows, teachers at Women's Room are different from 'traditional' teachers since they, as a collective, question state power (such as in their discussions of whether or not the institutionalization of Women's Room will decrease their independence and limit their earlier roles as activists in social movements), the male norm behind the idea of citizenship and the heterosexual norm behind gender equality. Therefore, I think it is also essential to explore possible resistance in such a 'progressive' educational arena.

Conclusion

This chapter discusses the transitions of the Swedish welfare state with a focus on migrants' situation in the labour market and adult education. The neoliberal turn makes the Swedish welfare state lean towards a workfare regime that emphasizes individual responsibilities for one's social and economic situation. Such a shift also influences how education is regarded in Swedish society. Racism against migrants is embedded in xenophobic populist discourse and transitions of the Swedish welfare state. In the discourses and practices of the welfare state, Swedish language is emphasized as a marker of Swedishness. High Swedish proficiency is also seen as the only means by which migrants can escape marginalization.

This chapter also situates gender equality discourses and politics in the development of the welfare state. Ethnic Swedish and migrant women's different relations to the development of the dual-earner model from the 1970s and onwards are understood within ethnocentric public discourses in terms of cultures, and such discourses make structural racism invisible. The monolithic representation of 'traditional' migrant women in gender equality discourses and the debates on 'honour killing' demonstrate how gendered racism is embedded and linked with gender equality discourses, the ways the welfare state responds to these gender issues, and the Swedish mainstream feminist scholarship that identifies with the achievement of gender equality and the women-friendly welfare state.

It is worth noting that Swedish feminist scholarship is a broad and heterogeneous field. For example, there have been researchers who focus on the intersection of gender, class and ethnicity (Davies and Esseveld 1988; Knocke 1991, 1996; Ålund 1997, 2006). There are growing interests in intersectionality in Swedish feminist scholarship (Carbin and Tornhill 2004; de los Reyes, Molina and Mulinari 2003; Lykke 2003, 2005) although some feminist scholars wonder if these interests risk narrowing the potentiality of the concept by an incorporation without any change in the theoretical paradigm as a whole (de los Reyes and Mulinari 2005: 78; Lykke 2005: 9). In a context where racism is not fully theorized in mainstream Swedish feminist scholarship (de los Reyes, Molina and Mulinari 2002: 12-14; Mulinari 2001: 14), certain gender issues, such as women's roles and a specific type of violence against women that are linked to culture, family and religion, can help construct and

maintain boundaries of national belonging and be appropriated in racialized discourse and practices. These areas, together with Swedish language ability mentioned above, form the framework with which I will analyze feminist teachings and interactions at Women's Room.

The final part of this chapter demonstrates theoretical dialogues in critical and feminist pedagogy and postcolonial theory and how these can be of relevance for research on folk high schools in Sweden. I make clear that it is problematic to polarize 'progressive' and 'traditional' education and to homogenize both groups of teachers as liberatory teachers and oppressed students, as suggested in critical and feminist pedagogy. In the following chapters, I would like to use the strategies and responses evolving from my research to create a further dialogue with critical and feminist pedagogy and postcolonial theory.

Difference, Women's Room and the welfare state

The chapter is divided into two parts: the first section is related to the former chapter and aims to situate the women in my research and Women's Room in some of the shifts in socioeconomic policies that have occurred within the transitions of the welfare state. The second section discusses how the concept of difference is conceptualized by teachers at Women's Room and explores the relationship between this school, Swedish feminist academia and gender equality discourses.[67]

A folk high school for women and its transition

The folk high school was the form that the founders of Women's Room opted for as the school's type. My informants suggested several reasons behind this choice: firstly, compared with other forms of schools, folk high schools do not have to follow centrally established curricula which high schools and municipality adult educational institutions (*Komvux*) have to follow. A folk high school enjoys 'the freedom to determine its own activities and educational profile' and 'to design and tailor its courses to suit a range of target groups' (Ministry of Education and Research 2007). The one-year 'Feminist Studies' course at Women's Room and the 'Globalization' course at another folk high school with a focus on Latin America and the Third World are examples of such freedom in course design.

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67 The materials in this chapter are mainly based in interviews with teachers, and it is worth noting that the views presented are partial, as I did not interview politicians or read documents such as the school's applications for money.

Secondly, many of my informants suggested that there are several similarities between the popular movement and the women's movement. Regarding educational visions, both movements put an emphasis on democratic encounters between people where they can discuss and articulate experiences and knowledge to criticize political decisions and use knowledge to participate in and change society (see also Arvidsson 2004; *Folkbildningsrådet* 2008; Sundgren 2003).[68] This is illustrated in the following words of the principal, Linnéa:

> We should make women more active in taking part in democracy, to take power of their own lives, be able to become well-oriented members of society and learn more. I think in teaching, it's very important that we stress to start with students' own experiences and knowledge, and to start with everything that women know and have learned in some way. There are a lot of things that women know which are not written in books (interview with Linnéa).

With its emphasis on creating and framing forms of active citizenship and democracy, Women's Room does not differ from other folk high schools. However, according to the teachers I spoke to, Women's Room is different in one way from the other folk high schools: the school's identification is shown in their school profile being named as feminist and in their arguments regarding the need for a specific space for women. This relates to the third argument presented by my interviewees for choosing a particular organizational form, since, as a folk high school, Women's Room can get financial support from the state and municipality. As a result of this support, students do not need to pay a tuition fee and can apply for a student allowance and student loan when they are registered at the school. Two of the founders (Birgitta and Elin) who still work at Women's Room asserted:

> This way [by building a folk high school], you can get money from the state, which is something we think should go to women, some of the money from this country. Get some of the money and reserve it exclusively for women (interview with Birgitta).

> We thought it was quite common that women were isolated, and they were not out in the labour market, where they wanted to be. […] In Sweden, during this time, equality was discussed and became a law. So, we thought we could use the school for our purpose. […] Women should have their own income, and they should have a job if they want, outside their homes, and those were our goals (interview with Elin).

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68 Christina's view is slightly different from the other teachers regarding the similarities of the ideas between the women's movement and folk high schools. In the development of folk high schools, only sons of the rich peasants were originally eligible for these study programs. Furthermore, the main goal of the popular movement was for the working class to enter the parliament. In addition, the popular movement is broad, and around a third of folk high schools are Christian schools in different ways. These aspects, in Christina's viewpoint, have nothing to do with the women's movement and the type of folk high school is not a guarantee of its feminist or left-learning school profile. Nevertheless, Christina does agree with other teachers that a folk high school is 'a state-financed forum to guarantee that you have democracy in society'. It is democracy that provides the women's movement and folk high schools with shared ideals (interview with Christina).

Elin's words situate the establishment of Women's Room in the context of the women's movement and also in an era characterized by changes and new laws concerning gender equality, which I already mentioned in the previous chapter. Birgitta and Elin described the conditions shaping the creation of the school, identifying strategies to provide resources to women. These strategies are more difficult today, with shrinking resources and increased competition. Several changes at the level of national policies have placed Women's Room (and other folk high schools) in a more difficult economic situation today. For example, the Swedish government has changed the structures of the school system and cut the budget for adult education (interview with Linnéa and Thomas). Until 1992, folk high schools and other schools (from elementary schools to senior high schools) were controlled by the National Board of Schools (*Skolsöverstyrelsen*), and they received a steady budget from the state. Since 1992, they have belonged to the National Council of Adult Education, and nowadays financial support depends upon how many students folk high schools have and how many weeks these students attend courses. The principal of Women's Room named the changes in the following ways: 'Earlier, we knew this was the amount of money that we had, and it was the same money from year to year. They didn't bother with how many students we had in a class' (interview with Linnéa). [69]

Some of my informants suspected that folk high schools were given less financial support because fewer people lack senior high school education nowadays. Therefore, less people need to attend courses at folk high schools in order to get an upper secondary education certification. The teachers also mentioned that, before, many of the politicians from the Social Democratic Party went to folk high schools identified as social democratic or with the tradition of the working class movement, but 'they [politicians] do not know much about this school system anymore' (interview with Margareta). One of the vice-principals at Women's Room further suspected that changes in the Social Democratic Party have led to the change of financial policies for folk high schools: 'The Social Democratic Party today is not as radical as they used to be. They moved to the right and they moved more towards capitalism' (interview with Harriet).

Harriet's words point out the neoliberal turn of the Social Democratic Party in the change of welfare regime from the 1980s. In the following section, I will situate the impacts on the school of financial support from the state within the latter context.

Impacts of the economic situation

Change in financial support from the state has affected Women's Room in several ways. First of all, teachers mentioned how the economic situation has restrained the possibilities of reaching the goals set by Women's Room. For example, in order

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69 This change was situated in the 1990s during the economic recession when the budget for public sector shrank. The change of decentralization in school system in the 1990s also affected schools from elementary level to secondary level since the budget for schools varied in different municipalities (Skolverket 2009: 14, 21).

to reach the goal of enabling different groups of women to meet, Women's Room tried to have 'Monday groups' to merge students from different courses in the main school in the fall term of 2004, but this attempt did not work well. Some teachers mentioned that before the fall of 2004 they had one afternoon with various students' clubs, and this set-up functioned better than the Monday groups did. However, even this effort was left aside 'because of the budget…the economic situation, we can't afford to have that kind of subject [an afternoon with students' clubs]' (interview with Margareta; see also interview with Mia).[70] This goal of merging students is further constrained by the teacher-student ratio. Before, one teacher was assigned to ten students, and today one teacher is assigned to twenty students, which means that teachers do not have sufficient time or resources to work toward the school's goals (interview with Harriet; interview with Nadia).

To take another example, many of my informants stressed their efforts to keep a feminist organization with a flat structure, where important decisions are made by all the staff and/or students. A study of Women's Room describes how a feminist organizational structure can only be maintained with sufficient resources from the state (Wainwright 1994). In addition, changes in the economic situation leave the teachers with less time for discussions about school policies and decisions. When the school's heads apply for project courses, the teachers have little space to discuss whether or not the projects hinder the school's profile and teaching goals. Moreover, some of my informants suggested that new staff who are not familiar with the women's movement and feminist theory make the maintenance of a flat structure more difficult and also that the founders or those teachers who have worked at Women's Room for a longer time do not have the energy to guide the new teachers (interview with Nadia).

The most severe impact of the difficult economic situation mentioned in the interviews is that Women's Room, as well as other folk high schools, has to apply for project courses in order to survive. The knowledge lift project mentioned in the previous chapter can serve as an example. According to Bernt Gustavsson (1997: 29), the economic view of education was dominant in the Adult Education Conference in Stockholm in 1996 and the aim of the knowledge lift project was defined by Jarl Bengtsson, the Chief Counsellor for Education at the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) at that time, to make people 'get rid of the redundant and un-necessary knowledge'. The huge investment of the knowledge lift project focused on natural science and technology, which was considered 'necessary knowledge' in the new society.

Although several scholars point out the problematic realignment of education to economic and labour market needs in the shift of educational discourses and policies in Sweden, according to the interviewed teachers, the knowledge lift project helped women to break traditional gender roles, change their choice of subjects at school and, as such, may have influenced gendered segregation in the labour market. The

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70 However, the former principal didn't agree with such an interpretation, as only 25% of the students participated in students' clubs. In her opinion, if the teachers can work really hard to make 75% of the students participate in the subject, then such a subject can be affordable economically since there are enough students in each class (interview with Christina).

knowledge lift project could also be used by Women's Room for its feminist ideals. Such a project was described by one of the teachers at Women's Room as 'an opportunity for people to get a new education and new kinds of jobs in society. If you were a carpenter, you could be educated to be a teacher in carpentry perhaps. And most people who went to these courses and started to be educated were women' (interview with Astrid). Astrid further mentioned that when the knowledge lift project came to an end, Women's Room had to stop providing the courses supported by this project.

The dependence on the project as an important economic resource makes it difficult for teachers at folk high schools to challenge the neoliberal ideology behind the knowledge lift project. As I will argue later in the chapter, the primary focus on the gender dimension at Women's Room also limits the possibilities for teachers to criticize such a project from other perspectives such as class or race/ethnicity.

The principal of Women's Room explained: 'We have to be on the market. They don't see us. We must be known…I hope that I can convince them [the politicians] that we are doing many good things and that we can get more money from the municipality and present projects that they will be really interested in' (interview with Linnéa). Relating Linnéa's words to the previous chapter, her words illuminate the context of the marketization of adult education.

During the school year of 2004 to 2005, basic courses at the branch school of Women's Room were purchased by the municipality. Some project courses targeted unemployed migrant women, and the aim of these courses was to help these women get back into the labour market.[71] Some teachers at Women's Room criticized the project courses for unemployed migrant women since they had to 'control' the students more or had to evaluate students differently in order to satisfy those who sponsored the courses (interview with Birgitta; interview with Tyra). In Tyra's words:

> If we really work as liberal educators, we should sit and discuss issues in society and talk about how we can influence society. That is civil education. But now, we have to sit and provide skills, and students have to learn more of the Swedish language in order to be in the labour market. And there are knowledge requirements that we have to fulfil to do this. […] Their [the students in the project course] Swedish language skills are really good. Even if their Swedish is not that good, they have knowledge that others in the general courses do not have since the latter seldom have experiences from the labour market. […] We interviewed the students and they were dissatisfied. We had good contact with the students, but the course structure…they [students] did not buy it. They know that it is a one more course…What will they do after this course? […] The price we pay is that we get money from them [the sponsors] to arrange such a shit course…I do not mean that the course is shit, but the thinking is shit. They lie that…or it is not they, but we have to lie to the students that, 'Yes, you will get traineeships, and this will help you find a job. Try to make the best of it'. But then, it shows that this is not

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71 One project course in the main school targeted women with rheumatism, and the aim of the course was to train these women to help other women with similar health conditions. Two project courses targeting unemployed women were supported by the union and EU, and one took place in another area in the same city where Women's Room is located. The other took place in another town, which is around 80 kilometers away from the city.

the case: the traineeships are quite bad, the work is quite bad and it doesn't become a real job…maybe it can be substitute work for the summer time or traineeships for two months. The employers can get money since it is the course that will pay students for their work, and the salary is little as it is for night work in a factory. […] This is a problem of principles. Women's Room has extra problems when we moved to a new place.[72] But all folk high schools have problems… Folk high schools want to survive and they have to partly sell themselves. […] The price [for folk high schools] is too high (interview with Tyra).

Tyra further mentioned that when the supervisor of the course said something discriminatory about the migrant students in a meeting with the course teachers, she became angry but dared not talk back since the supervisor who represented the sponsoring institution was her boss.

These teachers' words depict a paradoxical situation. On the one hand, entering Women's Room and obtaining an education is regarded by most teachers as a second chance for women students. On the other hand, the situation they described corresponds to what Ali Osman (2009: 156) identifies as the three fundamental notions in neoliberal model of education: 'making the provision of education cost efficient by commodifying the product, test performance by standardizing experience, and a focus on marketable skills'.

Linnéa mentioned that under the pressure of market competition, she had to show politicians the 'many good things' that Women's Room undertakes. One essential 'good thing' emphasized in the new discourse of education is to enhance the employability of the students, or, in Tyra's words, 'to provide skills'. As I see it, in this proving of skills, the school follows the logic of the present neoliberal discourse such as reducing educational issues to economical ones and accepting the assumption that 'perfect' Swedish language skills will lead to employment and integration.

Furthermore, the teachers mentioned that they cannot criticize the ineffectiveness of such courses. Even worse, if there is any ineffectiveness, it is identified as originating not from the faulty definition of social problems and problematic direction of social policies, but from the teachers' 'not doing things well enough'. Accordingly, although there are criticisms from students and teachers about such courses, their voices are restrained due to the need to apply for and receive funding for these courses.

Examples shown in Women's Room illustrate the dilemma that the staff faces – the course aims of certain project courses contradict the ideals of liberal adult education. The power relation between the course sponsor and the educators also restrains Women's Room as a feminist institution and its teachers as individual activists from realizing their feminist ideal to 'combat all kinds of oppression, locally and globally' (school website, accessed 050914).[73]

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72 The main school of Women's Room moved to another place in the fall term of 2004, but, according to my informants, they did not get the financial support that the municipality promised. The move of the school made the staff exhausted and the difficult economic situation of the school put a heavy burden on the teachers. This was also something I observed in the staff meetings. Some even mentioned their worry of losing jobs to students in the classes (interview with Linnéa).

73 The accessed date is the same, so in the rest of the thesis I will omit the accessed date.

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, folk high schools, as one of the important adult educational institutions for migrants, are severely influenced by the changes in the welfare state (Osman 2009; Schierup and Dahlstedt 2007). Women's Room was affected severely especially in terms of the school's economy. How about migrant students at Women's Room? Scholarship on the transition of the welfare state and its impact on migrants help me to situate the focus of the study – migrant women students and feminist teachers at Women's Room – in a broader context.

Women at Women's Room

Most of migrant women students at Women's Room are from Iran, Iraq, Kurdistan and Somalia (see Table C in the Appendix IV). Some of them are refugees and asylum seekers and some came to Sweden because of marriage. Most of the students came to Sweden during the late 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s. Some had already earned Swedish citizenship, while some (especially those who are asylum seekers) had received only a one-year resident permit and had to renew it every year, which meant that they were not sure whether or not they could stay in Sweden in the next year. The difficult situation for some of the students who could not get a permanent resident permit reflects the tightening of the refugee policy in Sweden, particularly after the implementation of the European Schengen Agreement in 2001 (Knocke 2000: 363; Schierup, Hansen and Castles 2006: 196).

Many migrant students lived in Mellanby (where the branch school of Women's Room is situated) and in other suburbs of the city where the majority of inhabitants have a migrant background. Migrant students go to Women's Room for different reasons: some lack basic or upper secondary education, and they go to basic courses at the branch school or the three-year general courses at the main school. Some need Swedish language certification for entering the labour market or university.

Although these students are classified as 'migrant students' in my research, they are not a homogenous group. For example, Somali students in A1 tended to sit together in class, and they seemed to consolidate as a group when they had conflicts with Iranian students. However, these Somali women belonged to different ethnic groups in Somalia, and political issues in their home country were a taboo among them (interview with Muna).

This is also the case for the group of 'feminist' teachers at Women's Room. Although the former principal, Christina, stressed that teachers at Women's Room must have some experiences in the women's movements (030814 field notes), in reality this was not the case. For example, some teachers mentioned in the interviews that they were hired because the school needed teachers in a particular subject. According to Nadia:

> None of the Swedish as a second language teachers were hired because of her experience in the women's movement. And this is not only true for Swedish as a second language teachers. I would guess that about 45% who were hired here during these years had no

experience in the women's movement. […] Often it is that when the school looks for a mathematics teacher, they [the applicants] do not have any experiences in the women's movements at all. Therefore, they have to hire whoever is qualified as a math teacher (interview with Nadia).

Nadia's description illustrates the gap between reality and what is claimed by Christina as the ideal for hiring teachers with feminist thinking or experiences in the women's movement. Besides a possible lack of training in teaching with gender perspectives (as mentioned in Chapter 2), I wonder if the lack of feminist teachers can be explained by the characteristics of the Swedish women's movement, its institutionalization and participation in processes of mainstreaming of gender equality politics (Eduards 2002a; Schmitz 2007).

Other teachers also mentioned their different paths to embracing political consciousness. Some teachers focused more on class perspective, others on sexuality; some were more influenced by the working class's movement or by the tradition of liberal adult education, and some did not think specifically in terms of gender, sexuality and/or class at all:

> Actually, I choose not to join the women's movement because I thought that for me, I think for many of us, we thought that class, a class perspective was the most important. […] Before, I worked in several typical male-dominated occupations. I worked in a factory, making small pieces of metal. I worked as a bus driver. And I didn't get a job in another technical factory because of my biological sex. Because they told me we have no women here. During my years in these male-dominated occupations, I was very angry…so of course I have thought a lot about the societal structure (interview with Nina).

> I am from the working class, blue-collar. When I chose the program at high school, the orientation teacher told me that I could choose a two-year social program and that I then could go to the university. She was lying to me. Of course, because you have to have attended three-years of high school to go to university. So she fooled me. But I think she thought 'ok, she is a girl, her last name is XX [a non-Swedish last name] and she is from the working class. She can't cope with university. It is better for her if she starts to work in the factory' (interview with Astrid).

Here the two teachers convey different views on class and gender, which is something I will continue to analyze in the second section of this chapter. Both Nina and Astrid prioritize class as the most important social category. But Nina seems to separate gender and class while Astrid's experiences demonstrate the intersection of class, race/ethnicity and gender articulated in practices of discrimination.

When it concerns teachers' ethnicity/original nationality, five of the teachers I interviewed migrated to Sweden (one from a Nordic country, one from Asia, one from South America and two from central/Eastern Europe), and one of them was born to a parent with a migrant background. Three of them mentioned in the interviews as well as in discussions with students that their migrant backgrounds had greatly influenced their life experience and teaching.

Although these teachers with migrant backgrounds share some similarities with the migrant students at Women's Room, there are also differences between them and migrant students, as Astrid's observation shows:

> If you look at the starting period of the school, we were mostly white, middle-class, Swedish women. I am Swedish also; just because my father was born in another country doesn't mean that I am a migrant or that I am oppressed in the way that, for example, Muna [a student in A1] is. There is a big difference. We have a lot of migrants on our staff, but they are from countries that don't…they are not oppressed. (Chialing: compared with other countries, they are more highly ranked?) Yes, of course. Tyra and Nadia come from the higher classes. […] And [another teacher from Iran], who stopped working here, she was also from the upper class. Rabia is from the upper class. She is not a farmer's wife, or something like that. She is educated. The working class, migrant women, they can smell that. They know exactly who you are or who you are not (interview with Astrid).

Astrid's interview illustrates a mono-cultural background of the founders (and, I would add, the teachers and staff who work at Women's Room nowadays). Although she was born to a father who migrated to Sweden, she doesn't identify herself as one of the migrants and she doesn't think that some of her experiences of being discriminated against can be measured in the same way as the experiences of the migrant students. She further mentions class and educational background difference between teachers with a migrant background and migrant students. Nadia's self-description supports this: 'I belong to a refugee group whereas most of them were from the middle and upper classes, well-educated or perhaps from academia. This was a group that was very welcomed in Sweden' (interview with Nadia). Nadia's words grasp a discourse in which the well educated political refugees during the 1970s and the migrants from the 1980s and onwards are created as binary opposites.

I would like to further situate differences between migrant students and migrant teachers in the broader context of the Swedish history of migration. These teachers migrated to Sweden much earlier, and in an era when migrants were seen as important contribution to the labour force and therefore were included into the labour market more easily than are the latecomers.

Moreover, some of the teachers' original nationalities were not 'foreign' to Swedish society with the possible exception of teachers who migrated from Asia and South America.[74] The process through which people from other European countries were included in Sweden corresponds to the construction of 'Europeanness'. Researchers demonstrate how Southern European and Central/Eastern European countries were moving closer to 'Europeanness' in the process of the formation of – and especially later enlargement of – the European community (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992; Casanova 2004; Marranci 2001). Accordingly, the original nationalities of most

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74 However, Wuokko Knocke mentioned that even in the era when migrants in Sweden were mainly from Finland, Yugoslavia and Greece, there was already a negative picture of migrant women who were seen as traditional and constrained by their culture and upbringing. This negative image of migrant women in relation to their 'culture' was strengthened when women from Third-World countries began to arrive (interview with Knocke).

teachers with migrant backgrounds moved closer to the category of 'us' – whether Swedes or European – when other Others (the category that most migrant students are assigned to) came to Sweden.

I would like to borrow Adrienne Rich's (1986) concept of a 'lesbian continuum' to describe the category of 'us' as a continuum. Within this continuum, some are closer to Swedishness/Europeanness and differences are small (although in some cases these differences are still important). However, as the following chapters will show, there is a breaking point at which there are Others who cannot be part of this continuum, no matter how much effort they make to move closer to the category of 'us'.

The classification of the teachers with a migrant background in the continuum of 'us' also comes from teachers' identification as a feminist collective and from the processes of disidentification through the employment of social positions and social capital. Such a stance also resonates with my argument about the rejection of a pre-given identity of a researcher in relation to her doing something 'good' in Chapter 2. As will be shown in later chapters, I do not think that the background of being a migrant (whether these are teachers or students) guarantees particular actions of resistance.

In the second section of this chapter, I will examine feminist thinking at Women's Room in the discourses of gender equality and Swedish feminist scholarship.

Women, difference and Women's Room

Why a women's school

> We have a society that is marked by male dominance, a sex-segregated labour market, female responsibility for housework... The borders between the sexes divide our solidarity and they create inequality. We, as women, have a great responsibility for changing all this (school website).

Similar to the above quotation from the school website, teachers mentioned that Women's Room existence is due to common experiences of being subordinated in a patriarchal society. They also suggested that this experience forms a foundation for women to create a collective social struggle:

> [Our bottom line is that] women are oppressed; that's why we have Women's Room instead of a men's folk high school (interview with Margareta).

> There is one thing if you work at university, doing research, working with theory, then you can deal with as many categories as you want. That's very exciting, it's very nice. But we are not researchers. And that's a very big difference. We work in real life and society is based on two roles: men and women. That's it. And researchers can say what

they want, but it doesn't change that society has two roles. So, as long as we have two roles in society…we still need…a school for women (interview with Christina).

We have to unite in some way because you can't fight the structure alone. And I think the reason why we have this school is because here we have a room where women can meet in an official environment and in an institution and not home, in a kitchen. This is public. This is a public place (interview with Astrid).

Teachers at Women's Room are aware of criticism towards the universal assumptions in white feminist theory and try to defend the category of women as a political category in feminist struggle.

Relating Christina's view to Berit Larsson's (2001) critique of the binary dichotomies of women and men in gender equality discourse, I find that the opposition between men and women is strong in Christina's highlighting of two gender roles. In Astrid's words, I can identify a contrast between public places as Women's Room and private spaces as home and/or kitchen. According to her definition of inequality, if women can be relieved from the duties of housework and participate in public (and men's) spheres, they will be liberated.

Women's Room's feminist ideals resonate with early feminist discussions of a universal patriarchal system in which the gender division of labour and gender segregation are presented through binary categories such as the division between domestic/public and between women's/men's sphere. This system is used to explain women's oppression (Rosaldo and Lamphere 1974). Common experiences among women – of being socially designated women and suffering oppression as victims – are regarded as the foundation of the category of women and the basis for 'global sisterhood' (Morgan 1984).

I would like to further situate such a contrast and presumption within mainstream Swedish feminist scholarship, which emphasizes differences between women and men and regards gender relations as the most important social relations (de los Reyes 2002; Liinason 2010).[75] Furthermore, the private/public contrast also resonates with discourses of gender equality and the welfare state in Sweden, where the dual-earner family is regarded as the norm and full employment is highlighted. The entry of women into the labour market, according to Swedish family policies, means economic independence and, accordingly, is beneficial for women (Lundqvist 2008).

When I was in the field, I often heard teachers using Virginia Woolf's (1942[1929]) term 'a room of one's own' to distinguish Women's Room from the older form of women's adult educational courses which focused on teaching skills that would allow women to fulfil their traditional roles (see also Larsson 2001). For example, in her interview Elin highlights that Women's Room is not an extra room for women, but a place for women to challenge divided and traditional gender roles. This view is further articulated in the following exchanges:

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75 For more studies about the conflation of gender with the two-sex model and the primacy of gender relations in theorizing inequalities in Swedish gender studies, see de los Reyes and Mulinari 2005; Honkanen 2008: Arora-Jonsson 2009.

If all the women are supposed to learn something and to take a space, we need to have some space for it. For me, it is a strategy, taking out the men [from that space], not because he should take up all the space, but because women will force him to, actually (interview with Birgitta).

There should be a space for women only, a space without the sex roles, the gender roles. Just to have a possibility to see who I am without playing these roles. And I think we were working quite a lot in confronting the woman's role. For example, we've been discussing a lot about the woman's roles we have in a women's group…that is, how we work in a destructive way. For example, the mother taking care of everything, and no one has possibilities to grow since the mother is there all the time (interview with Christina).

In Christina's words, I can identify again the assumption that women's roles in the private sphere, for example, the role as a mother, do restrict women and thus are in need of analysis. According to the two teachers quoted above, a place for women only is meant to exclude men (and excludes men's taking space and men exerting power) and change the gender divisions of labour and gender roles that dominate outside of that space.

In my examination of Women's Room's usage of a binary understanding of gender, I identify a risk for an ethnocentric subtext. For example, feminist anthropologists challenge the notion of a powerless private sphere. Michelle Rosaldo (1980: 140) re-examines earlier discussions of a binary gender system and indicates that 'gender is not a unitary fact determined everywhere by the same sorts of concerns'. To take another example, Marilyn Strathern (1980) argues that it is problematic and ethnocentric to employ a Western dichotomy to explain classification systems in other societies since these societies don't have certain Western binary oppositions. Other scholars argue that ethnocentric usage of the binary gender system can fall into the danger of considering women in/from other societies who are family-oriented or domestic as 'traditional' or 'backward' (Mohanty 1991: 72), which can also be found in the Swedish public discourses mentioned in the previous chapter.

Moreover, there is also a problematic assumption behind the Western dichotomy that 'the more public form is necessarily the more egalitarian one' (Walby 2000: 529). There may be circumstances such as the increase of paid employment of women not leading to a reduction in gender inequality (ibid.: 528; see also hooks 2000: 383). However, the prioritization of gender relations as the core of inequalities excludes the possibilities of analyzing inequalities based in interwoven social relations. As a result, the interviewed teachers do not engage with the paradox of the subordinated integration in the labour market in Sweden and the gendered racism in the public discourses that migrant women often suffer.

Although teachers at Women's Room prioritize the category of gender in their analysis of women's oppression, different groups of women have been present since the inception of Women's Room. In the following, I would like to examine the interviewees' viewpoints on women's differences.

Why a school where migrants are half of the student population

There are more than 150 students who take courses at Women's Room every year, and these women are 'from 17 to 70 years old and come from more than 20 different countries' (school website). From the first evening course in 1979, the founders were specific about why they decided to include migrant students as half of its student population, as follows:

> Chialing: You emphasized that this school hopes that women can meet or women can speak. When you talk about the 'women', who are the women that you are thinking about?
>
> Christina: Everyone (interview with Christina).
>
> Chialing: When you tried to build Women's Room, which kind of women were you thinking about?
>
> Harriet: All.
>
> Chialing: All women?
>
> Harriet: All kinds of women.
>
> Chialing: At that time, did you think about migrant women?
>
> Harriet: Not only. We thought from the very beginning that it was important to have a mix with Swedish women, migrant women, different classes, different ages. But of course, that first course we had was for unemployed women. So, most of those women belonged to the working class and were not well-educated at all because we thought it is more important to have courses for women who have less education and who are not well-off (interview with Harriet).

In Harriet's words, differences were named in terms of ethnicity, class and age. This resonates with Larsson's description of Women's Room:

> This is 'a room of one's own', an education praxis and a folk high school, where women meet across ages, class boundaries, religions, skin colours, sexual preferences, ethnicities, disabilities, sex radicalism and gender conservatism (a list which can never be completed) (Larsson 2009: 18, my translation).

I notice that the difference presented in Larsson's description make up a list of diversities that 'can never be completed'. This viewpoint is the main reason for creating Women's Room as a platform for women to encounter differences. I will continue to discuss this later in the chapter, but here it is important first to return to an argument I made in Chapter 3 about the problem many scholars and activists confront that when difference is written in an 'etc.-clause', difference becomes fixed and independent categories. As a result, differences among women become static in a women's group, awaiting for women to encounter.

In the interviews, it was striking for me to hear the taken-for-granted answers (as if my question were redundant) that the founders thought about 'all' women. This reminds me of a description of socialist feminism in the 1980s:

> Feminism is the political theory and practice that struggles to free *all* women: women of colour, working class women, poor women, disabled women, lesbians, old women – as well as white economically privileged, heterosexual women (Smith 1982: 49, quoted in Bhavnani and Coulson 1986: 81, original emphasis).

In my opinion, such an 'inclusive' tone turns to be exclusive of different women's experiences since it presumes the knowledge evolving from Western feminist scholarship a universal solution for all women. For example, there is a contradiction between teachers' emphasis on training women into men's occupations and migrant women's working experiences in 'men's jobs' such as factory work (Knocke 1991).

On the other hand, teachers at Women's Room did address diversities amongst women:

> Parallel with this idea [to see women as a subordinated category], I have to work all the time to make visible the diversities within and between sex/gender (*kön*). So, there is a category that we women share because we are all oppressed, but in the two parallel processes going on, we are able to see not only sex/gender oppression, but also the many diversities within it. In the end we might ask, is there really a category of sex/gender? (interview with Nadia, my translation)

> All women are […] victims of discrimination in some way. OK, I am not as discriminated against as Hodan [one Somali student in A1]. She is a black woman and I am a white woman. […] Antonia Johnsson, a well-known director for a large company in Sweden, one of Sweden's richest women, of course has more power than I do. But as a woman you are always…almost always exposed to gender discrimination. It's like a structure, it's not the individual man…it's the patriarchal structure (interview with Astrid).

> So you know it's not so easy to talk about class or to talk about ethnicity because it depends. Sometimes ethnicity is most important and sometimes class is more important. What we have in common is that we are women. But this is also difficult because we are the only school in Sweden which has women in its name. So, who has a right to be a student at Women's Room? That's women (interview with Elin).

Nadia's position of deconstruction is different from other teachers' focus on the framework of two-genders presented earlier in the chapter. Nadia wishes to illuminate diversities within women (and men) as a basic form of difference.

Astrid and Elin also argue for the diversity within the category of women, such as differences in ethnicity and class. However, both of them still confirm the priority of the category of women and of gender oppression. It seems for them that different social categories are separate and can be divided into different layers or boxes that can be compared and prioritized – whether it is Astrid's notion as the common oppression that all women suffer or Elin's notion as different layers that people can have different orders of layers. Here I would like to link these two teachers' view to the problem of 'primacy', which is found in the social theory in the previous chapter, as well as in the social movements. The problem, I would like to restate again, is the

lack of intersectional perspective that makes these teachers prioritize gender relations as the most important social relations for inequality.

Encountering differences

> Chialing: When in the beginning you decided to build this school, did you think about migrant women in Sweden?
>
> Christina: […] We saw that racism was starting to come to Sweden. So, we decided that half of the women should come from abroad and half were to be born in Sweden…just to meet different cultures. Not to be afraid of other cultures (interview with Christina).

In this quotation, Christina mentioned that in the late 1970s, racism started to 'come to' Sweden and she argued for a need to 'meet different cultures, not to be afraid of other cultures'. Her words mirror a common view in Sweden that although there were racist policies toward Sami people and enforced sterilizations in Swedish history (Jeppsson 2009; Melby, Ravn and Wetterberg 2008: 15), racism was considered an ideology linked to Nazism and started to have a clear face when there were a series of racist events in Swedish society in the 1980s (Pred 2000). Mainstream discourse tends to explain the rise of racism with the challenge of 'different cultures' that new groups of migrants have brought to this country. In other words, racism was not something historical framed in Swedish society, but something that 'came' to Sweden with the immigration of groups who were different from the assumed 'homogeneous' Swedish society.

Secondly, Christina understands racism as related to emotions, especially the lack of knowledge of other cultures that creates feelings of fear.[76] The assumption is that racism comes from ignorance (see also Schmauch 2006). If people can meet different cultural backgrounds and get to know different kind of people, they will not be afraid of something different and, accordingly, will be less identified with racist values. Such an individualist understanding of the process of racism has in common with multicultural education that emphasizes on personal change in attitudes by provision of knowledge about Others and encounters of difference.

'Encountering difference' forms an important reason for Women's Room to be halfway composed of students having migrant backgrounds. For example, when Mia presented the history of the women's movement in Western countries in the introductory week for migrant students (*Grund* from the branch school and A1 at the main school), she mentioned that Women's Room merged Swedish women and migrant women since 'it is difficult for migrant women to meet Swedish women; it is also difficult for migrant women to meet different migrant groups' (040824 field notes). Similarly, Karin also stated in the interview that 'This is the place where you

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76 This corresponds to the common representation of Swedish society as having a 'mentality of farmers' who are afraid of strangers. This is something that I often heard from Swedish teachers and students at Women's Room and also from my Swedish friends.

have a possibility to meet somebody that you would never meet otherwise' (interview with Karin).

Mia and Karin's words demonstrate the existence of spatial segregation in Swedish society. Astrid further supports the assertion of the former sentence in explaining that an encounter can make women notice the diversities within the category of women:

> Here women can experience that, 'oh, we aren't…we aren't the same. There are many differences between us as women'. And I think that can enrich women's struggle (interview with Astrid).

In Astrid's words, I identify a celebration of women's difference found in some feminist theory. For example, Audre Lorde (1984: 41) describes how she 'made contact with other women while we examined the words to fit a world in which we all believed, bridging our differences'. Lorde suggests that we should not merely tolerate differences, but should recognize differences among women, identify and develop new definitions of power and new patterns of relations across differences, and devise ways to use each other's differences to enrich our visions and our joint struggles (ibid.: 121-23). I suspect Lorde's words have had a certain influence on some of the feminist teachers' thinking. Birgitta's quotation of Lorde's notion of a 'house of difference' to describe Women's Room at teachers' on-the-job training is an example of this (041205 field notes).

The celebration of women's differences can also be situated in multicultural discourses which emphasize that different cultures can enrich Swedish society. However, if difference is not further examined as to how it is constructed and how it is used to sustain power structures, the following situation occurs. Although the gesture of encountering difference and of celebrating difference seems to reject the viewpoint of difference as something alien and dangerous, it does not engage itself with the multicultural discourses that essentialize cultural difference and that do not further challenge the limited 'tolerance' of different cultures along the line of the norm in 'our' society (see also Ahmed 2000; Lewis 2005; Tuori 2007).

Regarding such a pitfall in encountering difference, Birgitta is one of the teachers at Women's Room who takes a step further:

> I think we should work much more consciously with the fact that we have people with differences here. I think we had an old model that we thought was a good idea: 'to make people meet'. It still is. But I think we should work more consciously with anti-racist education (Chialing: for?) – ourselves, the majority of us who work here. And we need to study more what is 'Swedish', who belongs, who doesn't belong, and why. You know that kind of…more political way to work. I think we have done it a little bit. But we should have much more consciousness in all the courses (interview of Birgitta).

Birgitta's words demonstrate a different position than that of other teachers – a postcolonial position of understanding difference. For her, understanding difference means not only to meet, but also to contemplate difference from an anti-racist per-

spective, especially for the group of 'us' to engage the idea of Swedishness and the boundaries of belonging.

In this section, I illustrate different understandings of oppression, the category of women and difference at Women's Room. Some of the interviewees' viewpoints, I would like to suggest, correspond to dominant ideas in Swedish feminist scholarship and gender equality discourse. In the following, I would like to focus more on the relations, similarities and differences between the Swedish feminist academy, Swedish gender equality politics and Women's Room.

The periphery and the centre

Women's Room, a feminist institution in Sweden for nearly 25 years, has received little attention from the Swedish feminist academy.[77] The teachers were quite disappointed that Swedish scholars were not interested in researching them and mentioned this in some of the interviews:[78]

> There is some kind of ignorance among academics, especially when it comes to Women's Room. […] I think there is a very wide gap between the activists that we have here as students and the academics, […] those who had a feminist perspective in their research and were involved during the 70s. They have this political background in some sense, even though they chose to be academics because it's much nicer to sit in your room and read and write and not meet people, you know (interview with Margareta).

> We started the school during the struggles of the 1960s and 70s. Those who were active in these struggles, they needed to build their career. For many years, I felt that we were still there, we would work towards the fight, but the others, they went to university, wrote their PhD theses, and received high wages. It was a time when suddenly we had no foundation that could support us in our fight (interview with Nadia).

In these exchanges the respondents create a hierarchy between academics and activists. I experience a sense of betrayal under this hierarchy – aimed at those who were once 'sisters' in the political struggle in the 1970s and chose careers with high wages, high status and nice working environments and left the activists at Women's Room behind.

There is an intention amongst the interviewees to reverse the value attached to this hierarchy. For example, Birgitta, Elin and Harriet argued in their interviews or

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77 With the exception of Larsson's work (for example, 2001, 2009) and short discussions of Women's Room in research comparing women's organizing in Canada and Sweden (Coulter and Wernersson 1999: 220; Ross and Landström 1999: 321).

78 Before I first presented my research project to the teachers at their staff meeting, the vice principal (Margareta) said, 'Thank God – although we don't really believe in God – that finally our prayer has been heard!' since they had hoped that there would be someone conducting research about the school (040608 field notes).

in class that Women's Room is a place both for production of theory and for practice. Feminists in academia are described as those who sit in their 'ivory tower', who are afraid of reality and do not meet people. These teachers seem to imply that the theory created in the ivory tower is detached from the people in reality and, accordingly, cannot be applied to reality. I also see a sense of pride about what these teachers have tried and achieved at Women's Room.

There is another implication of this betrayal, which is the betrayal of certain feminist issues. Nadia's words indicate that teachers who were left behind are those who insist on political struggles in women's rights, who resist women's subordination and who fight for women's space. Their position is a critique of the institutionalization of feminist scholarship, which is elaborated further in Elin's words, as follows:

> In Sweden the academy is located in the centre, much more so than it is in the United States. […] If you make your career in academia, you should be aware of what the centre is and what the periphery is. If you, then, as a lower-status institution are dealing with the periphery, you think this is not so good. […] It has to do with gender studies and how they, during some time, are very much directed towards the centre because they are afraid of being accused of being more political than other academics. […] This is a small country's problem more than it is in England or in the United States. […] It has very much to do with how you get the money for your research (interview with Elin).

The position of centre and periphery further determines which issues are central. In a discussion of on-the-job training at Women's Room, Birgitta mentioned that 'Nordic and Swedish gender studies focus mostly on work, but gender studies in other countries discuss sexuality, postcolonialism and postmodernism' (040913 field notes).

I would like to situate the institutionalization of feminist scholarship within the context of gender equality politics. As described in Chapter 3, Swedish gender equality is mainstreamed through the government and policies, and many feminist scholars focus their interests on gender equality politics. This focus is what Elin phrases as 'direct to the centre'. According to Linda Briskin (1999), Swedish gender equality is based on discourses on harmonious gender relations and common interests of society. Christina Bergqvist and Sue Findlay (1999: 155) provide a similar argument: 'An emphasis on common interests between women and men is often expressed in gender-neutral policies, which focus not on women's issues, women's rights, or discrimination against women, but on the family and the labour market' (see also Arora-Jonsson 2009: 217; Gustafsson, Eduards and Rönnblom 1997: 42). Women's Room's focus on women's issues and its highlighting of power relations between women and men and male dominance challenges this gender-neutral norm and the principle of common interests in society. This contributes to Women's Room's position as a peripheral institution dealing with peripheral issues that harm harmonious gender relations.

Women's Room's challenge of the Swedish gender-neutral norm may be illustrated not only in their focus of women's issues, but also in their ways of organizing people

– that is, the employment of gender as a political category and the organization as a women's group. In her research on the Swedish women's movement, Maud Eduards (2002a: 152-153) argues that organizations based in the exclusive category of women break the male-norm democratic principles that emphasize the cooperation between women and men and the way of working through party politics or parliamentary democracy. Women's Room as a feminist institution that excludes men demonstrates a gesture of rejection of social cooperation with men and the principle of complementary roles between genders. As a result, they become hostile women who will produce separatism and conflict between genders.[79]

Furthermore, Women's Room is not only a school for women only, but also an institution with many lesbian students and staff. According to research on the lesbian movement in Sweden, Women's Room, as one of the few women-only spaces in Sweden, 'has a certain attraction for lesbians, especially those with a feminist political outlook, and they are to be found among both students and teachers' (Ross and Landström 1999: 321). This corresponds to Christina's words and my observation in the field:

> Many lesbians come here because they think…or they haven't thought about saying it [their sexual orientation] before but they choose to come here to say it for the first time in their life, to do it in a secure [space]…and of course they are accepted [in this school] (030814 field notes).

A teacher mentioned to me that nearly 90% of the founders/teachers of the school were lesbians (041003 field notes). Nowadays, about half the staff/teachers at Women's Room identify themselves as lesbians.[80]

The existence of many lesbians makes Women's Room contradict the heteronormativity of Swedish gender equality politics, in which nuclear and heterosexual families (with parents and children) are in focus (Bergqvist and Findlay 1999). As a result, there are certain stereotypes of Women's Room, as teachers mentioned in their interviews:

> We have such a low status here, and mostly it's not only the ignorance among academics, it's also the ignorance among politicians and common people. We talk about this resistance in our environment and we are still seen as suspicious because we are *feminists* (interview with Margareta, original emphasis).

Such an image reminds me of a presentation of the feminist party (Feminist Initiative, shortened as FI) before the election of 2006 in Sweden. Swedish media presented FI as man-haters, and the stress within FI on LGBT issues was regarded by some domi-

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79 Although it is easy to link Women's Room's practice as a women-only school with the radical lesbians in the US in the 1970s that built the trends of separatism in theory and in political action, it is worth noting that teachers at Women's Room reject the label of separatism. Taking Christina's words as an example: 'No one who works here is a separatist. […] We are part of the society. We are not separatists' (030814 field notes).

80 When I joined the school's party for collecting donations, about 70% of those in attendance (students, teachers from Women's Room or their friends/families) were lesbians (041002 field notes).

nant Swedish feminist scholars as a threat to the image of Swedish feminists and the achievement of gender equality (Witt-Brattström 2005). Women's Room, as well as FI, was not welcomed by some Swedish feminists since both of them did not follow the gender neutral norm and heteronormativity and seem to abandon 'progressive Swedish men'.[81]

While I believe that these informants illuminate important issues about the limits of the mainstreaming of Swedish feminist academia and gender equality politics, my empirical material challenges the self representation of the school as radical and outside the mainstream gender equality discourse. For example, as stated earlier, Women's Room does not totally contradict mainstream Swedish feminist scholarship in their prioritization of gender relations in theorizing inequalities.

Women's Room's teachers' critique of Swedish society is also limited to the aspects of gender roles and gender segregation, which has been the main focus of gender equality politics for decades (Alfredsson 2005; Fürst 1999). Although the existence of lesbians at Women's Room can make the school different from the gender equality projects that do not aim at a deconstruction of the heteronormativity (Dahl 2005; Magnusson 2000), the rhetoric found in Women's Room is still in line with that of gender equality politics, rhetoric that suggests that gender equality can be achieved through a shift from private to paid work and the change of the self to do non-traditional women's work.

Although the existence of Women's Room has been a way to criticize gender equality, such a critique does not automatically lead them to disidentify the image of Sweden as a country of gender equality as a whole.[82] This is demonstrated in Nina's words in the following:

> That everyone in the society despite gender or sexuality or ethnicity or… To have your equal place. I think it is the main goal […] because I think it's…uh in one of the most equal countries in the world, you are allowed to have a school, to discriminate half of the people [i. e., the men are discriminated as they are not allowed to go to this school] and with the political goal to change the system. So, that's why…when there is equality or people are equal, we don't need this school maybe…not in this form (interview with Nina).

Similarly to Astrid and Elin's view of women's differences, Nina also enumerates equality in terms of gender, sexuality and ethnicity. Although Nina does not think Sweden is really gender equal (otherwise there would be no reason for the existence of Women's Room), she does not deconstruct the image of Sweden as 'one of the most equal countries in the world', either.

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81 In contrast with Women's Room, there are male members in FI.

82 This corresponds to a duality in the rhetoric in official Swedish gender equality politics that on the one hand are stories of continuing oppression (see, for example, Yvonne Hirdman's theory (2001) of a gender system and Hirdman's use of this concept in the official report SOU 1990: 44) and on the other hand are stories of Swedish evolution towards a country that is truly equal (Lundqvist 2010; Rönnblom 2002; Teigen 2002).

Visions and hopes of feminist teachers

According to Nina, the reason for their 'discrimination' against men is based in the school's feminist political goal of changing society. Through this political engagement, teachers at Women's Room illustrate their visions and hopes for their feminist educational praxis. This praxis is closely related to notions of critical feminist thinking and reflection.

> Teachers are very close to priests and policemen and as a teacher, you should watch out for the 'P's. You can't be a policeman, a priest or a political agitator for these women. I would work differently with adults. Maybe it's more like the midwife, making things possible to come out. […] I think my work is to constantly problematize (interview with Birgitta).

> I don't think that teachers can change people. So, my goal is at least to…hopefully *open their minds* to think from another perspective. And hopefully…maybe…maybe next year, in the next ten years, in the next 50 years, maybe their children will have changed (interview with Nina, my emphasis).

> Somehow I have at least tried to make people reflect on their situation and think from a broader perspective. I hope that I manage to *open more eyes* and feel myself contribute to a better future, although I cannot do so much (interview with Nadia, my emphasis).

I would like to root these teachers' visions in a specific pedagogy highlighted in liberal adult education, which emphasizes how important it is to 'encounter something we did not previously know', or 'encounter other cultures and other historical stages' in order to make oneself 'be open to different perspectives' (Gustavsson 1997: 33). Such pedagogy highlights education as a political act and process, which is similar to the goals of critical pedagogy and feminist pedagogy (Freire 1972, 1998; Giroux and McLaren 1986; hooks 1994). However, a similar criticism presented earlier in relation to the concept of 'encountering difference' can be applied here: that such a pedagogical practice views difference or culture as something static and waiting for 'us' to encounter.[83]

   In these teachers' words, there are different ways to make use of education to change society. In the quotations above, I identify two different practices – to 'make things possible to come out' or to 'open'. The former draws on Birgitta's metaphor of a midwife who will help other women bring out what they already have, not an act of 'opening', which can be seen as an act of imposing on the other women students. Here, I would like to concentrate on the repeated metaphor of the act to 'open' used by the last two teachers in the citations above. Accompanying the metaphor of 'opening', there is a series of contrasts of open/closed, light/dark, open-minded/narrow-minded and able to see/unable to see. As Birgitta points out, teachers are sometimes like priests, and this makes me think about the Western tradition

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83 Similar pedagogy can be found in Larsson's (2009: 180) borrowing the concept of 'go to visit' (*gå på besök*) from Hannah Arendt.

of the Enlightenment and priests' civilizing projects of 'educating' Others in colonial projects. This, in my thinking, also results in the insight that there is an assumption that feminist teachers are those who know the 'truth' that they can then pass on when they educate other women.

I think it is useful to use Bosse Bergstedt's (2005) research to rethink the feminist visions at Women's Room. Bergstedt examines the ideal of folk high schools as meeting places between people where openness and freedom are emphasized. He argues that 'There is an openness but also a limit. Knowledge and meanings are developed in an interplay between spaces defined by folk high school and individual freedom'. In his own words:

> A large number of Swedish folk high schools are the so-called [social] movement folk high schools (*rörelsefolkhögskolor*), which means that they are operated by organizations such as a political party or a Free Church Association. The debate has often raised as to what extent the movements' own ideology can be permeated in school's activities. Although it changes over time, it seems that folk high schools in most cases have managed to preserve its openness to individual freedom. The principal at Vadstena [folk high school] used the metaphor of 'mission station' when he described the school for its movement, which in this case is the Swedish Church (Bergstedt 2005: 71, my translation).

In a folk high school run by Free Church Associations, the school becomes a place where students meet churches' beliefs and activities. In a similar vein, Women's Room becomes a place where migrant students meet discourses of gender equality and the women's movement in Sweden. The paradoxes of feminist teachers' visions will be explored further from Chapters 7 to 9, where I discuss resistance and processes of othering in feminist teaching.

Conclusion

This chapter presents Women's Room in the context of structural tranformations of the welfare state and focuses its analysis on the staff's views of women's oppression, the category of women and women's differences.

Women's Room I argue in this chapter, is a feminist institution for women only, with the presence of many lesbians and with a focus on women's issues. Thus, Women's Room challenges the gender-neutral norm and heteronormativity in gender equality politics in Sweden. This places the school in a peripheral position in Swedish society as well as in Swedish feminist academia.

Nevertheless, Women's Room's emphasis on these desires – to change individuals' perspectives, to work toward the adoption of non-traditional gender roles and to further the breakdown of gender segregation and the gender division of labour – is not a

break with the rhetoric of gender equality politics in Sweden. Instead, this emphasis offers several continuities with this rhetoric.

The lack of intersectional analysis and reflection regarding gender as a category at Women's Room can be found in the teachers' prioritization of gender and their perception of migrant women as the embodiment of 'different cultures' for women to encounter. I situate the problematic use of binary system in ethnocentrism in Western feminist theory generally and in Swedish mainstream feminist scholarship and gender equality discourses specifically.

Although there are some teachers with a migrant background at Women's Room, I find that teachers identify themselves as the category of 'us' in terms of teachers, in terms of feminists and sometimes in terms of majority population although the meanings given to these locations are diverse. There are processes of class-coded disidentification with migrant women among teachers with a migrant background. In the following chapter, I will discuss the processes of disidentification with the category of 'them' among migrant students.

Doing difference

Before entering the discussions of feminist teaching in Chapters 7 through 9, it will be important to know more about the students. As argued by pedagogic theory's emphasis on the knowing of whom we are going to teach before we set up our teaching, it is important to explore what the processes of doing difference look like among the migrant students who belong to the category of 'them'. Then we can examine whether or not, and how, the teachers respond to such processes of doing difference in their feminist teaching.

According to my observations, the processes of doing difference happened constantly both within and between the categories of 'us' and 'them' at Women's Room. For example, within the category of 'us', young Swedish students differentiated themselves from Swedish feminist teachers and vice versa – in a case of some students' privately 'hunting' a presumed 'rapist', Swedish teachers criticized the narrowly-defined political correctness of some lesbian, vegan and anarchist young feminists at school while these young feminist students thought that the teachers were old-fashioned feminists and did not understand them well. Within the category of 'them', some Somali Muslim students were angry about being pointed out by Iranian students in regards to the use of perfume, and other disagreements arose over different interpretations of the Koran and over certain representations of African women in colonial histories. Sometimes, heterosexual students with migrant backgrounds could differentiate themselves from young Swedish students identified as lesbians.

In these examples, various forms of feminist thinking, original nationality, religion and sexuality were used in the processes of doing difference. These particular examples were intertwined with interpersonal conflicts or otherwise complicated, and so will be explored further in the following chapters. In this chapter, I will concentrate on three other illustrations from students with migrant backgrounds, since these examples occurred on a more general level – that is, 'other Others' pointed out by these students are those whom they do not know, and their remarks about 'them' are more general. With examples from observations and discussions in the field, this chapter aims to complicate the category of the Other and examine the processes of difference among migrant students at Women's Room.

Portraits of key informants in this chapter

Three informants are in focus in this chapter: Sron, Mina and A.N. Sron was a Kurdish woman and she was an 'old' student at Women's Room. She had lived in Sweden for seven years, and she had been in *KiU* at the branch school of Women's Room several times. She tried to find a job during the intervals when she did not attend Women's Room, but did not succeed. She was one of the more active students in *KiU* who participated in class discussions a lot.

Mina and A.N. were two of the three new students from Iran in A1 in the spring term of 2005. Mina had been in Sweden for only half a year and had finished the 'Swedish for migrants' course within three months. A.N. had been in Sweden for three and a half years. A.N., together with another new student from Iran (Lena), belonged to the Iranian Communist Party, and A.N. and Lena said in class that they were feminists (050406 field notes). Both A.N. and Lena came to Sweden as political refugees. Mina and A.N. were two of the students who could follow the academic content in A1. For example, Astrid, the social science teacher in A1, presented the history of the women's movement with a special focus on Western feminist scholars and activists (050202 field notes).[84] When students were divided into small groups to discuss the women's movement, A.N. was very active in her group and talked a lot about Alexandra Kollontay (050207 field notes). When Astrid talked about women's history and showed women's pictures from ancient times to the present, Mina demonstrated that she was acquainted with British history, could follow Astrid's teaching speed and offered many comments (050121 field notes).

These three students and I became very close and we had much informal contact. For example, Sron invited me to her house to join her in celebration of the Kurdish New Year. Mina also invited me to her house, and we talked a lot during breaks. A.N. shared her political ideals with me and presented their organization to me. These informal interactions provided opportunities for me to come to understand them and helped me to situate their comments within their life experiences.

'Class' that makes a difference

When I first met Mina, she was a new migrant in Sweden. Mina's husband had returned to his home country, Iran, and married her. After getting a one-year resident permit, Mina came to Sweden in the summer of 2004. She already had a university degree and had worked at a mobile company in her homeland. She planned to ma-

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84 Those feminists mentioned by Astrid included Olympe de Gouges, Mary Wollstonecraft, Fredrike Bremer, John Stuart Mill, Fredrik Engels, E. Pankhurst, Clara Zetkin, Emma Goldman, Ellen Key, Alexandra Kollontay, Alva and Gunnar Mydral, Margaret Mead, Virginia Woolf, Elin Wägner, Simone de Beauvoir, Eva Moberg and Betty Friedan.

jor in another subject at university in Sweden. Mina's Swedish was better than that of many other students in the class, and she said this was so 'because my husband practices Swedish with me every evening since his Swedish is so fluent that no one can distinguish it from that of a native speaker when he talks on the phone'. Mina's husband came to Sweden during the Gulf War in the 1990s, earning a PhD and Swedish citizenship. Today he works in a big car company (050120 field notes).

When Mina invited me to her home, she mentioned that the residents in their apartments were Swedes and that only she and her husband were migrants. She said 'My husband would not allow me to go to Mellanby since it is too dangerous there'. She further mentioned that once a neighbour had questioned her about living in an area where there are mostly Swedes, whereupon she had answered, 'That's because we are rich; we can afford to buy an apartment in the city centre!' Mina told me also that her husband was the only one with a migrant background amongst those with top positions in the company. When I asked Mina about her future plans, she answered as follows:

> I plan to finish the Swedish language course as soon as possible so that I can enter university. [...] I cannot understand why so many migrants study just because they want to get study allowances. I wouldn't want to be like those migrant women in Mellanby, who bear a lot of children and do nothing all day long. Because of their children, they just depend on the social welfare system without having to make a living. I think these people should become responsible for themselves. Right now, they don't work hard enough to get themselves out of their position in the bottom of society (050222 field notes).

In Mina's illustrations, she stresses that her motives for education are different from other migrants who 'just want to get study allowance'. This corresponds to one of the policy changes that the right-wing government put into practice after the election of 2006. The new policy set a maximum of the years of study allowance for migrants who study the Swedish language since the logic behind this policy is the presumption of 'lazy' migrants who do not really intend to study Swedish. In such a logic, migrants are depicted as 'cheaters' and 'dependents' of the welfare state (see also Razack 2008).

Furthermore, Mina stresses her husband's perfect use of the Swedish language. This emphasis on his Swedish language, I suggest, can be situated in a broader discursive context wherein the 'problem' of unemployment of migrants is usually redefined as a language problem (Kamali 2009; Knocke 1996, 2000; Osman 1999). Mina's husband, according to Mina, speaks Swedish in a way 'that cannot be distinguished from that of a native speaker'. This separates her husband from 'other migrants', who 'fail' to learn perfect Swedish and who accordingly 'fail' to integrate into society. Although Mina does not speak Swedish as well as her husband does, and does not have a job, her role as the wife of a successful migrant enables her to identify with her husband's social position.

The white working class women studied by Beverley Skeggs (1997) in *Formation of Class and Gender* dissociate themselves from the representations of their position-

ing as working class women in British society. They also make efforts not to be recognized as belonging to the working class since the working class has been demonized, pathologized and held responsible for social problems in Britain. Similarly, migrants in Sweden have been described as a burden on the welfare state and a source of social problems. Aware of this description, Mina refuses to be one of 'them' – she makes use of a stereotype of migrant women with lots of children who are dependent on social benefits in order to distance herself from those migrants who live in Mellanby and who are unemployed. Mina has economic and social capital through her class position. However, this class position cannot prevent Mina from being discriminated against because of her ethnic background. In order to resist such discrimination, Mina employs class – wealth and the ability to buy an apartment in the city centre – to distinguish her family from other migrant families. In the process, she helps maintain boundaries as her 'resistance' to typification as a migrant, since such a resistance is based on the acceptance of the spatial segregation of migrants in big cities and of the broader discourse in which migrants in particular suburbs are viewed as a social and economic burden on society.

I would argue that class is gendered and racialized through the image of the lower-class migrant women – that belonging to a lower-class, for migrant women, is not only a factor of being poorer, but is also related to whether or not they have children, how many children they have and their relations with the welfare state. Furthermore, the way that class is racialized can be seen in the fact that class is not a single category that differentiates Mina from other migrants who belong to a lower social class nor one that makes her similar to Swedish people with the same class position. As I mentioned above, Mina describes herself as 'rich enough to live in the city centre', and as 'making efforts to enter university', in contrast to those in Mellanby who don't make efforts to change their social position. If Mina were Swedish, she would not stress these characteristics since these are linked to the description of migrants in Sweden. Class, I would argue, is gendered and racialized in a specific way in the Swedish context.

Jeanette Hägerström's (2004) research demonstrates how gender, race/ethnicity and class are interrelated and how divisions of us/them are mutable. Just as some of Hägerström's interviewees (students with migrant backgrounds) positioned themselves in the process of 'becoming like Swedes – the "us-group"' and, accordingly, differentiated themselves from other Others – the 'real them' – Mina's words show a similar process of differentiating herself from other Others. Mina employs her husband's economic position, her husband's perfect use of Swedish, their dwelling in the city centre and her ambition to go to university to position herself and her husband as 'better' than 'other' unemployed migrants who live in Mellanby or who bear a lot of children. Nevertheless, Mina's case shows that the mutability of the division of us/them is not as fluid as one might wish – rather, it is constrained within broader constructions of us/them. Instead of disrupting the painful dichotomies of us/them, the processes of othering within the category of 'them' sustain and reinforces the ideologies of such a construction.

In Mina's case, class intersected with gender and race is what she uses to do difference. In the following section, I will demonstrate two other examples to show how other categories, such as religion, can be used to differentiate oneself from other Others.

Not suitable for Swedish society?

Once after class at the branch school of Women's Room, I sat on the same tram with Sron. Sron saw two women with veils that covered their whole faces except for the eyes, and she turned to me, saying, 'If they want to veil their whole faces, why don't they go back to their own country? It doesn't suit Swedish society'. She also mentioned that she was different: she didn't have to wear the veil and she could swim in the swimming pool where women and men mixed (040917 field notes).

Sron repeated her viewpoint in one of the discussions in class. When the teacher in *KiU*, Nina, introduced a new project, suggesting that Women's Room share the same building with other folk high schools, she asked the students whether they thought it was acceptable to encounter men in some areas in the new building. Some students preferred to be in a single-sex area, while others answered that they didn't like the idea that women and men were in separate places, such as men in the living room and women in the kitchen. After a while, the discussion shifted to inequality between women and men. Sron then said that she couldn't understand why some women covered their faces with the veil except for the eyes. She also repeated the argument she had made in the tram, that as these women did not suit Swedish society, they should go back to their own country (041210 field notes).

Similar attitudes towards migrants with the veil also materialize in A.N.'s words. A.N. participated in a protest against the forced veil in the city centre on International Women's Day in 2005. During the protest, another classmate, Lena, and a friend, were beaten by Muslim men. I asked A.N. about this incident.

> A.N.: We were only protesting the forced veil for children under 16…There is a school near my place and children read the Koran there. Why? If they want to read the Koran, they can go back to their homeland. Why do they have to come here? Why? They are only small children, but they have to wear the veil. I feel sad about them. They are children and they like to play. Why should they have the veil? I protested against this.
>
> Chialing: So you think that people shouldn't force them to veil.
>
> A.N.: Yes, to veil or to read the Koran or say to girls, 'You can't play with boys!' Why not? They want to be like their Swedish friends. When they become adults, they can decide for themselves. Then they can believe in a certain religion.
>
> Chialing: Why were there some men who hit some of you?
>
> A.N.: They said, 'You should not discuss the veil'. I replied, 'Here people are free to discuss everything. I can discuss with you, but I am not allowed to hit you. We just

discuss. Why can't you discuss? You do not discuss; you only hit people. I am a human being, and you shouldn't use violence against me'. But they didn't understand since their religion blinds them.

Chailing: So this happened on the 8th of March. On another day you organized a protest against this violence. Is this correct?

A.N.: Yes. It was on the 8th of March and I was at the shopping centre. There was violence. Why did this happen in Sweden? This is a democratic country. Why? (interview with A.N., my translation)

In these two illustrations, the veil is used to identify the other Other that does not suit Swedish society. I would firstly link these women's attitudes towards the veil with their life experiences. In Sron's case, I assume that Sron's resentment of the veil can be rooted in the drastic political impacts of the Islamic government on her life: Sron's husband fought for democracy in their homeland and was granted humanitarian asylum status[85] in Sweden. Before Sron could follow him to Sweden, she was harassed by the Iranian police and was held in jail several times, since the government intended to reach her husband by torturing her. She experiences democracy in Sweden as different from the dictatorial government in her homeland and appreciates it. To Sron, women with veils covering the whole face resemble the dictatorial government that oppressed her family, put her in prison and also caused the death of her one-year-old son. In A.N.'s case, I relate her viewpoint about the forced veil to her atheistic outlook. For her, being forced to wear the veil represents the Islamic government that restrains people's freedom of religion.

Secondly, in Sron and A.N.'s viewpoint, as I interpret it, the veiling of women represents gender segregation and gender inequality. I locate their viewpoints in a specific political context in Iran wherein 'constraints on female liberty and action were a key aspect of the Islamic governance' (Farahani 2007: 135). The forced veil, combined with several political policies, defines the roles of women in narrow and constricted ways. These are forces that restrict the freedom of women, as can be seen in the following exchange:

A.N.: If I go back to my homeland, I will become sick…When I was in my homeland, they said, 'You are a woman, so you can't do this and that. You are not allowed to ride a bike, not to swim with your father'. I don't want to go back to my homeland. I want to stay here as I like it very much.

[…]

Chailing: Do women in your homeland wear a veil? What do you think about the veil?

A.N.: I think it is not good. It means that women are subordinated since men don't have to veil themselves. Why should women wear a veil?[86] I don't like the veil. I don't

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85 Under Swedish asylum policy, there are two different types of asylum: political asylum and humanitarian asylum. If one gets 'humanitarian asylum', one cannot leave Sweden when one wishes to do so (interview with Sron and Sron's family).

86 To this I wish to add that Muslim men are also required to control their behaviour to preserve modesty. In the words of Fataneh Farahani (2007: 130), 'women and men are restricted and shaped by existing cultural values and these codes and requirements are highly gender related' (see also El

like being forced to do something by someone else. I am free and I should have the same rights as other people (interview with A.N., my translation).

When living in Iran, women have no choice in regards to veiling practices since 'wearing the veil has been imposed, withdrawn, and re-imposed within a single lifetime' (Milani 1992: 19). This complicated history, I suggest, leads to the fact that many Iranian women prefer to freely choose their clothing styles when living in Sweden.

Their way of doing difference, I further claim, is embedded in a broader context of Swedish gender equality discourse. In Sron's case, she differentiates herself by emphasizing that she can do some things that are not allowed for these women. By pointing out 'other' Muslim women with veils covering the whole face, Sron shows that she is 'freer' than 'them'. This contrast wherein Sron is presented as 'liberated' and other Muslim women as 'subordinated' finds a parallel in some Western feminist discourses that regard 'oppressed Third-World women' as religious and traditional (Mohanty 1991; Narayan 1997). Sron employs the same thinking as these discourses to judge 'other' women and places herself closer to 'modern' Western women.

In A.N.'s interview, she questions why girls are forbidden to play with boys since these girls 'want to be the same as their Swedish friends'. The restrictions on migrant girls are linked to their 'traditional' culture and the ways in which their Swedish friends live are depicted as the norm and something desirable for migrant girls. This corresponds to general presumptions in Swedish/European discourse that children (especially young girls) with migrant backgrounds must face a conflict between their 'traditional' culture/religion and Swedish culture of 'freedom' and 'gender equality'. In many European countries, there is also an 'enforced emancipation of young girls with migrant backgrounds, if necessary against their expressed will, from gender discrimination and from patriarchal control' (Casanova 2004: 10).

In these two examples, I see Sron and A.N.'s words as a means of establishing distance from other religious migrants. The women with the veil that covers the whole face and the forced veil become the extreme Other in Swedish society, bringing with them the notion of oppression of women and children. In the following section, I will explore how a specific religion – Islam – and the practice of veiling are linked with integration discourse and secularism, in the Swedish context specifically and in the European context generally.

Guindi 2005; Najmabadi 2006). A.N.'s argument of 'imbalance between genders', where women have to do something while men don't have to do so – is commonly used in problematizing the life world in feminist teaching at Women's Room (see also Nina's discussion on polygyny in Chapter 8). However, such an argument cannot grasp the gendered regulations of both women and men in Islam.

Religious Others in Sweden and in Europe

The argument of 'going back to one's homeland' is one argument used by the far right against migrants in Sweden. Surprisingly, in Sron and A.N.'s examples, such an argument appears in migrants' words towards 'other' migrants as well. I would like to place it within the broader contexts of how a specific group of migrants – or, to speak more clearly, Muslims – are regarded in certain Swedish/European political rhetoric.

As one aspect of the political discourse in Sweden, it has been suggested that the Swedish government should consider whether or not an migrant/asylum seeker's culture suits the culture of Swedish society: 'It is neither amoral nor against the law to…try to judge whether he or she comes from a country or culture whose customs and usages are so extremely different that a reasonable harmonious adaptation is difficult or impossible' (quoted in Ålund and Schierup 1991:9). Similarly, when Gail Lewis (2005: 546) examines policies of exclusion in Britain, she argues that 'in the contemporary British (and indeed European Union) context discursively preserved for migrants whose difference is calibrated on the basis of skin colour, religion and/or certain habits of being contained in a narrow and static notion of culture and become the index of the limits to assimilation'. In Sweden and Britain, culture and other characteristics that can mark migrants' difference are employed as symbolic 'border guards' (Armstrong 1982, quoted in Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992: 33) to construct the division between 'us' and 'them':

> These border guards can identify people as members or non-members of a specific collectivity. They are closely linked to specific cultural codes of style of dress and behaviour as well as to more elaborate bodies of customs, literary and artistic modes of production, and, of course, language (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992: 33).

As shown in Mina's case, language is one of the border guards that help define an imagined community between 'us' and 'them'. The acquisition of the Swedish language becomes an important criterion for Mina to show that her family is getting nearer to the category of 'us'. In Sron and A.N.'s case, their pointing out the 'real them' relies upon the construction of a style of dress – the veil – as one of the marks of 'cultural distance' (Knocke 1991: 374). As Meyda Yeğenoğlu's analysis (1998) shows, the body of the Oriental woman, which is considered constrained in traditional religion and thus needs to be unveiled and modernized, confirms the Western subject as a person with knowledge and reason.

Furthermore, the women in veils are usually represented as 'victims' of their traditional patriarchal families and societies (Lewis and Mills 2003: 8). I would like to add further that viewpoints of veiled Muslim women as victims must be situated in the wider social and historical contexts of Islamophobia in Western (especially European) countries (Marranci 2001),[87] contexts themselves embedded in the

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87 Islamophobia in Europe is embedded in the situation wherein migrants in Europe are almost synonymous with Muslims, and that the disadvantaged position of migrants is consonant with their economic and social position (Casanova 2004: 6).

context of the 'War on Terror'. As Sherene H. Razack (2005, 2008) demonstrates, the violence Muslim women endure becomes a marker of Muslim men's barbarism, and it provides ideological justifications for the 'War on Terror'. In a similar vein, a Swedish official report from the Centre for Asymmetric Hate and Terrorism Studies (Ranstorp and dos Santos 2009: 15) employs the veil of women in Rosengård, a particular suburb in Malmö (the third biggest city in Sweden) in which 60% of the inhabitants have migrant backgrounds, as a sign of the increase of 'radicalization', fundamentalism and traditionalism in that area. I would like to stress that the way gender equality is used to define the Other is not only connected with the construction of Swedishness (with gender equality) and the Other (with a barbaric gender system), but also in broader colonial legacies and imperial discourse.

The image of Sweden is regarded by both Sron and A.N. as 'secular', even though many schools use the premises of churches to hold school-ending ceremonies and religious holidays are celebrated as national holidays.[88] Many people in Sweden baptize their babies. This practice is not as strongly criticized as the veiling of children, nor is it seen as an imposing of religion on children. This corresponds to Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis's (1992: 35) observation in Britain that 'the long struggles for the recognition of religious pluralism did not necessarily secularize the national culture. […] Biblical myths and narrations, Christian holidays as national holidays, musical and other cultural heritage, as well as an ethical code which is broadly based on the Christian code, have continued to survive and be reproduced'.

I would suggest that such phenomena are embedded in the development of the secularization of Europe. According to José Casanova (2004), the secularization of Europe includes both religious individualization and Christian cultural identities. The former is characterized by Grace Davie (2000) as 'believing without belonging', while the latter is characterized by Danièle Hervieu-Léger (2003/2004) as 'belonging without believing' (quoted in Casanova 2004: 1). Therefore, to be religious or not is considered a personal choice, and the celebration of religious holidays cannot harm the image of the secularist self as a member of progressive, modern and enlightened European countries since it is only related to 'Christian culture', not religion.

Contrary to this, Muslim migrants in Europe organize collective identities and their public representations 'become a source of anxiety not only because of their religious otherness as a non-Christian and non-European religion, but more importantly because of their religiousness itself as the other of European secularity' (Casanova 2004: 7). Therefore, Islam becomes the Other of Western secular modernity, a view that corresponds to Oriental writings and the colonial/missionary agenda that contrast the 'inherent superiority of Western civilization' with 'the inherent backwardness of Muslim societies' (El Guindi 2005: 63).

The contrast between 'secular' and 'religious' is value-laden, and it implies that not only religious countries but also religious migrants must be secularized and modernized. For example, the religious Muslims in the protest are described by A.N. as

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88 There were debates in Sweden about the religious content in end-of-term celebrations in multicultural education (Roth 1999: 15-16).

lacking the capabilities needed in a democratic society. A.N. roots the problem of this inability to discuss religious practices in 'their religion that blinds them'.

I would like to relate this description firstly to the educational discourse on democracy in Sweden described in Chapter 4, where I suggested that the use of the term 'lack' demonstrates a contrast by which the West has 'values' and the Other has 'cultures' (Razack 2008). This would suggest that Sron and A.N.'s interpretation of religious migrants corresponds to the political rhetorics of Europe: 'We welcome each and all immigrants irrespective of race or religion as long as they are willing to respect and accept our modern liberal secular European norms' (Casanova 2004: 9). If religious migrants fail to change themselves, they are regarded as a cultural Other that 'is constructed as an alien and as such as a potential "enemy" who threatens "our" national-cum-cultural integrity and uniqueness' (Yuval-Davis 2001: 64). In the Swedish context, the country has been represented as one with a homogeneous culture and migrants/asylum seekers as people with 'different cultures' since the 1980s – that is, those who are mainly Muslims from African or Middle Eastern countries are described as a problem for integration and assimilation. This demonstrates the limits of accepting 'cultural diversity' and that the acceptability can only be achieved by the putative social norms in that country (see also Lewis' (2005) analysis of Britain).

In the context of Islam as 'othered' religion, the practice and the meaning of the veil can be highly politicized. In Sweden, meanings given to the veil began to be politicized about ten years ago. In one example, two students wore the veil that covered the whole face to school and this raised huge discussions in Swedish society. Sron and A.N., however, seem to fail to grasp the various meanings given to the veil in different historical contexts and countries and maintain their single discourse on the veil in the Swedish context. The Swedish teacher in A1 (Nadia) was also aware of many Iranian students' inability to acknowledge various meanings of the veil of many Iranian students, and she said the following:[89]

> Nadia: The Iranian Communist Party has been against the veil and regards the veil as a representation of the oppression of women. However, this seemed to be the first time that they burned the veil in a demonstration.[90] There are young women's groups in Sweden that fight for their freedom to wear the veil. I think Lena cannot understand this.
>
> Chialing: I guess it is because they are against the forced veil in Iran, but the meaning and the practice of the veil in Sweden is not the same as in the context of Iran.
>
> Nadia: But it seems that Lena still lives in Iran. She does not recognize that the social context in Sweden is a different one (050314 field notes).

As Nadia states, the social and political context in Iran and Sweden differ. To this I wish to add that the histories of the development of Islam in different countries differ

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89 The exchange was from a dialogue when I discussed with Nadia about the speech Lena gave on special activities for the whole school on International Women's Day at Women's Room. In the speech, Lena, similarly with A.N., strongly criticized the forced veil.
90 Nadia guessed this might be the reason behind the strong reaction of the Muslim men.

themselves and also that issues of the veil can be discussed from various perspectives. Feminist scholars argue that women are often constructed as the cultural symbols of collectivities and of their boundaries, as 'carriers of tradition' and as intergenerational reproducers of traditional cultures:

> Women have been playing crucial roles in the reproduction of national collectivities and states – and not only in the biological sense, by giving birth to the future members of the collectivity. The construction of the individual's subjectivity – in which collective myths, symbols and identifications are embedded in an individual Weltanschauung – is founded and formed primarily during the early part of childhood (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992: 28; see also Yuval-Davis and Anthias 1989; Yuval-Davis 1997: 61-67).

Iranian history illustrates how women are regarded by different regimes as either symbols of a modernizing country or as bearers of tradition. Nevertheless, I would further argue that even when women are constructed as bearers of tradition, this construction is negotiated differently by women. An example of a study of the revivalism movement in Malaysia can be useful here. Aihwa Ong (1995), who carried out that study, argues that Malaysian women negotiated differently within conflicting discourses of sexuality, nationalism, modernity and religion. Their negotiations cannot be classified into simple resistance to or collusion with these discourses. In some cases, women choose to veil strategically. In Egypt, college women who pioneered the Islamic movement in the 1970s wore the veil to indicate the knowledge of Islamic sources and the leadership among women. Their adoption of the veil represented an affirmation of an Islamic identity and a rejection of Western materialism, consumerism and commercialism. 'The Islamizing of life, politics and resistance is directly related to the colonial/imperial assault on Arabs and Muslims' (El Guindi 2005: 55). In the French context, where the ban of religious symbols in schools is enforced, the veil can become a politicized gesture against the assimilation policy and the implied nationalism behind the ban. As a result, 'the meanings of dress acts and spatial behaviours are never singular' (Lewis and Mills 2003: 18).

However, in the Swedish context, there seems to be only one real discourse on the veil, one in which the different meanings of veiling are seldom discussed in mainstream discourses. These discursive silences, I would argue, contribute to the failure of A.N. to grasp the various meanings of the veil and to the fact that clothing becomes the constructed difference that helps identify the 'real them' in Sweden (see also Hägerström 2004: 135).

Through the examples of Sron and A.N., I wish to show that a certain religion – Islam – is crucial in constructing boundaries. By defining the 'real them', Sron, her family and A.N. are able to define themselves as 'better asylum seekers' who 'suit Swedish society' and therefore are 'worthy of' staying in the country. Nevertheless, as Lewis (2005: 546) argues, 'the assimilated (and assimilable) has the potential to occupy the position of cultural symbol of the nation (and its enduring qualities of tolerance), but only to the extent that their patterns of life accord with the normative constructions of what national culture, understood as way of life, is'. Sron and A.N.'s ways of differentiating the real Other sustains the normative national culture

that distinguishes the boundaries of those who belong to the nation and those who do not.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have conducted a complicated analysis on three levels – to situate the doing of difference in these students' life experiences, in the political context of their homeland and in the discourses in Sweden.[91] As shown in the examples, the categories of class and religion used to disidentify other Others intersect with other categories in a specific way in Sweden. Mina's case demonstrates how class is gendered and racialized in a specific way in the Swedish context; Sron and A.N.'s cases indicate how religion is gendered and racialized in the Swedish/European context where Islam and the practice of veiling are regarded as the religious Other that harms the Western values of democracy, secularism and gender equality. As a result, gendered racism is reified with the image of migrant women with a lot of children who 'eat up' the welfare state and/or Muslim women with Burkas who embody extreme difference and who are perceived as victims of the patriarchal culture of Others.

Although these women try to differentiate themselves from other Others and make efforts to be like the more prestigious 'us', they are constrained through the existing discourses and their social position as migrants. It is paradoxical that although the categories of 'us' and 'them' are not dichotomous and the boundary between the two categories is changeable, difference made by these women only recreates more 'us' and 'them' distinctions between the two poles and sustains the ideology of the construction of the Other. I would like to link their limited resistance to the survival strategy of the oppressed. W. E. B. Du Bois (2007[1903]: 45) illustrates the 'double consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the type of world that looks on in amused contempt and pity'. In the three examples, these migrant students seem to look at migrants through the eyes of mainstream Swedish society and produce racism 'as a price of surviving, and of resisting, racism' (Winant 1995: 503). Although there is internalized oppression and these women employ class and religion to distinguish the Other, I would further suggest that such a kind of racism among blacks is different from racism among majorities in mainstream society. To quote Anthias and Yuval-Davis's words:

> Racism is embedded in power relations of different types. From this point of view, although Blacks may be racist in terms of believing that some groups are endemically inferior, they do not usually possess the power to effect change. On this basis, it does not seem reasonable to consider their racism as the same type as that exercised by dominant groups over subordinate ones (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992: 16).

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91 In Mina's case, the second level of the political context in her homeland is not relevant.

Although postcolonial theory provides a useful analysis of the construction of us/them, it also reinforce the polarity of 'us' and 'them'. Contrary to this, responses from my research show a process of othering within 'them'. Similarly, at Women's Room, the 'us' (the teachers) is not homogeneous and these teachers resist the division of 'us' and 'them'. Nevertheless, since the representation of 'us'/Swedishness is not stigmatized, there is a different process of distancing oneself from the Swedishness in the category of 'us'. I will discuss the disidentification of the Swedishness and the fractured 'us' in the following chapter.

Resistance to definitions

> We [teachers at Women's Room] are critical towards our society.
> We don't easily separate the 'us' from the Other (interview with Elin).

The previous chapter discusses how migrant women respond to, resist and/or re-produce the category of the Other. This chapter will shift the focus to teachers at Women's Room and examine their reactions towards the boundary between 'us' and 'them'.

As analysis in the previous chapters shows, language, religion and culture are important markers to define difference. This chapter will continue to focus on these dimensions and inquire the following questions: How do teachers at Women's Room address issues concerning language, religion and culture that position migrants as 'problems' and Others in Swedish society? What does the process of disidentifica-tion of the category of 'us' look like? What is the relationship between the fractured 'us' and the mainstream discourse of drawing difference? By examining teachers' statements in interviews and their actions in classrooms, this chapter is intended to complicate the subject positions of 'us' and to investigate the possibilities of anti-rac-ist education.

Portraits of key informants in this chapter

The teachers in focus in Chapters 7 through 9 are Astrid and Nadia in A1, Karin and Nina in the branch school and Birgitta in FS.

Astrid and Nadia were teachers with a migrant background – Astrid's father was a migrant and Nadia followed her family to Sweden when she was a teenager. Astrid taught social science in A1 and her class is the one I observed the most in the field (see Appendix II). Nadia was on leave in the fall term of 2004, and I started to observe her 'Swedish as a second language' class in A1 in the spring term of 2005. According to my observations, both of them often raised issues concerning ethnic discrimination and racism in class.

Karin and Nina were social science teachers for the basic social science class in the branch school. Nina taught *KiU* only for the fall term in 2004, and the topic that I observed in her class was a general introduction of Swedish law regarding family and consumption.[92] Karin taught *Grund* for both terms, and she was also the leading teacher at the branch school. The topics in her class included the school system, the political system and consumption.

Birgitta was the class teacher of FS and she was one of the teachers at Women's Room who was well versed in feminist theory. She had experiences of teaching at the branch school with migrant students, but not during the time I was at Women's Room.

In this chapter, I will focus on these teachers' interviews and teaching practices related to migrants and constructions of us/them.

Faulty definitions of migrants' 'problems'

Language – whose problem?

As mentioned in previous chapters, many of the difficulties that migrants face in Swedish society are often explained through 'the language problem' (see also Rahimi 2003). Contrary to the hegemonic discourse, the teachers at Women's Room understand the difficulties migrants face in different ways. Firstly, some teachers point out the growing evidence of the structural discrimination migrants suffer in Swedish society. For example, Astrid describes how having a 'wrong' family name can cause migrant unemployment in Swedish society:

> Chialing: According to your observations, what do you think about racism and sexism in Swedish society? Before I came here, everybody said that Sweden was a country emphasising human rights and equality between men and women.
>
> Astrid: But that's only on the surface, right? You know if your name is Mohamed or Hassan or Fadime, you don't get the kind of job that you want. I think we have a very most well-educated group in Sweden who work as taxi drivers and cleaners. They are physicians, researchers and so on and come from other countries, but they don't get that kind of job in Sweden. Here they become cleaners because they have the wrong colour of skin or the wrong names. I think Sweden, Denmark and Holland are the worst examples of racism in the European community. Yes, it is a shame (interview with Astrid).

Astrid's subject position, I would suggest, is rooted in a process of disidentification with the nation. She distances herself from the image of Sweden as a country with equality and human rights and criticizes Swedishness for its complicity with structural racism in Swedish society.

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92 I missed many of Nina's classes because of illness on my part.

Secondly, some Swedish teachers criticize the demand on migrants to learn perfect Swedish. When I discussed issues related to students' performance in A1 with Nadia, she responded as follows:

> According to my experience, many Kurdish students have difficulties in learning Swedish. The Kurdish people are forced to speak Arabic, but the Arabic teachers in Kurdish schools are often bad since no one wants to teach Arabic there. As a result, both their Kurdish and Arabic are not good and they lack a language structure. This makes it difficult for these students to learn another language. Nevertheless, unlike in the UK, where English with an Indian accent is accepted, speaking Swedish well is required in Sweden and Swedish people cannot tolerate 'bad Swedish'. This puts Kurdish people in a disadvantaged position in Swedish society (050314 field notes).

Moreover, when I discussed with Nadia the communication problems in A2 and A3, Nadia stressed, 'The Swedish students in A2 and A3 have never been trained to listen to different types of Swedish. It has only been recently that people with various accents can be newscasters on TV news programs. I think Swedish people need to be trained to listen to different types of Swedish' (050314 field notes). In a conference of adult education for women in Taiwan in 2007, Nadia used a research study from Canadian schools to explain that if all subjects could be taught in both students' first and second language at school, it could help students with migrant backgrounds grasp both languages well. Unfortunately, in Sweden only a few Finnish schools provide enough first language instruction at school. She continued by saying that the importance of the first language is neglected and teachers of the first language at most schools get smaller salaries (070331, 070407 field notes).

These narratives illuminate Nadia's critiques of Swedishness by her shifting the focus of problems from the Other to 'us'. Nadia bases her arguments within her professional subject of linguistics and broadens the understandings of migrants' language learning processes within students' specific political and historical backgrounds. The logic behind the language policy in Sweden is that language is a central component in explaining the failure of migrants within the labour market. Nadia disagrees with such a policy by placing the responsibility of learning on the 'Swedes' and by calling for a structural change of the language instruction at school.

Although freedom of choice is stated clearly as one of the three immigration policy objectives in 1975, an official report on Rosengård in Malmö (Ranstorp and dos Santos 2009: 20) argues that mother tongue teachers risk to be used to spread values that are not the same as those of the municipality and, accordingly, contribute to an increase of the radicalization of Islamic organizations. Although municipalities have had the responsibility to provide mother tongue instruction in schools since 1977, some public after-school centres run by Malmö municipality prohibit teenagers from speaking their mother tongues in the name of integration (Ibarra and Aracena 2009: 14). In the classroom, the rule of 'one place, one language' positions Swedish as the hegemonic language in the school (Evaldsson 2000). In a similar vein, xenophobic populist parties demand 'language ability in Swedish' of migrants and ask for the abolishment of home language education programs (Kamali 2009: 148). Debates on

the topic of mother tongues demonstrate clearly how the Swedish language is constructed as the symbol of Swedishness, while the first language at home other than Swedish is regarded as something that hinders integration and even as something suspicious and with a possible linkage to terrorism. It is such a context that makes Nadia's emphasis on the importance of the first language essential.

When I was in the field, I regarded the 'failure' of integration among different ethnic/language groups at Women's Room as a problem and questioned whether Women's Room had reached its goal of creating a platform where all women could meet. Birgitta did not agree with me and had a different understanding of this problem. In her own words:

> If you have a group, you can sometimes [let the migrant students]…discuss this subject in their own language. This can be something they are not familiar with, for example, philosophy…because people have words/worlds with them, words and worlds when they come here. […] I think it is important that people are able to be persons and not just those who lack Swedish language skills or knowledge about Sweden or whatever. So when the others see that they [migrants] lack Swedish language skills, and they don't understand [these migrants], I can still see them as persons who are active […] especially when they are talking in their own language (interview with Birgitta).

In this quotation, Birgitta highlights the rich vocabulary and the worldview that migrants bring with them and the importance of creating spaces in the educational process where migrant students can become human beings, not Others who lack Swedish language skills or knowledge. Similar viewpoints can also be identified in Nadia's illustration of collaborative teaching with the science teacher, Linnéa, when they held gender equity education seminars for teachers in Taiwan. Nadia emphasized the importance of leaving space for students to use their own language in class discussions since sometimes migrant students need the help of the vocabulary of their mother tongue to express their ideas (070408 field notes). Their anti-racist arguments emphasize migrant women's agency and language skills and challenge my previous understanding of the 'failure' of integration of different women at Women's Room.

These illustrations above highlight the varied ways through which teachers at Women's Room question the hegemonic Swedih discourse of migrants as a problem regarding language, wherein the migrants are positioned outside the nation/'us'. Their re-directing of problems towards 'us', I interpret, is an act of re-examination of whiteness/Swedishness. As Vron Ware (1992: 137) suggests, 'If feminism is to fight for the legitimacy of its critical perspectives, then it must be able to intervene in debates about contemporary politics with a historically informed and "anti-racist" perspective'. These feminist teachers, I would like to argue, interject the role of Swedish language in the construction of boundaries of belonging.

In the following section, I will illustrate how these teachers challenge the hegemonic discourse regarding migrants' culture.

Putting 'our' religion in focus

As shown in the previous chapter, religion plays an important role in the processes of defining the 'real Other'. Regarding religion, Nadia mentioned how she introduced the topic of religion in A1 with an examination of 'our' religion:

> When they [students] read about Christianity, they discovered that Christianity is not one religion, but had thousands of different ways to believe in God. Then when we came to Islam, they all knew what it was about. So they were suddenly seeing it from another perspective. They could see Islam in a different way. […] So I think it is very important to strengthen the idea that Islam is not a terrible religion in comparison to Christianity, or that only Christians have become modern humans. […] I think it is also important to highlight [that] Christianity is not only oppression, that there are some positive things, for example the belief that people should not kill. […] In Islam, there are positive forces, such as we live after [this life]. And [it is important] to discover that our religions are actually changing over time and that this can be shown in Christianity. Although, perhaps the really religious Muslims do not believe this (interview with Nadia, my translation).

The main teaching goal of the topic of religion, according to Nadia, is to make migrant students understand that religions are interpreted differently and change over time. According to the dominant discourses, 'the real religious Muslims' are those who fail to accept the idea of different interpretations of religions, and the above quotation indicates that Nadia regards them as the 'problem' in educational settings. However, Nadia's interview shows how she avoids singling out Islam by beginning with an examination of 'our' religion – Christianity – and by deconstruction of the contrast between 'them' with 'the terrible religion' and 'us' with 'modern secularism'. Nadia also stressed the positive force of religion, which is something not presented in some migrants' representations of religion in the previous chapter specifically and in those of Western discourses generally.

The practice of veiling described in the previous chapter is viewed as a symbol of gender subordination and represents the Otherness of Islam. When I was in the field, the veil was not discussed in class (except Sron's mentioning of the veiling of the whole face in Nina's class, presented in the previous chapter). The questions of how to address issues of the veil or 'honour killing' with students were raised in the interview with teachers.

> Chialing: Can you give me more examples of how you discuss veiling or 'honour killing' with students, especially FS students who are mostly young Swedish women?
>
> Birgitta: I am very afraid of that kind of discussion. I mean the Swedish discussion…To Swedish students, I would probably ask them why the veil is so interesting. Why are we so caught up in that piece of cloth? Why are we not considering these women as agents in their lives? […] But when somebody comes in with a Burka [veil that covers the whole face], I would probably experience difficulty in teaching her. I would prefer to see somebody's face. You could discuss it. I am not fond of the veil. But I want to focus on…I think it is a larger problem for a woman that in Sweden, she cannot get a

job or she is marginalized because she is a Muslim. So I think that is what I would talk about it. In a Swedish group, I would talk about this with more…confronting them I think, but still try to…make them not feel so politically correct. How do you feel? Why? What do you feel about Islam? What do we learn from Islam? With different groups, I would work differently. With only Muslim women, they will probably not be interested in discussing it. […] They may wish to take up racism, not getting a job because of the veil, not understanding why we cannot accept them wearing a veil. […] I think there is too much focus in Swedish society […] on the symbols of discrimination against women. We live inside our heads. We have to undo our minds…in the media or whatever. That's typical, that's visible, what is different from us stands out. […] I am quite against how religions are used…no matter what religion, in a political way, for example, to discriminate against women. I am just as critical about Christianity…maybe I am more Christian-phobic.

Chialing: When you say that you are afraid of this kind of discussion, what do you mean?

Birgitta: I think there is too much focus on the veil rather than on that woman's whole life situation. For instance, racism, I would say, is a much bigger problem for her than the scarf. If we talk about discrimination against gay people, […] that [homosexual] person will be too much in focus. […] So I would rather talk about heterosexuality or heteronormativity. Then everybody can talk about it. No one has to be this sexuality…or when we talk about race, different colours, I would rather talk about…the construction of whiteness in Sweden, or Swedishness, because then everyone can say something. […] I have experience that makes me very careful about exposing people….unless you know them very well, and they know each other very well (interview with Birgitta).

In this long quotation, Birgitta clearly highlights the importance of the examination of 'us'/Swedishness. Instead of naming differences of race, sexuality and religion, Birgitta turns to examine whiteness/Swedishness, heteronormativity and Christianity. Instead of making the veil the focus, she is more concerned about why 'we' are caught up with visible differences. Birgitta further argues that to concentrate on a specific aspect of migrant women overlooks racism in society and puts migrant women's life situation in the margin. By shifting the focus, she intends to undo 'our' minds and deconstruct Swedishness.

With herself and Swedish students, Birgitta raised the dimension of feelings about the veil – in a feminist class, the politically-correct discussion might suppress some 'improper' feelings. Birgitta intends to break the dichotomous split of rational thinking/feelings in Western tradition and to explore the feelings of herself and her students.

Moreover, similar to how she regards migrant students as human beings with knowledge and a worldview, which was shown previously in the chapter, Birgitta emphasizes the agencies of migrant women. Such an emphasis on migrant women as agents reminds me of what Marnia Lazreg calls the concept of intersubjectivity:

To take intersubjectivity into consideration when studying Algerian women or other Third World women means seeing their lives as meaningful, coherent, and under-

standable instead of being infused "by us" with doom and sorrow. It means that their lives like "ours" are structured by economic, political, and cultural factors. It means that these women, like "us," are engaged in the process of adjusting, often shaping, at times resisting and even transforming their environment (Lazreg 1988: 98).

Birgitta's words demonstrate her intention to see Third-World women's life and practice as understandable and not to appropriate their agencies into 'our' analysis of gender discrimination. In my viewpoint, the acknowledgement of women's subjectivity in specific social, political and economic context is crucial to attempts to supersede and deconstruct ethnocentrism.

In the following section, I would like to demonstrate how teachers challenged the public debates on 'honour killing' in Sweden.

Rejection of culture as essentialized

Regarding 'honour killing', teachers at Women's Room contest the public discourses that links 'honour killing' with a particular migrant culture. Take the answer of Karin as an example:

> I mean, if […] a man is jealous, he can almost kill his wife or his girlfriend or whatever. This exists everywhere because this is in the power that men have over women. […] This is patriarchy but in its absolute worse way. We have this here too. […] I mean a Swedish teenager can be hit by her father here too. Or if she comes home with…that's to say…a boyfriend or if she is pregnant or whatever, the parents can go absolutely crazy about that too (interview with Karin).

Karin's understanding of the case of 'honour killing' is based in a universal patriarchal power structure and the idea that 'honour killing' does not differ from other forms of violence against women. I would suggest that her speaking places the unnamed Swedish patriarchal structure under scrutiny and makes violence against women in Sweden explicit.

These teachers further reject the idea of a fixed 'tradition' or 'culture' and stress the migration process that highlights a certain 'tradition' or 'culture' in a foreign country:

> I think that we all agree that, ok, this is a tradition, this is…accentuated, because you live here, it becomes even stronger here because of the situation here (interview with Karin).

> I don't think it has to do with culture. I think it has more to do with education and structure. When you come to a new country and you are a foreigner, all the traditions, the culture, and the control over your family or friends become more important. Like in Yugoslavia, before the war, no one talked about religion. No one…only old ladies went to the Catholic church or the mosque. But after the war, religion has become very important as a way of showing one's identity. And I think it's the same here. The

relatives from Lebanon or Kurdistan called, 'Oh, we are moving to Sweden. Sweden is not a good country. The women can do whatever they want. You have to watch out for your daughter'. And then the repression will become harsher here. Sara [a Kurdish student in A1] told me, I think you were in the classroom when she told it, that she liked Iran. When she was living in Iran, she loved it because she could do almost whatever she liked. And here she can't do anything. And it's because her parents don't trust Swedish society but they trust Iranian society. Even though in Iranian society there are night clubs and drugs. But they don't understand that. They thought, oh, this is a Muslim country, then it's ok (interview with Astrid).

In the above illustrations, Karin emphasizes how a tradition is accentuated in the specific situation that the family of Fadime Sahindal faces in Sweden. Astrid uses the example of Yugoslavia to demonstrate the dynamic process that influences the relations between religion and identity. She employs the migration experiences of a migrant student to demonstrate how the stereotype of Swedish society/Swedish women terrifies parents in migrant families, and strengthens their control over their daughters. According to both teachers, the 'culture', the 'religion' and the 'family' are never essentialized categories that create impermeable difference, but instead are in a constant state of becoming and are negotiable.

Although the mainstream discourse that constructs the us/them dichotomy is powerful in the Swedish context, the dichotomous categories can be resisted by those working within welfare institutions, in this case, teachers at Women's Room. The teachers with feminist political identification criticized the self-image of 'a country with equality'. They pointed out the structural racism and patriarchy in Swedish society and problematized the use of language, religion and gender issues to construct the cultural difference between 'us' and the Other.

The teachers at Women's Room can be identified with Paulo Freire as teachers that make education the practice of freedom:

> The ethic of which I speak (for teachers) is that which feels itself betrayed and neglected by the hypocritical perversion of an elitist purity, an ethic affronted by racial, sexual, and class discrimination. For the sake of this ethic, which is inseparable from educative practice, we should struggle, whether our work is with children, youth or adults (Freire 1998: 23-24).

Freire (1972, 1998) also suggests an open-ended process with critical dialogue, communication and empowerment that can lead to the transformation of the person and the society. But what does 'an open-ended process with critical dialogue and communication' look like? How do teachers at Women's Room transform their critique of Swedish racist society into their praxis of anti-racist education? In the following section, I will employ materials from class observation in my fieldwork to discuss anti-racist practices in the classrooms of these teachers.

Talking back: the praxis of anti-racist teaching

Karin's class: a space to speak

In Karin's class at the branch school, I could identify that she had created a space for migrant students to 'speak for themselves'. For example, Karin asked students to interview staff at their own children's schools and to report their study visits in class.

> Daifa: In my son's school, there is grade one through grade three and they have a total of 28 students. There is not a big playground. There are no Arabic classes. Children have to go to another school to attend an Arabic class.
>
> Aydan: In my son's school, there is only grade one through grade four. After that they have to transfer to a big school in another area. There are 50 students in the school and each class has 15 to 18 students. The economy of the school is not good.
>
> Houri: The economy of my son's school is not good. My son is in grade one. In two years he has to transfer to another school since the school is going to close and the municipality will build apartments there instead.
>
> Nasha: There are 495 children and 30 different languages [students' mother tongues] in my son's school. They have a mother tongue class one hour per week. The economic situation in the school is not good.
>
> Aydan: Sometimes it is the teacher who has to go to different schools to teach the mother tongue. For example, the Turkish teacher has to go to 11 schools in the nearby neighbourhoods (041001 field notes).

This activity not only helped students to understand the Swedish school system and their own children's learning environment, but also helped them to articulate problems confronting the schools in their neighbourhood. For example, the students' reports illustrated the difficulties and the marginal status of mother tongue instruction – not only do students not have a fixed place to learn their first language, but the mother tongue teachers' working conditions are unstable as well. It was shocking to hear that three of the four schools presented in the students' reports have a bad economy and that one of them would be closed. This reflects the unstable study environment of students and the lack of resources of the schools in the suburbs where students live.

Another example occurred before the study visit of the Local Administration and Committee of City Division. Karin asked the students to prepare questions that they intended to raise during the visit. Then, they read out the questions aloud and Karin wrote them on the blackboard:

1. Why did the health care centre and drug store move from Södra Kyrkogård to Lindängen?[93] Do you think that it was good for those of us who live there?
2. Why are many schools closed in Mellanby? In Mellanby, three schools have been closed.

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93 These are pseudonyms of different suburbs of the city where students live.

3. Why do you combine small schools into big schools?
4. How often are schools cleaned? My child dares not go to the toilet at school because it is dirty.
5. Why is the Emergency Centre in Fosie closed?
6. Why is the library in Örtagården closed?
7. Why is the Adult Education Centre in Norra Fäladen closed?

When these questions were raised, students also added more comments, such as 'It costs time and money to take a tram to visit public facilities in other neighbourhoods'. Karin replied, 'then perhaps we should ask politicians to lower the fees for public transportation' (050204 field notes).

During the visit, students raised these questions prepared in class and also raised other questions, such as 'Why is the bank closed in our area?' 'Why did you move the Insurance Office to another neighbourhood?' 'Why don't you provide more big apartments? We need a bigger apartment, but we are always waiting in the queue'. Unfortunately, answers from the local civil servants were often like 'Sorry this decision is not decided at the level of the local administration, but in the City Council'. 'Banks are private enterprises and we cannot force them to have a bank in certain areas' (050318 field notes).

In Sweden, housing segregation is often discussed in cultural terms in the media and in academic reports. Nevertheless, these students' questions indicate that living in the segregated suburb becomes a problem not because of their 'culture', but because of the lack of resources in these areas, stemming from such situations as schools with poor economy, public facilities closed in their neighbourhood, and the small-nuclear-family-centred design of apartments.

I think it is an important contribution that Karin creates such a space for migrant students to systematize their daily life experiences and their observations of Swedish society. This means that women's/students' experiences are regarded as a source of knowledge. The examples illustrated above show how these students' daily life experiences are in conflict with the definitions of 'suburbs' problems' in public discourses.

Furthermore, when research shows that there is little communication between civil servants and their 'clients' and the civil servants fail to manage issues of social marginality, it is very relevant to create a dialogue space for migrant women and civil servants, as is shown by the instances in Karin's class:

> Despite many documents and declarations stressing the importance of bringing democracy to the grass roots and to develop local civil initiative, there is little genuine communication between civil servants and their 'clients', according to an evaluation of *Storstadssatsningen*, a large-scale governmental urban development project targeted at the 'exposed city districts'. Agencies and armies of social workers and project leaders have not been able to come to grips with issues of social marginality and stigma (Schierup, Hansen and Castles 2006: 211).

In the study visit, some answers from the administrator were disappointing – the problems that migrant students face in their lives were not determined and could not

be solved in the local committee of the city division. This prevented some of the voices from being 'heard' and made their speech act incomplete – here I employ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's (1988, 1996) concept, 'can the subaltern speak'. According to her conclusion, 'The subaltern cannot speak' since 'even when the subaltern makes an effort to the death to speak, she is not able to be heard, and speaking and hearing complete the speech act' (Spivak 1996: 292). Although students' questions might be an incomplete speech act, these students learned to question the authorities in Karin's class and made their voices heard in the public space.[94]

Furthermore, before the study visit, Karin encouraged students to raise questions, and her viewpoint challenged the notion of a monolithic 'good Swedish' since the language could be expressed in different ways: 'Language is not like a straight highway. Like trees with many branches, there can be different ways to speak. You don't have to be nervous' (050318 field notes).

I think the role of Karin is crucial here since she creates a space for students to explore their experiences and encourages these students to question the authorities. In educational institutions, teachers often describe students with migrant backgrounds as 'passive and silent students', especially female migrant students (Hägerström 2004; Osman 1999). In contrast to these descriptions, students at Women's Room did speak for themselves and the articulation of their voices creates knowledge that it is possible to 'talk back' regarding faulty definitions about 'them'.

Nina's class: a space to act

Problems in the suburbs were also raised in Nina's class when she introduced the topic of consumption in *KiU*:

> Nina: Although the municipality examines the food stores, it cannot control all the food stores all the time. Therefore it is important for consumers to bring their complaints to the store or consumption organizations.
>
> Nahida: But since food stores know that clients will not go to stores that are far away, they are not afraid of clients' complaints.
>
> Laleh: Muslims eat special food and we do not have alternatives when the Arabic store sells bad food.
>
> Nina: Not only in Arabic stores; big Swedish supermarkets also sell bad stuff.
>
> [...]
>
> Nina: It is important for consumers to choose and to act. For example, there were consumers who refused to buy products from South Africa because they protested their ethnic segregation policy. There are consumers doing similar things to protest Israel's occupation of Palestine. If all of our students at Women's Room continue to complain to the food store and say we will stop shopping here if they still have bad food or if we

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94 Karin planned to invite local politicians to her *Grund* class in the spring term of 2005, but I didn't observe that since my fieldwork ended before then. It would be interesting to see the interaction between these students and the local politicians and discuss further whether the voices of these migrant women were really heard.

collect a name list to support our protest, we can make local stores better. For example, once a Somali student was followed by a clerk in a store. The clerk suspected that the Somali woman was a thief as she might hide stuff in her long veil. Then the Somali student complained directly to the manager and the duty of the clerk in the store was changed because of this mistake.

Shahla: The clerk had reasons to suspect the Somali student, as such cases happened before.

Nina: If clients might steal things, why didn't the clerk follow all customers? (041126 field notes)

Nina also tried to encourage students to act collectively. Nina asked students to engage in role play and to practice how to argue with the clerks at shops when they noticed that the food there was not fresh (041217 field notes).

Nina created a space for training migrant students to act in relation to their daily consumption. Her illustration of the Somali student's case also contributed to provide a strategy to combat the racism that occurs in students' lives on a daily basis.

In discussions of critical pedagogy, Elizabeth Ellsworth (1992) demonstrates that students' voices are fragmented since people speak from their multiple and contradictory social positions. Nina sensed the processes of othering when a migrant student distanced herself from the stigmatization of certain migrants as thieves, and she cautiously corrected students' unintended discrimination and called into question the stereotypes among migrants. Nevertheless, I would argue that in the process of discussion, Nina is still in the leading position to guide students' reactions, and there is not much space for students to debate with each other. I suspect that Nina's class at *KiU* is at the basic level, and sometimes it is difficult for students to debate in Swedish. As described in the following, there are more dialogues among students themselves in Nadia's and Astrid's classes.

Nadia's class: the deconstruction of 'we Swedes'

After seeing a Swedish TV series called *Fru Marianne* (*Madame Marianne*),[95] Nadia discussed arranged marriage in this film with students.

Nancy: In Swedish society, parents can't force their daughters to marry someone.

Muna: The media uses this to illustrate how migrant girls are forced to marry by their parents and I don't like such illustrations.

Rahma: Were there arranged marriages in Swedish society?

Nadia: Yes.

Rahma: Then why are the Swedes so shocked when they hear about arranged marriages among Muslims or in other countries?

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95 The original novel was written by Victoria Benedictsson (2001[1887]) and became a TV series in 2001. Marianne, a young woman from a poor noble family, married a rich farmer. This marriage was 'encouraged' by Marianne's parents in order to remedy the family's difficult economic situation.

Nadia: Perhaps these Swedes are ignorant about their own history and think, 'We Swedes are more "modern"' (050302 field notes).

In this discussion, when Nancy stressed that forced marriage is not allowed in *Swedish* society, two other students shifted the discussion to critiques of Swedish society. Muna from Somalia expressed her dislike of the linkage of arranged marriage with migrants since she, as one of the migrants (and especially Somali migrants considered by Swedish society as one of the major groups who practice arranged marriage), is under critique in the Swedish media. Another student, Rahma, criticized the way in which Swedes distance themselves from the issue of arranged marriage. Such a critique was supported by Nadia, who deconstructed Swedes as 'modern' and critically reassert the ignorance of the Swedes about their own history.

In contrast to the debates of forced/arranged marriage in Nordic countries (Keskinen 2009; Razack 2008), Nadia raised this issue after the class had a close reading of a famous novel in Swedish literature. I think this choice of teaching material shows Nadia's intention to challenge the link between forced/arranged marriage with migrants and to examine the similar phenomenon that the Swedes once had in their history (although this might create the same risk of regarding such a history as residing only in the feudal past as it is in Norwegian debates; see Razack 2008: 115). By doing so, she deconstructs the polarity of us/them. Furthermore, Nadia's class, like Karin's, equips students with the opportunity to engage in dialogue among themselves. In this process, the teacher is not the only one with a critical understanding of how gender issues are discussed in Swedish society. Some students are also able to 'talk back' to the image of the Other that mainstream society imposes upon 'them' and to dismiss the internalization of mainstream discourse among 'them'.

Astrid's class: the blurring of 'us' and 'them'

Astrid often used a postcolonial perspective in her class to address racism. For example, at the beginning of the fall term, Astrid used her personal example to discuss stereotypes of people with migrant backgrounds in Swedish society. In Astrid's words:

> I have a non-Swedish family name. When Swedish people see my family name, they think that my father often beats my mother. I was born in Sweden, but when I went to the post office and the staff saw my family name, they thought that they had to speak very very slowly so that I could understand. When I spoke to them, they reacted like 'Ok, she really understands'. […] Now Swedish people don't want migrants but they forget that once Swedes were migrants to the U.S. About 30% of the population immigrated to the U.S. between 1860 and 1890 (040901 field notes).

Astrid demonstrates the stereotypes that function in society to discriminate migrants. She deconstructs the impermeable difference between 'us/Swedes' and 'them/migrants' since the Swedes were once migrants. Furthermore, Astrid's personal ex-

periences challenge the boundary of us/them. Who are the 'us'? How can 'Swedish' people be classified as 'real Swedes'? Astrid was born in Sweden and was educated to be a 'Swedish' person. Her mother is Swedish and the Swedish language is her mother tongue. But some people classify her as one of 'them' because of her non-Swedish family name. When she speaks fluent Swedish without any accent, this somehow makes her a 'Swedish' person (or a good migrant who is diligent in learning 'perfect' Swedish language).

For another example, in the spring term of 2005, Astrid talked about the women's movement and mentioned violence against women:

> Astrid: Violence against women was regarded as a private problem before the women's movement.
>
> Zahra: How could violence against women be regarded as a private problem?
>
> Astrid: […] If a Swedish man beats his wife, it is 'his' problem. But when a migrant man beats his wife, it is seen as a problem stemming from 'his culture'. Isn't this problematic?
>
> Nancy: The murder of Fadima was because of culture.
>
> Astrid: But not all Kurdish men murder their daughters.
>
> Hodan: Some men kill women because they are jealous (050207 field notes).

As illustrated in the former section, Astrid refuses to accept culture as the cause of 'honour killing', and this example demonstrates how she practices her speech in her class. When students interpret the case of 'honour killing' differently from Astrid's own, Astrid highlights the necessity of not using an individual case to generalize the whole group, which is a discriminative mechanism that functions against the subordinated group. For example, when a migrant does something good, that is because he/she lives like a Swedish person; but when a migrant does something bad, it is the result of his/her 'culture'/society.[96] Like in Nadia's class, the dialogue process is not only led by the teacher, but also by students' participation in producing multiple voices among 'them'.

In my opinion, these teachers' anti-racist education praxis corresponds to the description of 'transformative pedagogy' in bell hooks's *Teaching to Transgress*:

> One way to build community in the classroom is to recognize the value of each individual voice and to accept different ways of knowing and new epistemologies in the multicultural setting (hooks 1994: 40-41).
>
> Theory emerges from the concrete, from my efforts to make sense of everyday life experiences, from my efforts to intervene critically in my live and the lives of others (ibid.: 70).

In these teachers' classrooms, students' voices and experiences are valued. Karin creates a space for expressing and articulating students' everyday life experiences in order to question the authorities and the mainstream definition of 'problems in the

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96 This can be applied to, for example, the case of discrimination against women.

suburb'. Nina's class provides training for students to resist racism and unequal treatment in society. Nadia is critical of the debates of arranged marriage and its construction of difference. Astrid employs her life experiences to criticize the fixed boundary of us/them and the stereotype of migrants. In the education process, these life experiences become knowledge which can be used to challenge the mainstream discourse of othering.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have analyzed the ways of disidentification of whiteness/Swedishness among teachers at Women's Room.

I have mentioned that teachers at Women's Room remind me of Freire's description of teachers that can lead educational practice to freedom. Although Freire's critical pedagogy is inspiring, and many teachers at Women's Room are influenced by his theory, Freire (1972: 25, 35) seems to impose a clear line between the oppressor and the oppressed. He describes different characters of the two – for example, Freire depicts that for the oppressor, to be is to have; for the oppressed, to be is to be like (the oppressor). I do agree with Freire's subtle descriptions of the oppressed, and the material from class observation shows the internalization of mainstream discourse by certain students at Women's Room. However, responses from my research indicate that there are not only on-going constructions of 'the real Other' among migrant students, but also 'talking back' protests against the representation of the Other among 'them'.

Teachers at Women's Room, although they are defined as belonging to the continuum of the 'us' group, demonstrate various ways of distancing themselves from the 'us' in their anti-racist speech and educational practices. Their disidentification of whiteness reminds me of what is addressed in *Race Traitor* (Ignatiev and Garvey 1996: 10) – 'treason to whiteness is loyalty to humanity'. They criticize faulty definitions of problems of 'them' and challenge positive representation of 'us'. Accordingly, their subject position of disidentification with the nation and deconstruction of Swedishness makes the category of 'us' as well as 'them' complicated and fractured.

I would like to argue that this fractured 'us' is central to anti-racist education and makes it possible to consolidate women who are constructed in different categories. As Nira Yuval-Davis argues for transversal politics:

> Each participant in a political dialogue would bring with them the reflective knowledge of their own positioning and identity. This is the 'rooting'. At the same time, they should also try to 'shift' – to put themselves in the situation of those with whom they are in dialogue and who are different from them (Yuval-Davis 2006b: 182).

Regarding the notion of 'rooting', one has one's own positioning and identity. Nevertheless, one can be reflective of one's own positioning, and, furthermore, identity is not fixed. By introducing reflexivity into the processes of disidentification with Swedishness, these teachers can break the polarity of us/them and create a political dialogue among women.

The fractured 'us' discussed in this chapter is helpful to examine critical and feminist pedagogy. When hooks (1994: 70) calls for black women to create feminist theory grounded in critical reflection on everyday life experiences, there seems to be a clear line between white/black women, and it corresponds to Freire's viewpoints that only the oppressed can make transformation. In my opinion, although white women (as most teachers at Women's Room are) benefit from structural ethnic discrimination and may in some instances oppress other women, the category of white/black women is not homogenous. Even within the same person there can be inconsistencies and contradictions. The teachers discussed in this chapter are not so progressive all the time, especially when gender issues such as family and sexuality are raised. I follow this up in the following two chapters.

Feminism, family and migrant women[97]

> Christina [talking about different reasons for migrant students to attend Women's Room]: Some haven't chosen us; it's their men who choose us because they think it's a safe environment where they won't meet other men [all members from TGEEA laughed loudly] (030814 field notes).

The above is part of the reply by the former principal of Women's Room to my (quite improper) question about the supposed conflicts between a feminist school and migrants' students 'traditional culture' asked when I first visited Women's Room in 2003 with members of TGEEA.[98] The laughter in this episode triggered several of the important questions that will be presented in this chapter. When all of the TGEEA members laughed loudly after hearing Christina's reply, what were the images of migrant women and men and their relations in the family we had in mind? What were the feminist assumptions of value/culture/family of migrants that permitted me to easily ask about conflicts between migrants' cultures and their attending a feminist school?

When I became more familiar with postcolonial feminist debates in Sweden, I learned that there is a hegemonic discourse on migrant women concerning their 'traditional women's roles' in their families. This representation of migrant women somehow corresponds to what I and other members from TGEEA had in mind when we visited Women's Room. What is the worldview shared by Swedish mainstream gender equality discourse and the common sense understanding of migrant women held by some Taiwan feminists? Is such a worldview rooted in certain Western feminist thinking? When teachers at Women's Room practice feminist teaching, how do they respond to the hegemonic Swedish discourse and Western feminist thinking? By probing feminist teachings on family/marriage for migrant students, I will answer these questions and examine this laughter in this chapter.

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97 Part of this chapter has been published as a book section (Yang 2009) with a different title: 'Whose Feminism? Whose Emnacipation?' in Keskinen et al. (eds) *Complying with Colonialism. Gender, Race and Ethnicity in the Nordic Region*, Surrey & Burlington: Ashgate.
98 My question and longer quotation from Christina's answer, see later in this chapter (p. 140-141).

Selection of feminist teaching episodes and portraits of key informants in this chapter

According to my observations, the topics raised as feminist issues for migrant students at Women's Room include women's history, the women's movement, Swedish law relating to marriage and family, gender division of labour in the family and in the labour market, women writers and sexuality. Some of the topics were held as special lectures for migrant students and some were integrated in teaching. For instance, with respect to women's history and the women's movement, these two topics appeared as special lectures in the introductory week of the beginning of the school year when migrant students in *Grund* from the branch school and in A1 gathered together in the main school. These migrant students listened to Elin's introduction of Swedish education and history of folk high schools with a gender perspective and Mia's presentation of the Western women's movement and its connection with Women's Room (040824 field notes). The same topics appeared in Astrid's social science class in A1, when she prepared it as a teaching theme at the beginning of spring term before the school's Theme Day on International Women's Day in 2005. Sometimes gender issues appeared as small instances when teachers addressed different teaching themes such as consumption, Swedish law, Swedish education and Swedish political system.

This chapter considers two examples to provide a close reading of how marriage and family are talked about and acted upon in interactions between Swedish feminist teachers and migrant students. As mentioned in Chapter 2, I identify the ways in which two of the teachers address the topic similarly to ways we made use of in gender equity education classes in Taiwan – that is, they/we try to use ways of 'thinking reversely' to problematize naturalized norms in society. Taking books (Chang 2001; Yang 2002b) concerning gender equity education and deconstruction of homosexual stereotypes as examples, the authors suggest asking questions like 'Why are we more tolerant of men's disloyalty than of women's?' 'Why do we use age to define "pseudo-homosexuality" among teenage students, but we never question the love story of Romeo and Juliet as 'pseudo-heterosexuality' since they are too young to be sure about their sexual orientation?' to reverse double standards of sexuality or double standards in defining sexual orientation. This way of addressing questions can also be observed among students at Women's Room, such as A.N.'s questioning as to why women have to wear the veil while men do not (in Chapter 6), and a student's challenging 'Why can men have four wives' when students discussed AIDS in English class (050202 field notes). I would like to use these two feminist pedagogical settings to reflect at a more general level on the problems in employing such a method in feminist teaching.

Two teachers, Nina and Birgitta, are in focus in this chapter. Nina introduced Swedish law in general to students in social science class at the branch school. Her class talked about laws regarding marriage on the day I observed, and that was how the topic of marriage came into the focus of the class. Birgitta had some informal

contacts with migrant students in the main school. She had a chat with Nuha in A1 during lunch time[99] and the topic of the chat was marriage.

The two students in focus are Layla and Nuha. Layla was an active student in *KiU* and she continued studying in *Grund* in the spring term. She had been in Sweden for nearly ten years. Nuha attended *KiU* in the branch school at Women's Room and continued A1 in the main school. She has a higher education background in her homeland and has been in Sweden for eleven years. She hoped that she could become a midwife or a pre-school teacher. She had a small child and was sometimes experiencing stress because of that. She stopped going to school suddenly, and I could not interview her to gain a further understanding of how she interpreted her dialogue with Birgitta.

Marriage, the topic of the debate

The first time I entered Nina's classroom, I was overwhelmed by and excited about the results of their former discussion on 'Why do people get married', the responses to which were written on the blackboard:[100]

Table I: Notes written on the blackboard by Nina[101]

Why do people get married?	Symbol
They like each other	Live better
Want to live together	Not live alone
Have children	Because a child is going to be born
To be a family	To feel better when I die
This is 'natural'	Regulations from society
A woman needs a man and a man needs a woman	Regulations from religion
Love	

During the break, Nina told me that when they first discussed why people married, the students' answer was 'it is natural'. Nina shook her head and said that it took time to make them think further about the societal or religious regulations or expectations involved in the practice of marriage.

After the break, Nina explained that Swedish laws on marriage only regulate how couples deal with their property. She mentioned 'unfaithfulness' in an example to

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99 Although one of the goals of Women's Room is to create a platform for different women to meet, during break time or lunch time, the students tended to sit with other students who had the same mother tongue, while administrative staff sat together and the teachers sat together. Birgitta was one of the few teachers who would join the students during lunch time.

100 I missed their discussion in the first section of the class before the break because I was in another class. As mentioned in Chapter 2, I was not able to follow all of the teacher's classes, and it is worth noting that my observations of a certain teacher were only partial and could not represent her whole teaching.

101 The content and format of the table is the same as what Nina wrote on the blackboard.

illustrate that there was a regulation on unfaithfulness in Swedish society before, but that it had been abolished. She asked the students, 'A Muslim man can have four wives, this is not seen as "unfaithful", how about a woman with four men?' Most students in the class were Muslim, and all of them said 'No! No!' Nina further asked, 'Why can men have four wives? Why this difference between men and women? Isn't this a little bit strange?' One student from Iraq replied, 'Men decide everything'. A student from Somalia, Layla, said, 'If my husband wants to marry another woman, but I don't agree, he can consider this himself. He will either not marry another woman, or marry that woman and divorce me'. Nina said, 'Traditions in Sweden become laws gradually. If people in Sweden think it is ok to marry four men or marry four women, it will become law eventually. However, Swedish law states that a person can only have one partner in marriage and bigamy is forbidden in Sweden' (040910 field notes).

The following are notes from a similar discussion in a conversation between a student Nuha and the teacher Birgitta during lunch time.

> Nuha: If I have a conflict with my husband, I will talk with my mother and my father. Then the elders will decide who is right. However, it is better to forget the trivial quarrels in daily lives and not to mention divorce just because of the trivial things.
>
> Birgitta: Why do people have to get married?
>
> Nuha: This is life! Parents will die and I don't want to live alone.
>
> Birgitta: In that case, people can live with their friends and this can make a family, too.
>
> Nuha: It is different to have a husband and children.
>
> Birgitta: Are there any women who decide not to get married *in your homeland*?
>
> Nuha: Yes, but they have psychological problems because they are influenced by their parents' unhappy marriage.
>
> Birgitta: *In Sweden*, people can live together without getting married.
>
> Nuha: That is impossible *in my country.*
>
> Birgitta: You are *in Sweden* right now. When your child grows up and tells you that he wants to cohabitate with his girlfriend, will you react?
>
> Nuha: I would want to know the girl and her family and tell her that *according to our culture*, we should have a Muslim ceremony before they live together (040921 field notes, my emphasis).

In the two examples, marriage/family is picked up by teachers at Women's Room as a topic for migrant students to reflect on in order to challenge their understanding of what is normal and natural from a Western feminist perspective.

When I reflect on these two teachers' dialogues with the students, I also rethink my own feminist teaching in Taiwan. Since people in Taiwan are expected to get married and have children in order to continue the (father's) family name – that is, the continuation of the patriarchal family line – feminist teachers (including myself) in Taiwan often employ ways used in consciousness-raising groups in the women's movement to challenge the naturalized norms and expectations of society. I usually

introduce the Swedish law of cohabitation for both heterosexual and homosexual partners as an example to show how the law supports people's different life choices.

To reflect on the pedagogical interactions of these two teachers with my own feminist teaching from postcolonial feminist perspectives, I wonder whether or not there are assumptions that women getting married and having children are 'less liberated' and that 'non-feminist' Third-World women's choice might be blinded by 'false consciousness'. In this case, it is the Other – Third-World women or the non-feminists – who needs to change and to reconsider the meaning of marriage. In the following section, I will first focus on the two settings and then bring in similar interview questions proposed by me for contemplation.

Which/who is in need of challenge and change?

In these feminist teaching settings, Swedish laws are represented as women-friendly – Birgitta and I stressed the cohabitation law and presumed that since Swedish law offers wider life choices for people, it is more liberal and, therefore, better for women. According to my own experience, those who decide to remain single in Taiwan will easily receive the same critique that Nuha gave to the single women in her own country. It is less difficult to cohabitate with a partner or to have children without getting married in Sweden than it is in Taiwan. Still, there are many 'incentives' in Swedish law to help heterosexual couples with children. One discussion in the social science class in A1 serves as an example: when the teacher, Astrid, talked about taxes in Sweden, she said, 'I don't have children, so I can't get my money back from the government'. A student, Paula, said, 'Me too!' Paula, who came to Sweden as an adult with a teenage daughter, did not receive benefits from the Swedish welfare state for paternal leave or child allowance (041124 field notes). In the discussion, Astrid pointed out that heterosexual women with children might benefit more from the so-called 'women-friendly' welfare state.[102] I also would like to point out that not all heterosexual women are considered legitimate mothers. For example, if a black Muslim woman having children benefits from welfare state provisions, she is often regarded negatively as someone who is dependent on the welfare state, something which was shown in Mina's case in Chapter 6.

To take another example, the Swedish detective fiction writer Stieg Larsson died suddenly in 2004 without writing a valid will. His partner, Eva Gabrielsson, who had lived with him for thirty years, cannot inherit his property and has no rights to the income from his books. A comment from a Norwegian newspaper criticizes Swedish law, stating that 'In our opinion this situation has to do with our fundamen-

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102 As of 2003, registered homosexual partners can adopt children. In 2005, the Swedish government adopted a bill allowing lesbian couples to have access to assisted reproduction. Therefore some lesbian women might enjoy benefits from the welfare state because of pregnancy and/or having children.

tal view of respect for equal status, and Swedish law does not live up to that view' (*Dagbladet Oslo*).[103] Moreover, the 'recognition of fatherhood' (*erkännande faderskap*) for unmarried couples is another example that demonstrates that the rights of unmarried couples are restricted in Swedish law. Through the procedure of recognition of fatherhood, unmarried couples are asked questions about their sexual relationship by staff of the Family Law Office in order to 'prove' that the partner to the child's mother is the child's biological father. Although a child born within marriage might not be the child to the husband, married couples are not required to go through this procedure. These two examples illustrate that although registered partnership is recognized in Sweden, Swedish law still provides married couples with more rights and thus prioritizes a family with a heterosecual married couple as the partners over other family types. Nevertheless, in the teaching settings, we (Nina, Birgitta and I) didn't discuss the heterosexual white norm while presenting the Swedish law as 'women-friendly'.

Moreover, when Birgitta says that 'people can live with their friends and this can make a family', she is referring to a practice that is not recognized by Swedish law or by many people in Swedish society. However, in the conversation, problems in Swedish law or Swedish society are not mentioned. I see in the conversation a strong contrast between Sweden and Nuha's homeland when Birgitta poses the question about single women in Nuha's homeland (see my emphasis in the dialogue). I suspect that Nuha also senses this contrast and knows quite well that, under this comparison, it is Nuha's homeland which 'lacks' something that is good for women and, as a result, the country's norms and regulations are worse than those in Sweden.

On the one hand, I would like to place the contrast between Sweden and Nuha's homeland in the specific situation in which this dialogue took place. The situation was illustrated by Birgitta in her interview with me:

> I need to discuss these ideas with somebody who can give some other input. At that moment I think we had already discussed that [marriage] in FS. We don't have women from other countries in class, and students from FS don't dare ask migrant students at school. I was sitting with students from FS and I just grabbed…I dared to do that since I am a teacher and I am allowed to grab people… Because I know that students from FS are too shy to ask themselves. So […] I am using my position but hopefully I haven't been rude or…'cause I could put her in a very…uh…and I don't know her very well (interview with Birgitta).

In the quotation, Birgitta reflected on whether or not she had put Nuha in a situation that might expose Nuha as a 'native informant' (hooks 1994: 43-44), who has unfairly been assigned the responsibility to inform other students/teachers about their religion/tradition/culture, and who, in even worse situations, has to defend these.[104] I suggest that the situation in which Nuha as a migrant student was put in front of a small group of Swedish students where she had to have a dialogue with a

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103 http://www.supporteva.com/uk/, accessed 090715. This is a website to support Eva Gabrielsson.
104 This is contradicted with what Birgitta said about being careful of not exposing people in teaching processes in the previous chapter.

Swedish teacher on marriage/family with a focus on her homeland might have made Nuha feel attacked.

On the other hand, this is not an individual matter. I think the dialogue between Birgitta and Nuha needs to be placed in a broader Swedish context in which migrant cultures and religions are often blamed as the origins of women's subordination. Another teacher, Karin, illustrated in her interview that migrant students are quite aware of the critiques from mainstream society:

> They know something about this society and the way of living. But they also hear or see through media, of course, a lot of very, very wrong pictures of how we live and what life here is about. And I can imagine that they sometimes feel criticized, that our society tells them that they live in a wrong way. That's also [the case] for religion, for example. It's wrong to be a Muslim or…I think they can feel a lot of these things. It may be conservative, the whole situation, because when you are abroad, the family appears to be so important. So maybe you become more conservative than you were before, just to keep this…a safe place. That is one possibility (interview with Karin).

According to Karin, when migrants sense racist attacks, the family may provide a sheltered space. However, she also suggests that this can lead to attempts to maintain traditional communities and thus lead to more conservative choices and movements. In the context where her homeland and culture are being challenged, Nuha feels that she has to defend her 'culture' and stresses that according to 'their culture', a Muslim ceremony is needed before two people can live together.

As I see it (and based on postcolonial feminist thinking), the two feminist teachers (Nina and Birgitta) and the migrant students fall into binary positions. In the two feminist educational settings, the Koran (especially regarding polygyny) and Islamic countries are singled out as oppressive mechanisms for women, and the two teachers try to make migrant students (and in particular Muslim students) reflect upon their religion/homeland. My experience from the fieldwork shows that when migrant students feel that their religion/homeland is criticized, they conflate Islam and 'culture' and defend their religion/culture as not necessarily oppressive. This reminds me of how postcolonial researchers criticize both positions:

> On the one hand, it is vastly reductionist to accuse Islam of being exclusively accountable for repressive gendered practices. Doing so opens ways for ahistorical, essentialist and Orientalist stereotypes. On the other hand, it is problematic to entirely exonerate 'Islamic doctrines' (in all of their complexities and multiplicities). Doing so leads to discounting and underplaying their hegemonic and disciplinary power in societies and communities where Islamic ideology is normative (Farahani 2007: 28).

Refusing such a binary approach, postcolonial readings of Islam and gender pay attention to intersectional power structures and take into account the political, social and cultural relations unique to individual societies. Nevertheless, in these feminist pedagogical interactions, the two teachers do not situate their reflections within a broader discourse in Swedish society/Western contexts where Islam is singled out as

a 'notorious religion' with a conservative impact on gender relations and on the social position of women.

In addition, when Nina explains how traditions become law, she mentions that it happens through a democratic process, and furthermore that laws can be abolished or changed. I think it is problematic for Nina to bring polygyny into the discussion in this setting since it is more proper to compare the Koran with the Bible in regard to regulations on marriage and relations between women and men. I suspect Nina regards the Koran as a set of regulations that govern people's lives, which equates the Koran to a source of law. Following her logic of discussing the creation and the change of all kinds of regulations, I can understand Nina's intention to point out that all kinds of laws are created by people, so the Koran is not unchallengeable. In Nina's words: 'One of the biggest difficulties is to make them [the students] understand that there are imams, or high positioned Muslims, who are actually telling them what is in the Koran. [...] It is very difficult for them to understand [that] because they think that the Koran is wisdom and the truth' (interview with Nina).

Nevertheless, Nina's explanation of Swedish law as a democratic process creates a representation of Sweden as a country of 'participatory democracy' and one grounded in a contrast between Swedish law and the Koran. The contrast between Swedish law and the Koran contains certain evaluations – that is, Swedish law is more 'progressive' than the Koran since there is a democratic process of law formation that is lacking in the Koran.

Moreover, examining the two instances of feminist pedagogical interaction, the target audience of the discussions seem to be the religious migrants who lack the rational thinking needed to understand the change of regulations/religion and the migrant women who lack the agency to make choices concerning marriage. There is a contrast between rational/religious thinking and a contrast between having or not having agency. Such a contrast prevails in the construction of the Other in Western discourse. For example, a study of a verdict of a case of 'honour killing' in a Swedish court (Eldén 1998) shows that there is a contrast between a rational individual (the ethnic Swedish man) and the victim trapped in 'patriarchal' culture (the migrant man) – that is, when a Swedish man kills his wife, he is regarded by the judge as a madman who has lost the capability of rational thinking, while a man with a migrant background who kills his daughter is regarded as a poor victim trapped in the pressure of his ethnic community and blinded by his traditional culture. The same contrast shows in the heated debates on arranged marriage in Norway, as Sherene H. Razack analyzes in the following:

> The argument [of arranged marriage] hinges entirely on the assertion that women in the West have more freedom, autonomy, and equality because they are not generally a part of extended kinship networks and are not subjected to arranged marriages, as are Muslim women. The divide is between those who live as autonomous individuals and who make decisions without the influence of kin and community and those who live their lives within communities, the two sides serving to illustrate not only the unbridgeable cultural divide between the West and non-West but the non-West as a place of danger for women (Razack 2008: 116).

Instead of challenging the contrast between 'us' and the Other, these two educational settings strengthen the representation of Western kinship as a matter of choice while kinship in other countries is regarded as a set of traditional bounds that limit women's life choices. As a result, it is the migrant students who need to 'open their minds' or 'think with another perspective', not the feminist teachers. In the following, I will discuss the lack of learning from women who have different experiences and worldviews.[105]

Whose feminism?

As I showed earlier, when Nina asked 'why can men have four wives but women cannot', the answer from the Iraqi student that 'men decide everything' seems to be the correct answer that satisfied the feminist teachers. I, who identify myself as a feminist, was also impressed with the answer and with that student's 'gender consciousness'. However, Nina's argument neglects the students' viewpoints on polygyny. For example, in interviews with Muslim students, emphasis is given to the equal treatment of wives in the Koran.

> Chialing: When I was at the branch school, they talked about the fact that men can have four wives.
>
> Noor: When she [the first wife] has problems or there are some causes [for him marrying another wife]. Perhaps the woman cannot have children, or she has a disease, or she has problems…doesn't want to have sex. […] When he marries other women, the first wife has the same rights as the other wives. […] If there are little differences, it is not good. It is taboo.
>
> […]
>
> Chialing: What do you think about this? Do you think it is good for women?
>
> Noor: No. When a woman marries a man, only she, she has the rights. But if there are second, third wives, perhaps the man doesn't like the first one so much. The women do not have the same rights among each other. That is why, in my country, it is not considered right that a man marries another woman when the first wife has no problems. When two wives don't like each other, it creates many difficulties (interview with Noor, my translation).

Noor's reply stresses the principle of fair treatment of wives, but also depicts the gap between the Koran and reality – some men marry other wives when there are no problems in the relation with the first wife, and some men don't treat their wives well. When I gave the transcription back to Noor to check if there were any mis-

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105 This does not indicate that all teachings at Women's Room neglect students' experiences. In the previous chapter, I have discussed how students' experiences are highlighted in their anti-racist education. Birgitta also mentioned how she used migrant women's experiences in the 'self-help' economic cooperation groups as an example of practicing democracy (081105 field notes). In the workshops for gender equity education in Taiwan, Linnéa demonstrated how she began the teaching of 'water' with students' knowledge and experiences of water (070408 field notes).

takes, she showed it to two other Muslim students, and they also expressed their dislike of polygyny since, in reality, men cannot treat all wives equally. One of them said, 'I don't trust them! ['them' means the men]' (050317 field notes). From these reactions, I detect that the Muslim students are not as 'naïve' or as much the 'passive victims' of the Koran as the teachers appear to assume.

During Nina's class discussion, Layla's explanation was a way to try to make the cultural practices understandable to others and her words show the tensions between discourse and practice. Her mentioning of the negotiation process between husband and wife identifies the agency of Somali women and the complex negotiations that go on in women's daily lives.

Nevertheless, Noor's words illuminate some central norms of Muslim societies. Firstly, it is important that women can bear children. If a woman cannot have children, this provides a reason for a man to marry another woman. Secondly, it appears that women cannot refuse to have sex with their husbands.[106] Thirdly, the meaning of the 'problems' or 'disease' that the first wife may have is unclear, and it is difficult to judge if that represents a 'reasonable' cause for a man to marry another woman. Similarly, Layla's reply in Nina's class can also be discussed further. For example, when the first wife doesn't accept her husband's proposal to marry another woman, will she be supported by others in the family/community? What happens if the first wife is divorced? However, there was no opportunity for me to follow whether or not and how these issues were further discussed. The response from Layla was not followed up by Nina in the situation that I encountered. I would argue that the neglect of the students' viewpoint on polygyny limits subtle discussions in feminist teaching, and this restricts feminist teachers from learning from their students' reflections.

Moreover, when Nina challenged polygyny in a short sentence, it was impossible to have enough conversational space to explore the social factors and specific social and historical contexts behind polygyny. For example, Rabia, the only Muslim teacher at Women's Room, explained the historical background of polygyny in her interview:[107]

> Islam […] is a complete life system. Islam gives you this opportunity to think and then to decide. The Koran is the law book and in the Koran it says that men can have four wives. […] You have to question: why? And then you are going to understand. […] At that time […] a lot of men died in the war. The women became helpless. […] Because it was a very poor situation at that time, the prophet said, 'You can marry them if you have money. You can help them. You can take care of them'. […] So this was an exceptional situation at that time after the war. And at the same time the prophet said, 'If you marry two women, you have to consider it a thousand times. You must give

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106 According to Fataneh Farahani's (2007: 172) research, while marriage is constructed as 'the' site of moral sexuality, spousal abuse and incest happen within marriage, and the whole society is silent and turns a blind eye to what happens inside the marriage.

107 I would like to point out a difficulty here in fieldwork – that sometimes what one knows, says, and does cannot be observed totally by a researcher. Nina might know the historical background of polygyny in Islam but she did not have time to discuss it fully with the students in class and did not show her knowledge about that in the interview. For Rabia, although she explained the historical context of polygyny in the Koran, she never discussed this with her students in class.

them the same rights, same situation and the same possibilities' […] At the last stage of the prophet's life, the situation was not the same. And he said, '[…] Now you don't have the situation of the war. Men and women can find each other easily'. […] Islam gives you the solution…all the time. […] I wouldn't like my husband to marry another woman because there is no need to do this now (interview with Rabia).

In Rabia's words, there are some contradictions in Islam: since the prophet's words changed at the last stage of his life, why does polygyny remain in the Koran? Since the Koran is the 'law book' and 'gives the solutions all the time', who can question 'why' and have the opportunity 'to think and then to decide?' When Rabia thinks that 'there is no need to do this now' and wouldn't like her husband to marry other women, can she question the 'law book'? Nevertheless, when polygyny in the Koran is criticized in Western contexts, Rabia's interpretation provides an alternative explanation of polygyny in a specific social and historical context.[108]

I would further argue that when a certain Third-World tradition is discussed ahistorically, such discussion reifies the colonial construction of Third-World societies as 'places without history' and strengthens the representation of Third-World women as victims fixed in timeless tradition/religion/culture (Lazreg 1988; Narayan 1997). Moreover, polygyny exists mainly for rich men since poor men cannot sustain a polygynous family. Therefore, it does not represent the general life experiences of Muslim women, especially for many of the Muslim students at Women's Room. This lack of contexualization of polygyny in the discussion at Women's Room leads to a generalization of Muslim societies, which is not applied to other parts of the world – for example, to generalize Latin America as Catholic.[109] Such a generalization ignores the heterogeneity within these societies and corresponds to the colonial representation of the Third World as uniform and monolithic spaces.

In a similar vein, Birgitta seems to use Swedish law as the norm to encourage Nuha to think from other perspectives, such as the possibilities of remaining single or cohabitating with a partner. During the dialogue, I could sense a clear feminist intention behind the chatting. On the one hand, I understood the difficulty of expanding the various dimensions in a short conversation. On the other hand, Birgitta's method of discussion jumps so quickly that she misses other possible points for further discussion. For example, when Nuha mentions that 'it is different to have a husband and children', one wonders in what ways is it different? When Nuha has negative images of unmarried women, how can Birgitta have further dialogue with her? Nevertheless, Birgitta not only misses the chance to further discuss the topic with Nuha, but also fails to learn from Nuha's different experiences, which, I would add, is contradictory to her intention of 'having some other input'. For example, Nuha mentioned another way of solving conflicts – not by divorce, but to beg the elders to be the judge of a conflict. This is quite different from the ways conflicts are

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108 Rabia's explanation of polygyny is different from Leila Ahemd's (1992) historical research. According to Ahmed, the patriarchal, patrilineal and polygamous type of marriage was already practiced throughout the Middle East. The vital significance of the institutions that Islam established was the pre-eminence of paternity and male-exclusive property rights for female sexuality.

109 Social welfare studies tended to classify the Eastern Asian welfare model as 'Confucian Welfare States' but such a generalization is criticized (White and Goodman 1998; Kwon 1998).

solved in Western nuclear families, or from using the courts to settle conflicts. The judgement of quarrels by the elders might provide women with alternative support from their original families (though it might be limited according to certain ideologies in their societies). However, this is not further developed in the dialogue.

I would like to link the two episodes with debates on multicultural citizenship in political science theory (May, Modood and Squires 2004; Modood, Triandafyllidou and Zapata-Barrero 2006). British Muslims employ multiculturalism to argue for recognition of difference and for pluralistic institutional integration/assimilation (Modood 2006; Modood and Kastoryano 2006). The central argument of multicultural citizenship is the acknowledgement of different worldviews and of how a multicultural society can learn from and be enriched by the heritages of different groups of people.

Nevertheless, in the pedagogical interactions in these two examples, I would argue that the teachers depart from a Western liberal understanding of the Cartesian subject that prioritizes autonomy over other values, for example, connections with others. These two teachers seem to conceptualize other worldviews as ignorant and are in need of other perspectives from which to reflect. Contrary to the quotation in the previous chapter in which Birgitta emphasizes the importance of contemplation of what 'we' can learn from Islam, in these two episodes, a lack of a process of unlearning of one's own worldview is revealed.

I would like to further link the two settings with Sara Ahmed's (2008: 126-128) analysis of happiness. Ahmed argues that 'happiness is attributed to certain objects that circulate as social goods' and it is not casual – certain objects are available to us because of lines that we have already taken. What Nina and Birgitta do is a feminist engagement with what is defined as 'happiness' for women – in Nina's case, she questions the meanings of marriage and polygyny and in Birgitta's case, she challenges the obligation of getting married and intends to provide alternative ways of 'happiness'. The contrasting figures of 'the happy housewife' and 'the kill-joy feminist' (ibid.: 127) are familiar to me since many feminists have demonstrated a stance of refusing to share an orientation towards certain things as being good. Nevertheless, if the suggestion is that what makes migrant women unhappy lies in 'their' religion/homeland while the things that make them happy (or happier) are alternative life choices provided in Swedish society, I suggest that a more careful contemplation is needed here.

I would like to further situate these two teachers' teaching and dialogues with students within a way of talking about migrants at Women's Room. Here I would like to present one interview exchange as an example:

> Chialing: You mentioned that half of the students in your school come from migrant backgrounds. *Are there any conflicts between their traditional cultures and the school's culture?*[110]

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110 Notice that I, as a researcher, asked improper questions that guided my informants. I will analyze my research role and my shared feminist worldview with these feminist teachers later in the chapter.

Christina: Migrant women come here for different reasons. Some come here because they are feminists; they choose the school because they don't want to live in their traditional culture. […] Some choose us because they are used to having a female surrounding and also have a feeling that women are always polite, which we are not. They discover that after a while. Some of them choose to stay; some of them leave. But they can do that. In ten years, maybe they think something else, something they do not think now. Some of the traditional female collectives around the world […] just [intend] to make sure that sexual behaviour is conservative. And we do everything to change that. And that is very frightening for the family sometimes. But some of them decide to stay and like it and see that they have another freedom. […] Some of them can see that if they connect a little bit with Swedish society and think in a Swedish manner about equality and gender, then they can get some freedom (030814 field notes, my emphasis).

In Christina's reply, migrant women are classified into two categories: one is autonomous individuals who identify themselves as feminists. Their attending Women's Room is based on a personal choice, and this choice represents a political gesture that releases them from 'their traditional culture'. The other category is traditional women who are confined within traditional female collectives and/or their family that intends to control their sexuality. Such a contrast is similar to the contrast between an autonomous, rational individual who has agency and a victim of her community, as addressed above. Furthermore, I find that both my question and Christina's reply contrast feminist ideals at Women's Room with migrant families and 'freedom in Swedish society' with migrants' 'traditional culture'. Like the discourse in the government report (SOU 1979: 89), Christina suggests that migrant women should have better connections with Swedish society and learn the Swedish notion of equality. This corresponds to some Swedish feminist scholarship that regards gender equality as the exclusive achievement of Swedish women. Similar to the suggestions of encouraging migrant women to leave their 'traditional family' (see, e.g., SOU 1998: 6: 187, quoted in de los Reyes 2002: 41), attending a feminist school appears to be another way to make migrant women more liberated, and subsequently, more 'Swedish'.

Nevertheless, examining my interview questions, I find myself addressing similar questions to/about migrant women as these teachers do, and in reflection on the research process, I see that I sometimes led my informants in a particular direction to (re)produce the dichotomies of us/them. In the following section, I would like to examine my researcher's role and look further into the feminist worldview shared between myself and the teachers at Women's Room.

The researcher's role and shared feminist worldview

Similar to Birgitta's question to Nuha, I also asked migrant students about possible conflicts between themselves and their children and whether or not they assumed

these would get worse in the future. This can be shown in the interview with Muna below:

> Chialing: What happens, for example, in the case that your children are growing up in Sweden and perhaps they become 'Swedish'? Might there be conflicts between you and your children?
>
> Muna: Yes, there might be conflicts. I have already started, from the beginning, to teach them. 'Mom, why do you have a veil? Why do you have a skirt all the time?' They asked me. I am a Muslim and it is not allowed for me to have pants. And they also asked the reason why I hurry to put on a skirt when a man knocks on the door. They have already noticed things like when there is another person, I need to wear a veil. When they become teenagers, there will be many problems. It is always like this, the majority coming from Somalia [have experienced] many problems…that the kids want to be a little bit Swedish (interview with Muna, my translation).

On the one hand, generational conflicts – between the women as parents and their children – are experienced by migrant students, as mentioned in Muna's interview. Although generational conflicts and 'living in between' are some of the experiences of migrant women, I argue that it is essential to examine why and how certain experiences of migrant women are highlighted while their other experiences are excluded in the Western hegemonic discourse. For example, Gail Lewis (2005: 549) analyzes the narratives on migrants in Britain and argues that 'central strands in this narrative are the assumed social position of women in British Asian communities and more generally their organization of gender and generational relations, especially insofar as the latter are deemed to give rise to young people experiencing a conflict of "living between two cultures"'. Her analysis is similar to the representation of migrants in Sweden:

> The cultural collision between the immigrant woman's upbringing and background and the norms and values in Swedish society, can thus make it very difficult for her to function as a wife and a mother. At the same time as she is tied down by her own tradition and role as a woman, she is supposed to meet new demands of change which her children introduce through their world of school and friendships. Apart from that she is faced with the demand from her husband of the permanency of her traditional woman's role (SOU 1979: 89: 156, quoted in Knocke 1991: 473).

The text, which I suggest can be used to represent a governmental discourse, indicates the presumed conflicts between family/culture/tradition of migrants and norms/values in Swedish society, and conflicts between migrants and their children, who grow up in Sweden and represent the Swedish way of life.

I would like to ask here what makes the official discourse on migrant communities in different Western countries so similar? What experiences of migrants are stressed/excluded here? What makes narratives in feminist teachings correspond to these discourses? What are the impacts of these hegemonic discourses on migrant women?

My answers to these questions are that, firstly, the family is regarded by some Western feminists as the origin of women's oppression (Friedan 1982[1965]; Rosaldo

and Lamphere 1974). In examining my fieldwork notes – and as I wrote the above – I saw that I had written that when I first entered Nina's class, I was 'excited' about earlier discussions on marriage. As a researcher intending to observe how feminist teaching is practiced at Women's Room, I was 'excited' since this is one of the topics presumed to be 'essential' to feminist teaching. I didn't even ask the teachers why they had chosen the topic of marriage/family because in Western feminist circles, it is taken for granted as a 'universal' feminist topic. Nevertheless, as black feminists point out, white feminists mistakenly put forward their own experiences of the family as universal, and their specific social position often makes them unaware of other power relations central in constructing women's experiences of intimacy and care. For example, immigration controls and practices and racist attacks on black households show that not all family forms and ideologies are dealt with as equally valid by the state (Bhavnani and Coulson 1986). Some students at Women's Room are asylum seekers and their families are treated differently by the state than other families. Some of them might be deported and for these women, the family is not the main source of their oppression. On the contrary, it is the Swedish state that causes more worries and fears for them. Therefore, the suggestion that migrant students reconsider the meaning of marriage or broaden their definitions to include different types of families does not fully capture the conditions of migrant families in today's capitalist Western societies.

For another example, when black people face ethnic discrimination, the family can provide a shelter or a solidarity base that may help counteract discrimination. Returning to the conversation between Birgitta and Nuha, when Birgitta mentions the possibilities of forming a family with friends, she seems to ignore the different social conditions between herself and Nuha. Nuha mentions that 'it is different to have a husband and children'. Although this thinking is influenced by heterosexual ideology, it might also be a result of her experiences of migration and migration laws. The migration process – the war in her homeland and living in a new country – have changed Nuha's life situation and may have given a special meaning to kinship. I would argue that when Birgitta mentions the various possibilities of forming a family, she neglects her advantageous position as a white woman in Sweden and overlooks the dynamic process of migration that gives kinship a special meaning for migrant women.

Secondly, there is a 'colonial stance' toward Third-World cultures in some feminist discourses (Narayan 1997: 43). The colonial construction of the Third-World functions not only in the colonial past where the 'backwardness' of the Third-World societies legitimated colonial power in the Third World, but also continues to function as a boundary to define difference and national belonging and as a mechanism of cultural racism.

I would argue that it is the exclusion/inclusion of migrant women's experiences that makes monolithic representation of 'them' possible. As shown earlier, the experiences of generational conflicts and 'living in between' can apply to many people in society, but these experiences of migrants are discussed with special focus in order to

demonstrate the conservative/traditional families of migrants. However, other experiences of migrants, such as structural racism in society, are neglected.

According to my observations in the field, when migrant students chatted with each other, they seldom mentioned problems in their families. The major problems they mentioned were racism and difficulties in the labour market. For example, Muna mentioned in the interview that she encountered reproaches such as 'Why do you not go back to your home country?' when she had quarrels with Swedes. Regarding difficulties in the labour market, Noor mentioned in the interview that she lost the opportunity to work in a restaurant because of her wearing a veil. A student at the branch school read the newspaper to see if there were jobs for her, and she complained to me that it was very difficult for her to find a job. She said, 'I cannot understand why a clerk at the supermarket needs to speak perfect Swedish' (041126 field notes). In a discussion in one of Women's Room's project courses for unemployed migrant women, the students discussed their former experiences in the labour market, such as irregular working times at night and poisonous elements in the working environment. These students further criticized the course for unemployed migrant women, complaining that they were being used as 'free labour' in the practical training and saying the class could not help them get jobs (050223 field notes). These examples show that these migrant women are not troubled with 'the problem that has no name' (Friedan 1982[1965]). Moreover, it is not only gender that puts them on the bottom of the labour market and society.

If feminist activists and scholars overlook the colonial legacies in feminist theory and Western hegemonic discourse, their speech and action will sustain the existing representation of the Other. Although this might not be the intention of feminist teachers at Women's Room, there is such an effect in these examples of speech and practices.

Although I am a feminist researcher and gender equity educator from the Third World, in the process I found myself also participating in a reification of colonial representation through my questions to the migrant students and to the teachers.

I think it is important to examine the shared feminist worldview that limits teachers' educational practices and my research practices at Women's Room. If feminists do not challenge faulty definitions wherein migrant women's problems are linked solely to their families, we cannot alter the limits of Western feminist understanding of families from an intersectional perspective. If feminists are not aware of how the experiences of migrant women are excluded/included specifically in the processes of othering, our selection of feminist topics for migrant women will continue to reify the boundaries of 'us' and 'them'.[111]

Before drawing a conclusion, I would like to use a dialogue between Muna and me to end this section:

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111 Here I use 'we' instead of 'they' since I regard myself as one of the feminist teachers and activists. It is worth noting that there is limitation in the writing in that I criticize 'their' feminist saying and teaching in other places in the thesis without making clear my participation in the process of Othering.

> Chialing: It is said that Women's Room is a feminist school. Is this ok for your husband and you?
>
> Muna: It's perfect, it's ok for me. (Chialing: Why?) […] When I came to Sweden, I thought, aha, it's a Western country, and men and women have equal rights, equal work; women can develop themselves for everything, can get all the opportunities that people can get. But this is not the case when you come to reality. Then you find that there are huge differences and women are oppressed. The teachers talk a lot about such things. I did not know that women are harassed by their bosses, and they may be sexually abused. I thought that this was a country with gender equality where women were respected. The same thing applies to my country where women are a little oppressed and less valued. I do not think that Swedish women experience it [equality]. They only believe they do. When I told my husband about this, he was glad that I learned so much from the school. I think actually there are no big differences between Somali and Swedish society (interview with Muna, my translation).

I think both my interview questions and Birgitta's discussion fall into the same pitfall of presuming migrant families to be patriarchal and traditional. Muna's answer is a good example of a migrant women's retort – 'There are no big differences between Somali and Swedish societies!' On the one hand, 'we' as feminist teachers need to learn more from 'them' in order to shift the ethnocentric assumptions that exist in feminist teaching and research. On the other hand, feminist teachers and researchers have to become aware of how migrants' cultures, religions and homelands are regarded in Western countries. If migrant students feel 'attacked' or criticized in feminist educational settings, they might take a stance to embrace their original culture, religion and homeland and this may hinder further contemplation. If there are no large differences between Somali and Swedish societies, as suggested by Muna, this should not be a concluding sentence. The discourses and practices in both societies need to be reflected upon.

Conclusion

This chapter consists of a close examination of two educational settings at Women's Room with three levels of analysis: firstly, I analyze the pedagogical interactions and discuss how Swedish laws are used as the norm to 'open migrant women's minds'. My empirical material shows the existence of ethnocentric assumptions in individualism and the notion of migrants' families in the two settings. In these pedagogical discussions, migrant women's viewpoints are not followed to develop further discussion. In these processes, the Other is required to contemplate, but there is a lack of learning from a different worldview.

Secondly, these two teachers' speech and practices and the common talk of migrants at Women's Room correspond with hegemonic discourse in Sweden and are

restrained by the lack of Swedish feminist theoretical intervention in racism. Their sayings and actions in turn strengthen the boundaries of difference.

Thirdly, I examine similar problems that appear in these two teaching settings and in my interview questions. I further link the problems to the feminist worldview shared between me and these feminist teachers. The uni-dimensional analysis of inequality wrongly roots the inequality of migrant women in the private sphere only. The colonial stance towards migrants' culture, religion and tradition encourages me and the teachers to reify the construction of Others and allows Swedish law and society to remain exempt from examination.

In the following chapter, I will discuss another topic – sexuality – to continue to examine the relationship between feminist teaching and the processes of othering.

Teaching sexuality

Christina: Many lesbians are coming here. […] They're dancing on the table, talking about this [their homosexuality] and of course many migrant women are shocked because that is very unusual (030814 field notes).

According to the former principal of Women's Room, the school became a safe place for lesbian students, but she also mentioned tensions between the two major student groups at Women's Room – Swedish lesbian women and migrant heterosexual women. It seems that because of these tensions, women's sexuality (especially homosexuality) becomes one of the issues discussed often among different groups of women. My questions became how do teachers deal with these tensions and with the two groups? What do the processes of discussing sexuality look like? I have shown in the previous chapter that teachers' talk and educational practices on marriage/family sustains the boundaries of difference. So another question I look at is: What about the role of teaching sexuality in processes of othering?

Coincidently, three teachers in A1 (Astrid in social science, Nadia in Swedish as a second language and Amelia in natural science) decided to have collaborated teaching with sexuality as the main theme in the spring term of 2005. I participated in these classes and raised some questions regarding the teaching of sexuality in the interviews with students and teachers. In this chapter, I will refer to the materials from my observations in these classes to explore how sexuality was discussed at Women's Room. Other interview materials will be discussed when they are relevant to the topic under discussion.

Portraits of key informants in this chapter

Several Somali students are in focus in this chapter. Hodan is from an upper class family which could provide private English education for her in her homeland. She is one of the few migrant students at Women's Room who lives in the city centre and was once questioned by the police about her living in the city centre. Another

Somali student, Muna, studied at *Grund* before she started A1. She wanted to become an assistant nurse and had some short-term working experiences in a home for the elderly. Here she experienced some racist treatment from the elderly people. The other Somali student, Rhama, worked part time at weekends and during summer vacation at the elderly home where her husband had worked before. Rhama has been in Sweden for five years and she is one of the few students in A1 who had working experiences.

Sara was the youngest student in A1. She has a Kurdish background and had migrated to different countries from her homeland at the age of two. She has a protected identity and is interested in 'honour-related violence' against women. She has amongst other written articles in a local newspaper, participated in political events and read novels on this topic, etc.

Sexuality in processes of othering

According to my observations, when students discussed sexuality, they always moved to another topic. Here are some illustrations of how the discussions went.

In her social science class, Astrid examined pictures in medical textbooks from different historical periods and discussed how woman's bodies were represented in Western medicine. In one picture, a gynaecological doctor examined a woman patient who was fully dressed. The doctor had to put his hands under the patient's long skirt to do his examination. Astrid explained that during that time, women's naked bodies were not supposed to be seen. Women were not allowed to look at their own naked bodies and married women were forced to use nightwear. Lena followed after Astrid and said, 'In the Koran, it says that men should not look at women's naked bodies. If a woman and a man have sex naked, their children will be born blind'. Three Muslim women students from Somalia (Hodan, Muna and Zahra) replied at the same time: 'No!' Zahra continued by saying, 'We can check that in the Koran! The Koran mentions that if a woman is not satisfied with sex, she can demand a divorce' (050207 field notes).

A similar situation happened in Nadia's class when the students read two stories of the first sexual experience of a young man and of a young woman in order to discuss the topic of sexuality. When they read the story of the first sexual experience of a young man, Nadia asserted that the mother of the young man lacked a sex life. Students followed Nadia's words and discussed as follows:

> Hodan [surprised]: How come she didn't have sex at all? The Koran says that if a woman does not have a sex life, she can demand a divorce.
>
> Sham [also surprised]: Where does it say this in the Koran?
> [The two students almost started a dispute with each other.]

Nadia: As far as I know, it does say so in the Koran. Nevertheless, if a Muslim woman does not want to have sex, what happens to her?
[Hodan looked at Muna, and then looked at Nadia.]

Hodan and Muna: Die!

Nadia: It was the same in Sweden. If a woman refused to have sex, the man would beat her violently. On the one hand, the Koran discusses women's sexual satisfaction, which is lacking in the Bible. On the other hand, women cannot say no to sex in marriage (050311 field notes).

In the discussions, women's right to a sex life was raised by Hodan in the above presented discussion and by Zahra in the earlier episode. It seems to me that this was a strategy used by the Muslim women in the school to resist the condemnation that often happened when Islam was singled out as *the* religion that constrains women. According to Fatima Mernissi (2003[1975]), Islam differs from Western religions in seeing active female sexuality as dangerous and thus as something in need of control.

In the class discussions, Nadia tried to state that there are both progressive and conservative parts in the Koran regarding to women's rights to sexual pleasure. Nadia also tried to lead students to reflect on regulations on sexuality in different religions and put social regulations in Sweden under examination in order to avoid singling out Islam. Nadia also pointed out the lack of emphasis on women's sexual satisfaction in Christianity as well and mentioned that there were women who refused to have sex in Sweden, a viewpoint seldom taken up in discussions on sexuality.

Examining these settings, I find that the students seem to be allowed to have some 'women's talk' on sexuality and this talk is considered to be part of the training to express one's opinion or of language training. But when the talk went over to religion, it was taken as something going towards the 'wrong track' in the wrong direction and was stopped. I interpreted this as an indication that the contents of the class as a whole were not to be altered or even amended.

Racism in teaching sexuality

According to my observations, when the teaching theme of sexuality proceeded, there were more confrontations with Islam and texts in the Koran from non-Muslim students (who were mainly from Iran in A1). The Muslim black students (who were from Somalia) also felt attacked by the other students. This resulted in a conflict between Somali students and Iranian students in A1.[112] When I made reference to this conflict, a Somali student, Rahma, complained to me that she did not like Iranian students criticizing Africa all the time. She gave me an example that once in Amelia's natural science class, Mina mentioned that African women were ignorant of sexual-

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112 This conflict, according to my observations, was a result of accumulative comments from Iranian students to Somali students, something that I already mentioned at the beginning of Chapter 6. It was accelerated when the teaching theme on sexuality proceeded.

ity and it was white men who taught African women about sexuality (050224 field notes). In an earlier conversation with me, Mina explained that she only depicted what a missionary said and that it was not her opinion. She also thought that Rahma had misunderstood her (050222 field notes).[113] Two teachers (Nadia and Astrid) and an Iranian student (A.N.) interpreted the conflict between these two groups as racism against black students: in a conversation with Nadia about the students' conflict, Nadia thought that she could understand Somali students since 'it is too much for blacks because of all kinds of discrimination in Sweden'. Nadia further mentioned that Astrid had tried to make Iranian students understand the Somali students' feelings and had said in class, 'we "whites" can never understand how the blacks are discriminated against' (050223 field notes). In the interview, A.N. said, 'There was a conflict between classmates because they did not understand each other well. […] Problems in language…perhaps some are racist. They think that, for example, she is black and she comes from Africa. She is not the same as I am' (interview with A.N., my translation).

I read this conflict as follows: racism became a 'side effect' of sexuality education and the Somali students were stigmatized in class. The racism that Somali students experienced was intertwined with the fear of Islam (Islamophobia) in the broader context, where it was easy for non-Muslim students to acquire a certain vocabulary from Swedish society/Western countries to criticize Islam. Moreover, I would like to associate Rahma's anger with Western colonial history where African women are constructed paradoxically as ignorant and hypersexual at the same time. When the Western countries began their colonial invasion in Africa, the continent was depicted as a 'dark continent' and the invasion was combined with the sexualized metaphor of Western male penetration into the 'mother-land' of African people.[114] For another example, 'positions of racial superiority [of Western countries] are associated with an ideal desexualized image of the body' (Cohen 1989: 8, quoted in Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992: 138-139) and this is embedded in 'the ideology of the split of mind and body which equals superiority and inferiority' and such an ideology 'has racist and sexist double standards underlying it' (ibid.). Through the construction of black women as hypersexual and dangerous, the domesticity of white women is constructed and the hierarchy of the West and the Rest are sustained (see also McClintock 1995; Stoler 2002). The Western discourse on sexuality of the Other provides a foundation for missionaries to become the representatives of Western religious power and who are to educate and modernize these Others. The fixed power relations between the West and the Rest legitimate Western imperial power to invade, conquer and control the Other. Accordingly, although Mina thought that she only repeated viewpoints of a missionary, for Rahma, it became a narrative about the history of colonialism in Africa.

113 This corresponds to Ulrika Schmauch's (2006) research on daily life racism that racism is often defined as a 'misunderstanding' and resistance to racism tends to be regard as being too sensitive.

114 See also Edward Said's (2003[1978]: 6, 207) description of how the Orient is penetrated and possessed in the 'male power-fantasy' that Orient women are possessed by European men. The metaphor of a dark continent appeared in Astrid's class when she mentioned that women's bodies were like a dark continent for Western medicine to explore (050207 field notes). However, the metaphor linked directly to the skin colour of black people in Africa in the context of Western imperial invasion was not mentioned in class.

What is lacking in teaching sexuality

Although sexuality interplays with various power structures in constituting racism, it was surprising for me to discover that these complicated connections of sexuality with other dimensions were not introduced when the teachers planned the teaching theme of sexuality for migrant students. When there were on-going discussions about Islam and Somali students kept to the role of the native informants[115] in class discussions, the teachers did not readjust their teaching plan, either. According to bell hooks (1994: 43-44), if the teachers make whiteness the focus of discussion, it can prevent some students from taking on the assumed role of native informants. Nevertheless, in the episodes described above, teachers seldom intervened in students' discussion of sexuality and allowed the topic to divert to Islam. If feminist teachers were sensitive to processes of othering among students and recognized that certain students became stigmatized in the interactions in class, they should have readjusted their teaching plans and have led students to examine what role sexuality plays in processes of othering in class and how such processes are embedded in Western contexts of Islamophobia and the development of Western colonial/imperial projects.

The teaching of sexuality in A1, I would argue, aims to challenge what Michel Foucault (1978: 105) calls the 'Scientia Sexualis' (the science of sexuality) in Western society. According to Foucault, four figures were constructed as privileged objects of knowledge for the 'Scientia Sexualis' of the 19th century – the 'normal', procreative heterosexual couple and the three 'deviant' Others: the hysterical woman, the masturbating child and the perverse or homosexual adult. In her class, Astrid challenged these three deviant others – in the same class when she examined Western medicine textbooks, she mentioned how the disease hysteria was connected to women's womb (050207 field notes). Throughout the teaching theme, Astrid presented Swedish research on children's sexuality (050301 field notes), sexual attitudes of young women and men (050310 field notes) and discussed homosexuality by watching and discussing the Swedish movie *Fucking Åmål* about two young lesbians in a small town (050314, 050331 field notes). These topics and materials, I would argue, are based on the Western feminists' agenda to confront a Western-centred knowledge on sexuality. But they do not take into account migrant students' experiences and are not based on non-Western societies' knowledge about sexuality.

My argument is supported by the students' feedback during the discussion of sexuality in Astrid's class:

> Muna: I think that children having orgasm is a strange thing.
>
> Noshin: Me too.
>
> Muna: In my society, when a woman starts to have her period, it means that she starts to think about sex and it is ok to talk with her about sexuality. When a boy is 13 or 14 years old, he starts to become a man, to dream much and needs to control himself (050302 field notes).

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115 According to bell hooks (1994: 43), one lone person of colour in classroom often becomes objectified by other students and the teacher, and is forced to assume the role of native informants, whose responsibility is to explain their religion, tradition and culture to the others. See also my previous discussions in Chapter 7.

I would suggest that Muna and Noshin's response to children's sexuality can be situated in a context with different views on children's sexuality. As many anthropological studies show, there are open views on children's sexuality in various societies (see Mead 1977[1942] as one of the examples). If children's sexuality is not a taboo, there is not much talk or discussion on children's sexuality. On the contrary, according to Foucault, the talk on a specific issue of sexuality reflects the regulations in (Western) societies – no matter whether it is defined as a disease in Western medicine or counter research to prove the naturalness or legitimacy of that kind of sexuality. Therefore, students' responses towards children's sexuality, I would suggest, shows that the topic of children's sexuality might not be relevant or essential for the migrant students.

Moreover, although on some occasions Astrid and Nadia intended to point out problems in othering and/or racism in students' discussion, I would argue that the lack of more systematic introductions on racialized sexuality or sexualized racism as basic issues in teaching sexuality made it difficult for students to learn a tool that might help them to analyze gendered and sexualized racism in Sweden specifically and in Western countries/Western colonial histories generally. This was shown in the previous illustrations in class discussions, such as how Iranian students could not recognize that their singling out of Islam and Somali students was embedded in Western colonial history. The discussions also show that they could not understand the institutional racism that black Muslim women face in Swedish society.

The lack of introductions on racialized sexuality was also shown on another occasion when race biology was mentioned in Astrid's class. When Astrid introduced the history of the Western women movement, the term of race biology appeared when Alva Myrdal's critique towards some pre-school teachers in Sweden was presented. Astrid explained race biology briefly for the students:

> Astrid: In Hitler's race biology, he encouraged the [Aryan] women to have more children. If a woman had more children, she could get a medal from Hitler.
> Muna: What a shame that Nadifa (another Somali student in A1 who has ten children) was absent today. Otherwise she could get a medal from Hitler (050205 field notes).

This example shows that the explanation was too short and saw to it that Muna did not understand that in Hitler's race biology, black women were not considered legitimated mothers who could produce a 'superior race'. Therefore, I would suggest, the teaching on racism cannot be simply an add-on element in the teaching of feminist issues. Instead it should be a starting point in teaching, especially when feminist issues are addressed to migrant women.

Furthermore, I would like to add that the discourse on sexuality is limited to a certain form of narratives of sexuality. Firstly, the discourse on sexuality presented in the teaching is based on an individualized viewpoint of sexuality, such as Astrid's discussion on personal attitudes towards sexuality and Nadia's discussion on personal first sex experience.

Secondly, it is limited to the framework of Western sexology and medicine. This is apparent in Amelia's discussions on sexual biology, contraceptive methods and sexually transmitted diseases in natural science class.

Thirdly, although in Nadia's class the fictions they read illustrated sensations of sexuality through literary metaphors, the narratives of sexuality in A1 as a whole left no place for narratives on pleasure and feelings of sexuality. For example, the students made some sex jokes but I could not understand them because of the language barrier. In the book *Embroideries*, Marjane Satrapi (2006) illustrates the sex jokes among Iranian women. What difference would it make if the teaching of sexuality begins with sex jokes among these women? Might this create a space for avoidance of reproducing the discourse of sexuality as a source of danger and repression?

Lastly, the teaching was constrained within the framework of a one-dimensional analysis of sexuality – that is, the teachers only use a gender perspective to analyze sexuality and do not examine its intersection with other dimensions, such as how sexuality was employed in the development of colonial projects in Western countries and how racism was gendered and sexualized. These are themes that Avtar Brah (2001) discusses in examining the relations between gendered racism, ethnicities and nationalisms in Western European countries. I suggest that teaching about the intersectionality of sexuality with religion, race/ethnicity and construction of the Other is essential for migrant students. Even though the teachers were not prepared to talk about gendered/sexualized racism and racialized sexuality, these issues arose in various classroom discussions. As I argued earlier, the lack of preparation by teachers and students to become familiar with the intersection of sexuality, racism and colonialism made it difficult for teachers to lead the discussions or caused students to overlook the racism produced in the classroom.

Homosexuality, one of the deviant Others defined by the Western discourse on sexuality, was in focus in the last part of Astrid's teaching of sexuality. In the next section, I will shift the scene of teaching sexuality to discussions on lesbians.

Homophobia, heteronormativity and racism

In the last teaching activity for teaching sexuality, students in Astrid's class watched the film *Fucking Åmål.* After the film, Noor, asked me if there were many young lesbians in Taiwan. She said that she had never seen lesbians in her own country (050314 field notes).

After watching the film, the class was firstly divided into small groups to discuss the film and then gathered together in the classroom. I was assigned in a group with Hodan from Somalia, Sara from Kurdistan and Anna from Iran. The following presents some of the discussions among the students:

> Hodan: The students in FS were lesbians and they were not interested in men.
>
> Anna: Once I saw two students kissing each other at the tram stop.
>
> Hodan: Yes, I also saw them kissing each other in school. I dared not look at them directly and turned my face away.

Anna: Me too!

[Sara made sounds to show her disgusted feelings toward lesbian students kissing each other]

Hodan [towards me]: When gay men adopted children, they wanted to have sex with them.

Chialing: Do you think that single fathers have sex with their daughters?

Hodan: No.

[Then the group discussion shifted to teenagers]

Sara [made a joke with Hodan]: Perhaps your boys are gay!

Hodan [irritated]: If my sons become gay, I would be extremely sad and it is better that they die. Sara, do never ever joke about this with me! I know a woman who poisoned her son because he was gay. Then she took all the other children back to Africa and swore that she would never ever come back to Europe! If one is a gay or lesbian, one would be killed in Somalia. When a woman is a prostitute, she wouldn't be killed.

Sara: No, I do not think people have the right to kill somebody else.

Chialing: How about the situations of gays and lesbians in Iran?

Anna: Islam in Iran is not the same as it is in Somalia.

[Astrid joined the group discussion]

Hodan: According to the Koran, it is not right to be homosexual.

Sara: I do not agree with killing homosexual people. There is only one Koran but people interpret it whatever way they want.

Hodan: Not only gays and lesbians would be punished. If a woman is not faithful within marriage, it is ok to kill her.

Sara: No, it is people who interpret the Koran so…

Hodan: No, it is the law book and no one can interpret it.

Astrid: We have to stop the discussion now but we can discuss more when we talk about religion later in this term (050331 field notes).

A week later, the whole class discussed their group discussions. The answers to the question 'How is homosexuality addressed in your society? Is it taboo or accepted?'[116] were as follows:

Sham: It is a taboo. I have never heard about that. Maybe there are gays, but I have never heard about lesbians.

Muna: Me too. There are some gays but no lesbians in Somalia.

Rahma: But I heard that in Holland there are Somali women who are lesbians.

Astrid: In Western history, the concept of 'homosexual' did not exist until the 18th or 19th century, about 150 years ago. But actually homosexual relations have existed throughout history. For example, in ancient Greece, it was thought that women were like animals and, accordingly, it was better to have sex with men than with women (050406 field notes).

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116 This is one of the questions from a sheet Astrid distributed to the groups as guidelines for discussion.

In these episodes, migrant students seem to deny the existence of homosexual people (especially lesbians) in their ethnic groups or in their societies. There are also negative viewpoints and attitudes towards homosexual people in their discussions. This seems to correspond to the image of migrants as homophobic in Swedish society. I will further analyze these phenomena in the following.

Racist stereotypes and homophobia

In these discussions, there seemed to be a contrast between the existence of Swedish lesbians (no matter whether they are depicted in the film or visible in daily life at Women's Room) and the denial of the existence of lesbians in migrant students' folk groups/'homelands', although there are differences among the group, such as Rahma's mentioning of Somali lesbian women in Holland. There are also different extents of visibility between gays and lesbians for migrant students.[117]

The African woman in Hodan's story interpreted homosexuality as a product of Europe and the woman thought that she could escape 'contamination' of the 'white disease' (Collins 2004: 108) on her other children by leaving Europe for a safe place without homosexuality. When Patricia Hill Collins examines relations between racism and heterosexism, she makes the following statement:

> As African American LGBT people point out, assuming that all Black people are heterosexual and that all LGBT people are White distorts the experiences of LGBT Black people. Moreover, such comparisons misread the significance of ideas about sexuality to racism and race to heterosexism (Collins 2004: 88).

The denial of the existence of gays and lesbians (more apparent in the case of lesbians) among migrant students, I would argue, constitutes a mechanism that makes homosexual people in these ethnic groups more invisible since they have to hide in the closet and pass as 'straight'. This in turn prevents these migrant students from being able to see gays and lesbians in their ethnic groups or in their societies. As Collins illustrates, although the black community and black church provide African Americans a space for resistance to racial oppression, the inability of examination of heterosexism within the black community sustains the traditional, patriarchal and heterosexual households/norms in the black community.[118]

On the other hand, the presumption also preserves the racism underlying it. According to Collins, racist assumptions about an authentic blackness grounded in a promiscuous, naturalized heterosexuality which leads to procreation define the blacks as those who 'breed like animals' (ibid.: 105). This helps to construct whiteness as

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117 Similar phenomenon exists in the Swedish gay and lesbian movement. Lesbian organizing in Sweden has to focus on counteracting marginalization and invisibility (Ross and Landström 1999: 315).

118 Although I focus my discussion on the closet in black communities, it does not mean that the closet exists *only* within black communities. Similarly, Collins focuses on examination of heterosexism within the black community but heterosexism and traditional, patriarchal and heterosexual households/norms can be found everywhere.

well. By defining blacks' sexuality as naturalized, the 'unnatural' homosexual sexuality which does not lead to procreation cannot belong to black people. Accordingly, 'whitened' homosexuality is constructed and it is regarded as 'an internal threat to the integrity of the (White) nuclear family' (ibid: 106).

Relating this to the migrant students at Women's Room and migrant women in Sweden, as mentioned in Chapter 6, many migrant women with children (especially black Muslim women) are discriminated. Discrimination against these women contains a binary distinction between nature and culture. These women are regarded as in need of modernization so that they can be suitable citizens of the welfare state. As Collins argues above, if black politics fails to examine the interplay of racism and heterosexism, it is difficult to fight against sexualized racism that sustains the oppressive power system on black people. Similarly, if feminist teachers cannot help migrant students develop tools to untangle the complex intersection between racism and heterosexism, they cannot successfully fight against discrimination that fixes migrant women in the position of 'traditional' women with the 'natural' responsibility of procreation in contrast to the 'liberal' Swedish women.

I will further discuss the lack of engaging heteroxexism and racism in the section on the pitfalls of teaching sexuality. Before proceeding to that section, I will analyze homophobic attitudes shown among the migrant students.

As mentioned earlier, the students presented there are stereotypes of gays and negative attitudes towards lesbians in the group discussions. But there are also differences amongst the students: Hodan seemed to agree that it was ok to kill a person because of his/her sexual orientation or disloyalty within marriage. She thought these rules are from the Koran and the Koran is not contestable. Although Sara showed disgusted feelings towards lesbian students at Women's Room, she had a different view with regards to the Koran and the right to kill homosexuals. This is, I suspect, related to her hidden identity and her efforts to stop 'honour killings'. She also stressed the humanitarian principles in Islam that 'People cannot beat others, cannot lie and cannot beat women' and was against all kinds of killing in the name of the religion (interview with Sara).

Anna, another student who showed negative feelings towards lesbian students, also distanced herself from Hodan's stance on killing homosexuals by saying that 'Islam in Iran is not the same as it is in Somalia'. Sara and Anna's words demonstrate heterogeneity within Islam and indicate that the various religious views can counteract the monolithic colonial representation of Third-World religion (Modood 2006; Narayan 1997).

Moreover, even though Muna is also from Somalia, her viewpoints on homosexuality are not the same as Hodan's:

> Chialing: What does the Koran say about homosexuality?
>
> Muna: It is not allowed.
>
> Chialing: We watched the film *Fucking Åmål*. When we watched the film, how did you feel?

Muna: I am not supposed to watch such a film. I cannot watch a film in which a man and a woman have sex. It makes people less valued. It is much worse if there are two women [having sex], and even worse if there are two men.

Chialing: Is it difficult for you to discuss the film since it is not allowed?

Muna: Within my heart, I have been very faithful. But to discuss is something else. I am not allowed to say that I accept homosexuality or they can have their own lives. I cannot say these things since I do not believe in that. And also, it is not acceptable in my belief.

Chialing: But what happens if I say that it is ok to be homosexual? Will you quarrel with me?

Muna: No. I cannot put my own opinions on your viewpoints. I cannot do that. These are my beliefs, my opinions.

Chialing: What would you say about the fact that in Sweden people are allowed to live together without getting married or to be homosexual?

Muna: Yes, it is accepted in Swedish society. And the biggest problem is my belief. I am not allowed to say that it is ok. Therefore I did not say much in the discussion (interview with Muna, my translation).

Muna believes in the Koran. Accordingly, it is not allowed for her to say it is ok to be homosexual. Nevertheless, she will not impose her opinions on others. In the quotation she also mentioned that her religion does not allower her to see people having sex generally, although there is a hierarchy of values where sex of gay people is the lowest. Muna's words remind me to contemplate further on students' reactions towards lesbian students' intimate behaviours. Would they react in the same if a heterosexual couple kiss in public? Are there different reactions if it is a gay couple? Before their reactions can be classified as homophobic, are there any possibilities to discuss these further?

When I asked Muna about the 'progressive' laws on homosexuality in Sweden, her answer indicate that her religious belief becomes 'a biggest problem' for her. Muna also mentioned that her belief constrained her in the discussion and saw to it that she became silent. This makes me reflect further whether the kind of feminist questions I raised caused Muna to perceive her belief as a problem and also what kind of feminist teaching makes migrant students silent (Ellsworth 1992: 100-107). In the following section, I will try to find answers to these questions by probing the teachers' observations of migrant students' attitudes of homosexuality and by exploring a Muslim teacher's viewpoints on homosexuality and Islam.

Pitfalls in two kinds of teaching homosexuality

Linkage between anti-homophobia, racism and nationalism

The migrant students' negative attitude toward homosexuality seems to correspond to the teachers' observations of the migrant women students and such observations seem to provide a reason for teaching homosexuality for migrant students.

For example, Karin mentioned that 'homosexuality is *so* difficult for them' (interview with Karin, original emphasis). In the interviews, I asked teachers why there were few lesbian teachers at the branch school and in A1. Teachers at Women's Room had not noticed the phenomenon of fewer lesbian teachers in classes for migrant students only until I raised the issue.[119] These teachers were not in administrative positions and their answers can not represent the reasons for Women's Room's assignment of fewer lesbian teachers in classes with migrant students. Perhaps it is because of the subjects that, for example, all teachers for Swedish as a second language are heterosexual women. But interestingly, the teachers did not give the type of subjects taught as a reason but gave migrant students' homophobia as a reason:

> At the branch school there is only one [lesbian teacher] …and in A1, no one right now. But if you look at the staff, it's 50-50. Perhaps it's because…you shouldn't generalize, but I do it anyway. Many of the people from other countries are homophobic, and if you are lesbian or if you are gay, you don't want to meet those kinds of views because that's your identity. And as a lesbian, you don't want to hear, 'Oh, all lesbians, we should cut their head off'. It comes too close. [As I told you in the beginning, when I started teaching], it was tough for me… these neo-Nazis. And they told me that they wanted to kill me because I was worth nothing [since Astrid has a Swedish mother and a father with a migrant background]. I shouldn't have been the one who had to take on that war. A Swedish teacher should have done that for me. […] That's what I think…one of the reasons [for few lesbian teachers for migrant students]…because they can be very tough (interview with Astrid).

> If I were homosexual, I would get hurt. But I think that's good that they are not afraid of talking about all the…awful thoughts they have sometimes. I try to hang it on society [to the structural level in society]. I had a long discussion today with two of the women who felt very discriminated by the social security system. They tried to lift it up to the level of the whole society. And I think that is also a very good way to start to talk about, for example, homosexuality. But then they start to talk about their countries and say, well, there are no homosexuals in our countries (interview with Nina).

In the interviews, Astrid and Nina tried to be empathetic with lesbian teachers who might encounter homophobia from migrant students. Astrid reflected on ealier experiences of being harassed by male racist students when she started teaching. I can imagine the difficult situations Astrid had confronted in her class, when she started teaching high school as a young female teacher. In interactive processes between teachers and students, there are some occasions that students might reverse the power relations by using the advantaged positions of (male) gender, (white) race and/or (hetero) sexual orientation (Luke and Gore 1992; Ng, Staton and Scane 1995). But these transgressions, I would argue, cannot alter the institutional power structure

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119 In contrast with this phenomenon, there were more teachers with migrant backgrounds for migrant students at Women's Room. For example, three teachers in A1 have a migrant background. In the branch school, half of the teachers (three in six) have a migrant background. Teachers at Women's Room did not notice the phenomenon either. Some of the teachers with a migrant background mentioned the advantages that they 'have larger knowledge about students' lives' (interview with Astrid) or can be a role model (who works as a teacher) for students (interview with Rabia).

that exists between teachers and students as a whole. It is the teacher who has the right to decide what to teach, who has the cultural and social capital to lead the teaching process and who determines the grades of students.

In the interview Astrid was hesitant to generalize and see all migrant students as homophobic. This implies her recognition of the racist stereotype towards migrants that assumes migrants are more homophobic than ethnic Swedes. Similarly, Nadia stressed the risk of reproduction of racism and reinforcement of prejudices about migrants in the interview:

> Chialing: When different cultures meet, there seems to be conflicts. For example, we discussed *Fucking Åmål*, and there were some who believed in Islam and they did not accept lesbians. There was someone who said if her son was gay, she'd kill him. What do you think about such kind of conflicts?[120]
>
> Nadia: The conflicts are perhaps more extreme or more pronounced, but there are Swedes who think so too. We have students who go to A2 and A3...Swedish students who have such ideas. […] As teachers, we must not be afraid of these situations and we must dare to take on the difficult things. Then it can create large problems when people do not respect others as persons with basic value. If they do not respect others and say it is ok for people to kill those who differ, it can be very difficult. And the discussion may go to an extreme where we run the risks of producing racism or reinforcing prejudices about migrants. But it is my duty to show that migrants are not one category, that migrants represent various cultures, and that they are different individuals, just like Swedes. […] Prejudice against gays and lesbians is more pronounced among migrant students. And perhaps it arises more quickly expressed since Swedes know what people are supposed or not supposed to think and perhaps do not say their prejudices. Swedes know that people are not allowed to say that gays are supposed to be killed. But migrants do not know that they are not allowed to say this. […] It is heavy and difficult, but you cannot avoid that task. It's like problems in society. If we do not dare to do it here with 20 women, how can we change our society? (interview with Nadia, my translation)

Contrary to my presumed 'cultural conflicts', Nadia illustrated clearly that a similar homophobic attitude exists both among 'us' and 'them'. According to Nadia, the only difference between the two groups is that the Swedes know what to say politically correctly, while migrants might not know the politically correct norm in society. She emphasized differences among migrants and Swedes and attempted to deconstruct the categories of migrants and Swedes in the teaching processes. Nadia also believes that it is the responsibility of feminist teachers to dare and address the issue of homophobia in order to change society. I would like to suggest that feminist teachers not only focus on homophobia but also pay attention to the hegemonic discourse that encourages them to raise gender equality issues with migrants:

> People must dare to discuss values and take up questions concerning gender equality and integration in a public and open agenda. This regards to raising questions to teach-

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120 Notice again that I also participated in constructing religious migrants as homophobic. See the analysis of my research role in the previous chapter.

ers how they manage when a girl cannot do the same things as boys, etc.' (Ranstorp and dos Santos 2009: 21, my translation).

I would argue that although these teachers sense the racist stereotype of 'homophobic migrants', they did not clearly acknowledge the racist aspects in homophobia to the migrant students. In some countries, there are questions about attitudes toward homosexuality in the exams for acquisition of citizenship (Gunkel and Pitcher 2008; Schmitt 2010). In other words, homosexuality is not only constructed as a unique product in (white) Western countries, as Collins (2004) argues earlier, but also used as a 'Western basic value' to test whether or not a migrant is 'suitable' in the Western country. As a result, 'anti-homophobia' is not a policy that Western countries actively practice in their own countries among their own people, but a policy used in immigration control in order to filter out the 'unsuitable' migrants.

For another example, in Danish Pride from 2001 the title of the festival was 'Danish Mermaid Pride from 2001 in Copenhagen'[121] and it has become one of the important images of the city on the official tourism site of Copenhagen.[122] Similarly, Pride week in Stockholm has become an important tourist resources and image of the city. When these cities are portrayed as 'gay friendly', hate crimes that happen in the daily lives and threats to Pride which occur every year are downplayed. Biased nationalism in the pride movement, I would suggest, is something essential to analyze together with the employment of anti-homophobia as a tool for combating institutional racism.

Inability in examining heterosexism in Islam

I have analyzed the pitfalls in white teachers' teaching of homosexuality. What is the difference if such teaching is taken on by a non-white teacher at Women's Room? There was an episode in Rabia's class on homosexuality. Rabia talked about Swedish law for migrant students and she mentioned homosexuality briefly:

> Rabia: What happens if two men live together?
>
> Layla: They are cohabitant partners.
>
> Rabia: They are not gays. […] It is like five friends who want to rent the same apartment. They do not need permission. […] If two men want to get married, what will the law say about that?
>
> Layla: No problem.
>
> Rabia: What about two men who want to live together and adopt children?
>
> Layla: It is just like a family.
>
> Rabia: They were not regarded as a legitimated family. On the contrary, it is ok in the USA. […] In Sweden, a man and a woman, two men, two women can have children or adopt children from abroad; a single man or woman can have children alone or adopt

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121 I would like to thank Mathias Danbolt, a queer activist and art historian in Denmark who reminded me of the the nationalist bias in the Copenhagen Pride Parades.

122 http://www.copenhagenphotos.dk/engine2.phtml?maxAmount=12&soegeord=mermaid (accessed 090209).

children from abroad. These are families, many different families. This is regulated by law, not by religion and it is different from our countries [the original countries Rabia and migrant students come from]. People can have different opinions (040913 field notes).

In this episode, when students' response to gay men was 'no problem', Rabia shifted the question and made students confused since the question of five friends living together was not a specific question to discuss at all. Moreover, Rabia did not notice that there are different regulations in various states in the US and she briefly presented the idea of various families without further discussions with students. When I was in class, I sensed a lack of preparation from Rabia in talking about homosexuality. In the interview, Rabia elaborated the viewpoints on homosexuality in Islam further:

> Chialing: You mentioned that the family is the basic institution in Islam. It seems to mean the heterosexual family. […] What about gays, lesbians and cohabitant couples?
>
> Rabia: In Islam we don't have such concepts. […] Islam condemns it [homosexuality]. That is not a natural way. […] How do you get more generations if all [people] become lesbians? Nobody wants to become pregnant. How? How? The species is finished. So I don't know. Why do I get this responsibility to…procreate more children but not you? Why? We have the same [responsibility]. Maybe… this is nature. So everybody has to procreate.
>
> Chialing: What about here in Sweden, it is ok to be a lesbian?[123]
>
> Rabia: […] Islam condemns it. Islam doesn't like it. But…it is the [choice of the] human being, I have to respect. I can't tell you the way to lead your life or how you have to live. […] I am sure that in every country there are groups [of homosexuals] and as a human being we have to respect them as human beings…to live with them and to have contact with them. But I don't know…I haven't studied much about this. I don't know what they think of the society's claim to have new generations (interview with Rabia).

Rabia's words reflect the ideology that connects sexuality with procreation within heterosexual marriage. For Rabia, procreation is not a life choice, but a responsibility that no one may escape. Based on the inability to procreate, she argues the 'unnaturalness' of homosexuality and irresponsibility of homosexual people. In my opinion, Rabia cannot critically examine heteronormativity and procreation-centredness in Islam[124] and this limits her discussions on homosexuality with students in class.

Regarding this, on the one hand, I contemplated about the possibilities of employment of the 'similarities' between Rabia and the Muslim students so that Rabia might have more knowledge and vocabulary to communicate with Muslim students. She might be more empathetic and, accordingly, another dialogue process in discussing homosexuality might be created.[125] This, I suspect, might shift the centre of the

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123 Notice that here I contrasted laws in Sweden with the regulations in the Koran, as two teachers discussed in the previous chapter.

124 Note that heterosexualism is not unique in Islam, but can be found in other religions, Western sexology and other social and medical discourses (Foucault 1978; Irvine 1990).

125 I discussed this in a personal conversation with Nadia and she contemplated if her being an atheist makes some students to close their ears to her teaching (050314 field notes).

classroom and positions the teacher's opinion as one of the perspectives that students can challenge or discuss further. On the other hand, as I have argued earlier, I think teachers still have structural power over students and this makes their opinion as one of a variety of perspectives difficult. Furthermore, when Rabia is the only Muslim teacher and becomes in some way a token at Women's Room, I wonder whether or not her homophobic attitudes would reify stereotypes towards migrants.

Conclusion

This chapter explores the teaching of sexuality for migrant students at Women's Room. Processes of othering appeared in discussions from sexuality to confrontation of Islam, racist representations of black women's sexuality and the danger of linkage of homophobia with stereotypes of migrants.

As I have argued, there are three pitfalls in sexuality education at Women's Room: Firstly, it is not based on students' knowledge of sexuality. In discussing the role of a critical teacher, Elizabeth Ellsworth (1992: 99) argues, teachers do not necessarily know 'better' than their students because of the limit of their own gendered, raced and classed position. However, these teachers shown in the episodes, I would argue, seem to present themselves as those who know the truth in the educational process. Secondly, the contents of teaching sexuality are based on a Western feminists' agenda to interject a Western discourse of sexuality. The uni-dimensional analysis of sexuality limits sexuality education at Women's Room within the individual level of changing one's opinions, attitudes or broadening one's choices. I further argue that there is a lack of intervention of construction of sexualized racism and racialized sexuality in imperial and colonial legacies. Although teachers are aware of the stereotypes of migrants as homophobic, the linkage between anti-homophobic and immigrant control and the viewpoint of homosexuality as a Western product are not highlighted in the teaching process. Accordingly, teachers fail to readjust their teaching of sexuality to combat racism and ethnocentrism in their class.

According to Foucault (1978), the increase of talk and discourse on sexuality does not mean the liberation of sexuality but rather the subtle control of sexuality by polymorphous techniques of power. In probing sexuality education in the US (Trudell 1993) and Britain (Waywood 1996), the two authors discuss the role that the nation plays in sexuality education and the complicated relationship between race, class and age and sexual control and discipline in schools. My study of teaching sexuality at Women's Room indicates that there is an implicit project (although it might not be the intention of the teachers) to educate migrant women into sexualized citizens of Western societies who are open to talking about sexuality and who can respect homosexuals, which strengthens the ideology of viewing liberation and human rights as the basic Western value and sustains the difference between 'us' and 'them'.

Understanding Women's Room

My dissertation explores the process of othering in a feminist adult educational institution in Sweden. This thesis places the relationship between racism and feminist teaching at the centre of analysis, situating feminist educational practices within a Swedish gender discourse on nationhood and belonging. My fieldwork focused on two groups of women – migrant students and feminist teachers – and their active processes of negotiation, resistance and reproduction of boundaries between 'us' and 'them'. I, the researcher, ultimately participated in the othering process, as earlier chapters describe.

I hope that my study will contribute to further research in three areas: (1) feminist teaching practices; (2) theorizing difference, especially the role of gender, race and ethnicity in Swedish feminist debates and in Western feminist scholarship; and (3) the process of conducting feminist research and the dilemma of closeness and distance in writing a feminist research product. I hope that I have participated in what Nira Yuval-Davis (2006b) calls a political dialogue that brings the reflective knowledge of our own positioning and identity and probed the possibilities for transversal politics in feminist educational praxis and in feminist theory more generally.

In prior chapters I argue that the introduction of a Nordic or Swedish model of the welfare state by several feminist activists and scholars in Taiwan was based on a static understanding of the Swedish model that ignores serious and deep transformations. I make clear that a more process oriented approach can provide insights into such changes. For example, the neoliberal turn of the welfare state in Sweden has implied, amongst other things, a shift from a relatively inclusive migration and ethnic regime to a more exclusive one. In opposition to this trend of theorizing and importing the Swedish model, I situate Women's Room, its teachers and its migrant students within a context of regime change in the Swedish welfare state, relating my analysis of educational practices to the broader context of discourses on gender equality and the welfare state in Sweden.

Rethinking difference

This project uses Avtar Brah's (1996) concept of processes of doing difference to engage with Women's Room teachers' and my former perception of difference as static social categories listed in an 'etc.-clause'. This choice places insights from the field in a critical dialogue with postcolonial and black feminist theory, which regards difference as a mechanism for exclusionary and discriminatory practices.

The concept of intersectionality is chosen by me as it allows me to theorize difference in better ways. First, it allows me to demonstrate how categories of difference are interwoven and intermeshed in the processes of boundary making at Women's Room as well as to make visible that different social categories, such as racialized class locations and racialized gender/sexuality, are articulated in different forms of racism.

Secondly, intersectionality moves away from a focus on individual identity to locate inequalities based on multifaceted social relations. It identifies gendered and sexualized racism in the interrelations of power structures, such as social and economic position, cultural representation, education, welfare state social policies and immigration regulations. My results demonstrate that gendered and sexualized racism is embedded in discourses and practices of gender equality and the welfare state in Sweden.

Finally, intersectionality provides an alternative to the 'add-on' approach, which neccessarily prioritizes a single category. As I argue in previous chapters, the exclusion of migrant women's experiences in feminist teaching cannot be solved with more talk about individual experiences. Nor can more discussion of sexism, racism or homophobia *per se* make feminist educational practices more inclusive. What is needed is more research to analyze how social categories and different axes of difference articulate in and by relation to one another, so that we can have a better understanding of difference's relationship to inequality.

Although my results highlight gendered and sexualized racist practices and discourses in feminist teaching and identify how these racist practices contribute to boundaries of difference and belonging, my research also illuminates complexities within the two groups of women in my study. Migrant students, not only disidentify with the category of 'them', but also continuously challenge the stigmatized representation of migrants in society. Teachers present a fractured 'we', who criticize the boundaries of difference, while in other contexts (re)constructing the migrant students as Others in the educational processes. The few teachers with migrant backgrounds find themselves in a position of in-betweenness: as outsiders within, who often position themselves as 'us', but sometimes ally with 'them' by acknowledging common experiences of racism. This demonstrates that subject formation and identity are always fragmented and contradictory.

This thesis situates subject formation within the social world within a broader context of cultural representation, economic and social position and education. By critically examining accepted political visions in 'progressive' education, I demon-

strate othering processes and racism at work in educational institutions, confirming the results of related race and education research in Sweden. My research, however, also presents resistance and the possibilities opened by transversal politics in feminist teaching. These original findings break the opposition between 'progressive' and 'traditional' education. In the following section, I would like to restate some of my research results on feminist education, which is regarded as one kind of 'progressive' education.

Rethinking feminist educational practices

As this thesis demonstrates, a process of othering occurs when feminist teachers employ a uni-dimensional understanding of women, an understanding that overemphasizes gender and excludes how social inequalities shape women's experiences of the world. Some examples include discussing family and marriage without confronting the racist stereotype of migrant women as members of patriarchal, religious and traditional families that subordinate them, teaching about sexuality without focusing on the colonial and postcolonial experience and legacies of sexualized racism or teaching about homosexuality without challenging the dominant discourse's assumption of migrants' homophobia.

Thoughtful feminist teachers often find some experiences of migrant women or certain feminist issues have been selectively highlighted in mainstream discourses to construct the Other. I do not suggest avoiding mention of these experiences, nor abandoning the possibility of re-examining these issues. Feminist scholars have demonstrated that experiences can serve as sites of interpretation and contestation (Brah 1996; Scott 1992). Intersectionality also offers a key way to interpret women's differences, so that individual experiences can be understood within society's intersecting power structures. My research materials demonstrate that a feminist praxis opposing racism emerges when migrant women students' experiences are articulated as a base of knowledge to challenge culturalization of migrant men's violence against women and scarce resources in the segregated suburbs where migrant students live. If feminist teachers can further employ an intersectional perspective on racialized gender issues, it will provide both teachers and students with a valuable tool for combating sexism and homophobia in their own ethnic communities, as well as gendered and sexualized racism in the larger society.

Although I have analyzed othering in feminist teaching as central to the teachers' practices, throughout the thesis I have shifted the term 'they' feminist teachers to 'we' feminist teachers. Indeed, practice of an intersectional perspective in feminist teaching must constantly engage 'our' feminist worldview, whether we are re-examining colonial and postcolonial legacies and the colonial stance toward migrants' cultures, religions and traditions or – closer to home – challenging ethnocentrism in feminist theory and politics.

Some last words

As I conclude, I would like to address some limitations of my research. I deliberately chose not to focus on Women's Room classrooms A2 and A3, where migrant and Swedish women are mixed. The interactions between 'us' and 'them' and teaching processes in these classes might vary from those described in this thesis. In addition, I found that my own postcolonial perspective grew markedly during the process of researching and writing this dissertation. This development of postcolonial perspective made me aware of limitations in my own assumptions and ways of seeing. Consequently, I was unable to detect or analyze some of the problems in instructors' feminist teaching when I was in the field. I also believe the dialogue processes would have differed if I had had a more clear postcolonial perspective when I carried out my research at Women's Room.

As I have shown, Women's Room teachers never entirely embrace the colonial legacy. Neither is their intention to sustain a representation of the Other without critiquing Swedish society. There is also considerable diversity in their feminist viewpoints and stances. This thesis nevertheless criticizes their/our feminist teaching, since I believe in the combination of feminist theory and practice, and I believe the feminist ambition that theory and practice can together serve as an emancipating political strategy. Women's Room, I would argue, should be not merely a house of difference, but a place for challenging women's perpetuation of difference.

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Appendix I: Abbreviations

A1:   The first-year general course at the main school of Women's Room, equated with the first-year of senior high schools. It is a course only for migrant women.

A2, A3:   The second- and the third-year general courses at the main school of Women's Room, equated with the second- and the third-year courses of senior high schools. These two courses are mixed with migrant students and ethnic Swedish students.

ABF   *Arbetarnas Bildningsförbund*, the Workers' Educational Association.

FI: Feminist Initiative, a feminist party in Sweden.

FS: 'Feminist Studies' course, a one-year short-term course at the main school of Women's Room. A class with mostly young, ethnic Swedish students.

Grund: 'Basic Course' at the branch school Women's Room, a basic course only for migrant women. After finishing *Grund* course, students can continue A1 at the main school.

KiU: 'Women in the Development' course at the branch school of Women's Room, a basic course only for migrant women. After finishing *KiU* course, students can continue *Grund* course.

Komvux: Municipality adult educational institutions (*Komvuxutbildningen*), with provision of basic and high school education for adults.

LGBT: Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual/transgender.

SFI: *Svenska för invandrare*, 'Swedish for migrants' course.

TGEEA: Taiwan Gender Equity Education Association, an NGO in Taiwan.

Appendix II: Descriptions of the fieldwork

Table A: Observations in the field

class	Number of courses	course		Other activities
		Teacher/course	Times	
A1	71 courses	Astrid	36	8 meetings
		Nadia	17	
		Tyra	15	
		Amelia	3	
Grund	23 courses	Karin	19	
		Rabia	3	
		Elizabeth	1	
FS	17 courses	Birgitta	10	2 practical courses
		Elin	2	1 activity day in a community centre
		Margareta	2	
		Frida	1	
KiU	14 courses	Rabia	5	
		Nina	5	
		Tyra	4	
Other classes	4 courses	Science A3	1	
		Feminist distance course	1	
		Feminist Science	1	
		Project course	1	
The whole school	24 courses mix of students from different classes	English	10	2 student group meetings
		Swimming	12	5 students' meetings
		gymnastics	2	7 school activities*
				20 teachers' meeting
				16 teachers in-job training
				5 board members' meetings

*__school activities:__ Book Exhibition (040924), Muslim holiday (041125), Solidarity Day (041201), Ending Day and Christmas (041221), International Women's Day (050307-08); open house (050401), Feminist Forum (050402-03)

Appendix III: Interview

Table B. List of interviewees[126]

category	Numbers of interview	interviewee
folk high school	1	Thomas (040621)
scholars	2	Wuokko Knocke (040727) Gunnel Kalsson (041206)
board members	2	Gabrielle (040717) Emilie (040728)
teachers	17	Amelia (050119) Astrid (050118) Birgitta (050321) Christina (050414) Elin (050301) Frida (050112) Harriet (050113) Karin (050121) Katarina (050314) Linda (050329) Linnéa (050309) Margareta (050202) Mia (050405) Nadia (050404) Nina (050302) Rabia (050318) Tyra (050311)
students	13	A.N. (050401), Iran, A1 Clara (050406), Sweden, FS Gry (050413), Sweden, A3 Kiana (050414), Iran, A3 Malin (050413), Sweden, FS Marjam (050408), Iraq, *Grund* Monica (050128), Lebanon, *Grund* Muna (050411), Somalia, A1 Nancy (050316), Iran, A1 Noor (050207), Kurdistan (Iraq), A1 Sara (050207), Kurdistan (Iraq), A1 Sron and Sron's family (041203), Kurdistan (Iran), *KiU* Ulrike (050302), Sweden, A2
total	35	

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126 I deliberately do not to describe details of my informants (unless it is necessary) in order to enhance the anonymity. I put real names of scholars on this list and the rest of the names are pseudonyms. The interviews with Swedish scholars are marked with their last name.

Appendix IV. Students

Table C. Homeland of students in four classes at Women's Room[127]

	homeland	A1	*Grund*	*KiU*	FS
Asia A1: 11 *Grund*: 11 *KiU*: 7	Iran	6	1	0	0
	Iraq	1	5	2	0
	Kurdistan	3	4	3	0
	Lebanon	1	1	1	0
	Palestine	0	0	1	0
Africa A1: 6 *Grund*: 8 *KiU*: 8	Eritrea	0	1	0	0
	Gambia	0	1	0	0
	Morocco	0	1	1	0
	Somalia	6	4	6	0
	Sudan	0	0	1	0
	Tunisia	0	1	0	0
Europe (outside Scandinavian) A1: 2, *KiU*: 1	Turkey	1	1	0	0
	Romania	0	0	1	0
	Ukraine	1	0	0	0
South America A1: 1	Columbia	1	0	0	0
Northern Europe	Sweden	0	0	0	23
total		20	20	16	23

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127 There were slight changes in numbers of students in these four classes during the school year. Kurdistan was classified by me as one of students' homeland because of the strong Kurdish identity of these students.