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**Master's thesis**

**Incorporating *The Hate U Give* in the  
English language classroom to  
promote critical thinking and ethical  
awareness regarding racism and  
social justice**

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## **Abstract**

The overall aim of this thesis is to discuss the benefits of implementing the young adult novel *The Hate U Give* (2018) by Angie Thomas into the English language classroom in upper secondary. The thesis examines if working with this novel has potential to promote critical thinking and ethical awareness within the students regarding social injustice and racism.

I looked into the importance of promoting critical thinking and ethical awareness in connection to the core elements decreed in the core curriculum for primary and secondary education as well as elements from the English curriculum, and the development of intercultural competence. This proved that openness, tolerance and curiosity towards other cultures, ways of living and mindsets are of great importance in fostering democratic values and well-functioning human beings. Looking into previous theories and studies also suggested that working on ethics through usage of multicultural young adult literature is fruitful for the development of critical thinking and ethical awareness.

In *The Hate U Give* Angie Thomas depicts layers of racism such as institutionalized racism, white privilege and code-switching in a nuanced and authentic way that challenge the “single story”. Therefore, this thesis argues that the counter narrative found in *The Hate U Give* is very suitable for promoting critical thinking and ethical awareness regarding social injustice and racism.

## Norsk sammendrag

Det overordnede målet med denne oppgaven er å diskutere fordelene ved å lese og jobbe med ungdomsromanen *The Hate U Give* (2018) av Angie Thomas i engelskfaget på videregående skole. Oppgaven undersøker om med denne romanen har potensial til å fremme kritisk tenkning og etisk bevissthet om sosial urett og rasisme hos elevene.

Denne oppgaven ser nærmere på viktigheten av å fremme kritisk tenkning og etisk bevissthet i forbindelse med kjerneelementene som er fastsatt i overordnet del i læreplanverket for grunnskole og videregående opplæring, samt elementer læreplanen i engelsk, og utvikling av interkulturell kompetanse. Dette viste til at åpenhet, toleranse og nysgjerrighet overfor andre kulturer, levesett og tankesett er utslagsgivende for å fremme demokratiske verdier og velfungerende mennesker. Et dypdykk ned i tidligere teorier og studier viste også at å jobbe med etikk gjennom arbeid med flerkulturell ungdomslitteratur er gunstig for utviklingen av kritisk tenkning og etisk bevissthet.

I *The Hate U Give* skildrer Angie Thomas flere sider av rasisme, som institusjonalisert rasisme, «white privilege» og «code-switching» på en nyansert og autentisk måte som utfordrer ensidige narrativer. Denne oppgaven argumenterer derfor for at det nyanserte narrative i *The Hate U Give* er svært egnet for å fremme kritisk tenkning og etisk bevissthet rundt sosial urett og rasisme.

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# 1. Introduction

The goal of this thesis is to investigate the potential of promoting critical thinking and awareness regarding racism and social injustice in the English language classroom in upper secondary, through usage of literature, specifically through working with the young adult novel *The Hate U Give* (2018). The capability of critical thinking and ethical awareness concerning social justice and racism are important pillars in the development of any well-functioning human being and for the well-being of democracy. In a world that seems to become more and more polarized, these skills and abilities are more relevant and imperative than ever. Right-wing extremism, racist actions, police brutality and police shootings from around the world are reported in the news on a regular basis, while white supremacy and nationalism seems to be on the rise in the US, Europe, and Norway as well. In the *National Threat Assessment for 2022*, the Norwegian Police Security Service (PST) presented a review of threats that the Norwegian society will face this year. The report states that there is a 40-60% likelihood of terrorist acts by right-wing extremists who believe that the white race is being subjected to genocide and that western culture will disappear (PST, 2022, p. 15). This lingering threat of right-wing terrorism might be surprising for some, as it is easy to think of Norway as a safe, inclusive, and tolerant society.

One does, however, need not go far back in time to find evidence to contradict this. In 2001, 15-year-old Benjamin Hermansen was brutally murdered in Oslo by two Neo-Nazis, solely based on the color of his skin. Politicians and the Norwegian society swore “never again”. Then, ten years later, Norway experienced two of the worst terrorist attacks since the Second World War, as 77 people were killed by a right-wing extremist in Oslo and on Utøya. Once more we swore “never again”, but in 2019 an armed right-wing extremist walked in to the Al Noor-mosque in Bærum and opened fire. Thanks to the courageous and selfless act by two elders present in the mosque, the terrorist was stopped before anyone was killed. However, before arriving at the mosque the terrorist had shot and killed his own adoptive, Chinese-born sister, Johanne Ihle Hansen. Later in court, he claimed that he killed her because he believes that people of color are a threat to white humans in Europe.

Furthermore, in March of this year, UNICEF released a new report on racism in Norway. Over 1800 children participated in the questionnaire, and the results are anything but uplifting. The report states that 37% of the participants have experienced racism based on how

they look, and 57% of the participants who have been exposed to racism said it happened while in school. An overwhelming 68% said that they did not receive any help from anyone when they had been exposed to racism, and 67% of the participants agree that the Norwegian government is not doing enough to fight and stop racism (UNICEF Norway, 2022, pp. 10-11). These numbers are worrisome, but sadly not surprising. Nevertheless, these numbers and the findings of this report does confirm that Norway as a country and as a society needs to take action and implement measurements to tackle and fight racism, because the current laws and regulations that are supposed to prevent racism does not seem to be successful.

The Education Act mandate that schools must have a zero-tolerance-policy towards bullying, violence, discrimination and harassment (Ministry of Education and Research, 1999) and yet the UNICEF report reveals a large number of children and young adults who have experienced racism in their place of education, and also that they have not been taken seriously or received help when this has occurred. This report also shows how Norwegian schools are in fact failing to meet the government's own standard decreed in the core values in the core curriculum for primary and secondary education: The core value *human dignity* clearly states that no student is to be subject to discrimination, and under the core value *democracy and participation* it is decreed that schools must promote values and attitudes that can counteract prejudice and discrimination (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2017). UNICEF underline that these results are especially troubling because children who are exposed to racism and discrimination in their most important arenas of socialization are likely to feel less apart-of, and struggle to identify with the larger society (UNICEF Norway, 2022).

Many of the participants in the study by UNICEF made suggestions on how to combat the prevailing racism in our society, and many said that anti-racism should be taught in school, and some even reported that they had never learned anything about racism or discrimination in school. The participants also commented that teachers and the school administrations need to take this topic more seriously, as many of the participants have experienced that even the teachers do not fully understand what racism is (UNICEF Norway, 2022, pp. 12-13). Being a teacher myself I have experienced how there are little to no consequences towards students who act or speak in racist ways, as students in Norway cannot easily be suspended or sent home from school, not even for big misdemeanors such as this. I have also experienced that the school administration is afraid to call out racist remarks by students and call it what it is,

and when I have asked for the school's plan of action against racism, there simply does not exist one, even though all schools must have a plan of action in the event of a bullying case.

To combat racism and raise our future citizens of the world as tolerant, openminded people who do not discriminate, we must start early. Schools and the educational system must take on a great deal of responsibility, as this is an institution that can help form and influence young learners greatly. In Theodor Adorno's essay *Education after Auschwitz*, he requests that society must focus on how to avoid repetition of abominations such as Auschwitz. He contends that the focus ought to be on early childhood education and on a general schooling of society (Adorno, 1967). To prevent things like Auschwitz or the murder of Benjamin Hermansen to happen again, it is important that young citizens of the world do not become indifferent or blind to the lingering power structures and white hegemonic discourse still active in our world today. There ought always be an incentive to question the power structure of any state, institution or society, whether one interrogates its efficiency or its honesty, or both (Roberge, 2011, p. 11). Luckily, we live in a country that encourage such inquisitive attitudes, and it is even emphasized in the core curriculum. The core element of *critical thinking & ethical awareness* states that "schools and teachers must let the students inquire into, scrutinize, and criticize both new and established ideas and truths" (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2017).

As mentioned, we like to think that something like Auschwitz, the murder of Benjamin Hermansen, and the terrorism on July 22nd could never happen again, that we are more conscious and wiser as a society. However, faced with an increased interest in rightwing politics, and a rise of white supremacy and fake news across Europe and the US, it would be unwise to brush aside the fears of Adorno. Adorno argues that *not* talking about the viciousness that Nazism and racism have created in history might lead such ideologies to regain authority and popularity while we are too busy ignoring, and in turn evading such uncomfortable conversations and discussions. History might repeat itself if we turn a blind eye to the reality of what is happening right in front of us (Adorno, 1967, p. 195).

Consequently, we must view the implementation of information about, and a focus on racism, even in early childhood education as imperative. It is important to acknowledge the crimes of our past and present, and to allow young students to discourse and think critically upon the past; why certain events transpired as they did, and how to make certain it does not occur yet again. Some teachers might find these topics to be both tough and possibly unsettling to teach, still, that only solidifies why such topics are vital implementations in school. A reluctance to

scrutinize such topics and to examine history because we dread the uncomfortable truth, can in due time refute the process of societal growth. It is therefore important to implement anti-racism in school subjects. Subjects such as social studies and history are for many natural arenas to talk and learn about racism, but with the Knowledge Promotion of 2020 came a greater focus on deep learning and the importance of working with themes in a cross-curricular manner.

This thesis argues that there is great potential in promoting critical thinking and awareness regarding racism and social justice in the English subject through reading and working young adult literature. Specifically, this thesis focuses on the young adult novel *The Hate U Give* (2018) and argues that this book is especially suitable to work with when aiming to promote critical thinking and ethical awareness within upper secondary students. This thesis defines critical thinking in line with how the term is described in the core curriculum. Critical thinking means to apply reason in an inquisitive and systematic way when working with specific challenges, phenomena, expressions, and forms of knowledge. Furthermore, critical thinking also means to understand that knowledge and the development of knowledge is in many ways culture dependent and might therefore be incomplete or erroneous (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2017, pp. 6-7)

## 1.2 Thesis aim and research question

The overall objective of this thesis is to investigate and discuss the potential value of incorporating the young adult novel *The Hate U Give* (2018) into the English language classroom in the upper secondary to explore and promote critical thinking regarding topics of social justice and racism. To further narrow down this rather vast topic, I have formulated the following research question:

1. How can reading *The Hate U Give* promote critical thinking and ethical awareness regarding social injustice and racism?

## 1.3 Outline of the thesis

This thesis is divided into six chapters. The first and current chapter discuss the relevance and importance of teaching topics such as social justice and racism in schools today in light of the current climate of our society. This chapter also looks at the importance of incorporating extensive reading of young adult literature in the English language classroom, and the

potential of extensive reading in general. The second chapter presents a description of the methodology chosen for this thesis: a literature review of previous studies and relevant theories on the topic of this thesis, along with a close reading of *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas. Chapter three dives into different theories and previous research on teaching ethics and critical thinking in school and utilizing young adult literature to do so. Chapter three also outlines parts of the Knowledge promotion of 2020 that I have chosen to focus on in regards to justifying the objective of this thesis, especially the importance of developing skills of critical thinking and intercultural competence. The fourth chapter presents the literary analysis of *The Hate U Give* and outlines certain recurring themes in the novel: racism, institutionalized racism, white privilege, and code-switching. These themes are presented with examples from the text and in chapter five these themes are discussed in connection to previous studies and relevant literature. Chapter five also presents the potential didactic benefits of incorporating *The Hate U Give* in the English language classroom through correlations between the themes of the novel and certain aspects and elements in LK20. This chapter will also present possible challenges and limitations in using *The Hate U Give* to promote critical thinking and awareness regarding social justice and racism. The sixth and final chapter presents a conclusion to the objective of this thesis.

## **2. Methodology**

The research method I have chosen for this master thesis is a close reading of the young adult novel *The Hate U Give* (2018) written by Angie Thomas, in addition to a closer examination of previous theory and previous research relevant to the topic of this thesis. In the following I will argue for why I have chosen these methods, and how I have applied them. I will also discuss the possible limitations that come with choosing such research methods.

### **2.1 Previous research and theory**

For this thesis I conducted an examination of previous research and theory on the value and potential of teaching awareness and critical thinking regarding ethics, social justice, and racism in the classroom through usage of young adult literature. I did a wide search to find previous studies and research on this topic, through usage of websites such as Oria, ERIC and Google Scholar. To my surprise, there are very few studies done on the matter, and the few that I did find were often done on preservice teachers and not on students in primary or secondary education. However, studies done by Michelle M. Falter & Shea N. Kerkhoff in

2018 and Lindsay Joseph Wexler in 2021 were very interesting and as my thesis focuses on upper secondary students, I deemed studies done on preservice teachers as comparable sources.

As the selection of studies on the subject were somewhat limited, I also searched for theories on teaching ethics and anti-racism in school. Gardelli, Alerby and Persson (2014) stood out as an important source on approaches to teaching ethics in school, and also why incorporating ethics in school is of great importance. I found this very valuable as I in this thesis wish to link the value of reading and working with young adult literature to promote ethics and encourage critical thinking and reflection on social justice and racism, to the English Curriculum. I found that many of the arguments made by Gardelli et al., coincide well with different parts of the English Curriculum. I also found an article by Roberta Linder (2021) relevant. She argues for why usage of multicultural literature in school can promote social awareness within young adults, and an article by Jacob Buganza (2012) further argues for why literature itself is excellent for teaching morals and ethics. This is echoed in an article I found by Ashley S. Boyd and Janine J. Darragh (2021), who argue that students can easier identify with and understand social injustice if they read texts about youth similar in age to themselves.

As part of the literature review, I also dove deeper into the *core curriculum for primary and secondary education*, the competence aims after VG1 and the core elements of the English curriculum itself. I looked for elements that would be well suited with the benefits of teaching ethics through usage of literature, and also elements that would justify the importance of installing critical thinking regarding racism and tolerance, and curiosity towards people different than ourselves. Intercultural competence is mentioned in this regard in certain parts of the curriculum, and so I also did a review of what intercultural competence is and the importance of it, which I base on works of both Byram (2020) and Dypedahl & Bøhn (2020).

I also found an extensive study done by Marit Elise Lyngstad (2019) on Norwegian English teacher's choice of literature for their students very relevant in emphasizing the importance of more diverse novels and stories. An important voice in the debate on the importance of stories from multiple and diverse perspectives is Chimamanda Adichie and her TED talk "*the danger of a single story*" (2009). This TED talk is therefore also a part of my selection of relevant theory, as this talk on the subject is very accessible and easy to grasp and would therefore be suitable for students in upper secondary. Another aspect I found important to review is Critical Race Theory, as this pertains to the teaching of the topics of white privilege, racism

and institutionalized racism, which are all central in *The Hate U Give*. There is currently some controversy surrounding CRT in the US, and the praxis has been banned in certain states (Adams, Smith, & Tambe, 2021). This in mind, I found works by Carter & Vavrus (2018) and Zamudio, Russel, Rios, & Bridgeman (2011) most useful in explaining what Critical Race Theory is, why it is important and why it should be taught in education today.

## 2.2 Close reading of *The Hate U Give*

I conducted a close reading of *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas, focusing on finding segments and passages in the novel that can be of relevance in teaching social justice and racism. The close reading resulted in a literary analysis that highlights and presents the overarching themes and topics of the novel. The main theme of the novel is racism, and the sub-topics that have been chosen to further investigate the complexity of this theme are institutionalized racism, code-switching and white privilege.

## 2.3 Possible limitations

Though I did find relevant and important literature to support the quest of this thesis, it is important to acknowledge the possible limitations of literature review as method. One of the biggest limitations of this research method is the lack of empirical evidence. Approaching this topic in a theoretical way hinders my findings somewhat, as they will be based on assumptions and reasonable probability solely grounded on previous studies and theories on the topics. It might also be somewhat of a limitation that the few studies I found are done on preservice teachers and not on students in upper secondary school, which is the focus group of this thesis. The final limitation worth mentioning is the fact that this thesis does not necessarily include or demonstrate concrete methods or approaches for how to teach and use *The Hate U Give* in the classroom. There will be some general suggestions but not a concrete lesson plan of any sort. However, I do believe that a literature review in combination with a close reading of *The Hate U Give* provides sufficient material to investigate and explore the possible didactic benefits of incorporating young adult literature into the English language classroom to promote critical thinking and ethical awareness regarding social justice and racism.

### **3. Theoretical framework**

This chapter contains an overview of previous research and studies on the benefits of implementing young adult literature in the English language classroom with the purpose of promoting critical thinking and ethical awareness regarding racism and social justice. Firstly, this chapter presents relevant theory for why implementing literature, and especially multicultural literature, in the classroom is beneficial, after which follows a brief presentation of why it is important to be mindful and hands-on when selecting literature for usage in school. Then comes an overview of intercultural competence and intercultural communicative competence, before a presentation of Critical Race Theory and its relevance to this thesis. After this comes a presentation of theory on the potential of teaching ethics in school and through literature. The chapter moves on to an overview of elements from the curriculum for primary and secondary education and the curriculum for the English subject relevant to this thesis, before finally a presentation of how to best work with literature in the English language classroom, based on previous studies.

#### **3.1 Literature in the classroom**

Reading literature can open doors of imagination and promote internal reflections for the readers. The curriculum for the English subject states that one of the main purposes of using literary texts in the English subject is to create deeper understandings of both ourselves and others (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020). According to some psychologists, many people experience a joy when reading fiction because it lets us incorporate and sharpen everyday skills that we as humans have developed for over thousands of years. Skills such as interpreting behaviors of others and entering the state of mind of others are activated when reading (Carlsen, 2020, p. 209). Part of our job as English teachers is to choose topics and texts that promote curiosity, respect, and tolerance, and to allow the students to explore different cultures and societies (Munden & Sandhaug, 2017, p. 356). Engaging with English texts could help students develop their understanding of other people, cultures, mindsets, and ways of life. Reading fictional texts can challenge the readers to explore different identities and perspectives on life – to decenter, as it exposes them to real-life language in meaningful settings (Munden & Sandhaug, 2017, p. 386).

Roberta Linder (2021) argues how the inclusion of multicultural literature can enhance social awareness development within young adolescents. Linder cites Louise Rosenblatt (1995) who argued that literature can allow the reader to live through the experiences of diverse

characters, creating an emotional connection. Students can respond to reading multicultural texts either by focusing on finding and abstracting information (efferent response) or by association, feeling and ideas emerging (aesthetic response). Linder continues, that young adults are at a development stage where they are beginning to think more abstractly and understand issues from multiple perspectives and therefore they are able to meaningfully comprehend and respond to multicultural literature. Young adults are curious about the world and are motivated when learning about things that have relevance to real life, in an interactive manner. Though they can still be preoccupied with themselves at this age, they can show concern for those who are oppressed or those who are suffering. This is also a stage in their development where they are starting to develop their own beliefs and values, and thus are becoming less dependent on their parents (Linder, 2021, p. 36). Referencing Taylor (2000), Linder argues that multicultural literature can change the way students and teachers look at the world by opening them up for multiple perspectives. This in turn facilitates for critical thinking about oneself and others. To achieve any of this, Linder argues that teachers must make sure to select authentic texts and novels. This involves making sure the author is a member of the cultural group portrayed in the literature and whether the story is culturally and historically accurate. Teachers should also make sure to choose texts where underrepresented students see themselves and other students can gain new perspectives, and texts that challenge the dominant culture and its relations and power structures (Linder, 2021, p. 39). By reading carefully selected multicultural literature of high quality, students are given the chance to decenter and live through the experiences of characters with different cultural heritage than themselves. Multicultural literature can also beneficially be studied in a cross curricular manner (Linder, 2021, p. 36).

### **3.1.1 Choosing literature for young adult readers**

It has been proven that for reading to take place at all, motivation is an important factor for boys especially, and that boys are more likely to be motivated to read about fictional characters if they feel they can relate to them. Girls on the other hand, tend to be more willing to read in general and they are also inclined to be able to relate to characters of whichever gender and age group, while boys do not. Therefore, when selecting literature and preparing reading projects teachers should be aware of these motivational factors and take them into account (Carlsen et al., 2020, p. 212). Choosing texts specifically written for teenagers and young adults can be very helpful in motivating reluctant or inexperienced readers. Young

adult literature can be characterized as books written for and about young people, and this is often reflected in the visual layout and format of the book. Books made for young people often have colorful and striking covers, the chapters are usually kept short, and they are often written from the point of view of their teenage protagonists (Carlsen, 2020, pp. 216-218). Many modern works of young adult literature also tend to challenge and criticize traditional attitudes and stereotypes, which sometimes make them controversial. However, by highlighting topics such as racism, violence and discrimination, young adult novels often speak to matters that are important to young people and society. Such books can therefore be both motivational for young learners to read, and using such books can also be a useful resource when working with the cross-curricular topic of democracy and citizenship found in the core curriculum (Carlsen, 2020, pp. 219-220).

An extensive study on reading in Norway demonstrated that access to a big assortment of authentic English literature is very motivating for students. In fact the study concludes that rather than buying new English coursebooks, schools should in fact use that budget on buying authentic books instead (Munden & Sandhaug, 2017, pp. 310-311). An extensive study from 2019 investigated English teacher's choices and beliefs regarding the usage of literature in the classroom (Lyngstad, 2019). The study showed that literary works by Anglo-American, male authors were chosen most often by most of the teachers (Breivik & Lyngstad, 2020, p. 167). However, there is a general consensus that there are negative effects of choosing stories from "one voice". Repetitively choosing books written from a white, male, Anglo-American point of view, can be very limiting, and in many ways counterintuitive to the goals of achieving intercultural communicative competence and intercultural competence (which will be presented further later in this chapter), and competences of the three cross curricular topics from the core curriculum.

Chimamanda Adichie talks about the need for exposure to diverse literature and stories in her celebrated TED talk "*The danger of a single story*" (Adichie, 2009). She argues that literature holds a lot of power, and especially over children who by nature are impressionable and vulnerable. When children are exposed to stories from one voice only, it will ultimately limit their world view and create prejudice. Adichie herself grew up in Nigeria, but for many years she was only exposed to British and American literature portraying white and blonde people. This affected her own storytelling as a child, where she would write stories about this same type of characters, as she did not know that people like herself could exist in literature. She also experienced the effect of the single story when moving to the US. In encounters with

white Americans, she realized that they had grown up with a one-sided story of Africa; that of catastrophes, poverty, and beautiful animals. Adichie argues that the single story of Africa stems from literature and can be traced back to the first Europeans who wrote of their travels to Africa. In 1561 a British merchant John Lock sailed to West-Africa and would describe black Africans as “beasts who have no houses”. Adichie argues that this type of writing was the start of how the West would tell stories about Africa, that Africa would become synonymous with negativity, difference, darkness and of a people who are “half devil, half child” (Adichie, 2009). The ability to decenter and be aware of ethnocentrism and harmful stereotypes, which are important aspects of developing intercultural competence, is harder to achieve when solely being exposed to “one story”. Many English course books used in Norwegian schools are dated and tend to present the English-speaking world very stereotypical.

For reading to be meaning-focused and not only a matter of vocabulary acquisition the learner should be exposed to texts consisting of mostly familiar vocabulary. Nation (2009) argues that extensive reading is well suited for this type of meaning-focused input as reading can be a source of enjoyment but also a way of acquiring knowledge about the world (Nation, 2009, p. 49). Extensive reading can be understood as reading for pleasure, preferably where the students get to choose what they wish to read themselves (Carlsen, 2020, p. 213). For the learner to be able to enjoy the content and the context of a text, the learner must master considerable knowledge and skills, such as recognizing the letters and words of the target language, while also understanding a large data of vocabular, grammar and textual knowledge. This, combined with the ability to apply previous knowledge of the world to be able to understand and reflect on the text at hand, are all a part of the degree of fluency a reader has, and will ultimately affect their reading experience (Nation, 2009, p. 50).

### **3.2 Intercultural competence**

Reading literature is never solely a transaction of information going from author to reader, as reading makes us enter into a “third space” where we decenter and try to make sense of the narrative from different standpoints than our own. Furthermore, reading literature is especially useful for the development of intercultural awareness, as it exposes students to authentic language in interesting and engaging settings. Viewed in this regard, literature is closely connected to the development of intercultural competence, where the ability to decenter is central (Carlsen, Reading literature, 2020, p. 210). The importance of developing intercultural

competence is recognized in the third core element in the English subject curriculum, *encounters with texts in English* (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020), and as this pertains specifically to the English subject and is closely linked to abilities of critical thinking and ethical awareness, a closer look at intercultural competence is necessary. Dypedahl & Bøhn (2020) argue that knowledge about, and tolerance towards different cultures and societies is essential in the development of *intercultural competence* (IC), which is a very important aspect overall of a person's language user competence. They define intercultural competence as the ability to relate constructively to people who have mindsets and/or communication styles that are different from one's own (Dypedahl & Bøhn, 2020, pp. 81-82). Dypedahl developed a model that demonstrates the learning cycle of the development of intercultural competence (Dypedahl & Bøhn, 2020, p. 85). The different stages of the learning cycle are intertwined, as one cannot be acquired without the other. In the starting point of the model, we find a general competence in communicative language. In this first stage Dypedahl also demonstrates that one must have certain attitudes of openness, respect, flexibility and tolerance towards other people, cultures, and ways of life, to be able to move on to the next step of the intercultural learning cycle (Dypedahl & Bøhn, 2020, pp. 85-86).

The second stage is also twofold and consists of both knowledge and skills that are important to acquire to be able to understand the aspect of *culture* in intercultural communication. Having knowledge of different cultures is to understand that culture is not necessarily defined by borders or nationality but must rather be understood as shared patterns of thinking, communication, and behaviors. In this regard it is also important to be able to think critically of how different cultures are, and have been, presented and be aware of stereotypes. The set of skills found in the second stage of the learning cycle can be described as a person's ability to compare and analyze different mindsets and behavior patterns found within different cultures and understand how this may affect communication and interactions. Empathy, or the ability to understand the world from someone else's perspective, or in other words the ability to decenter, is a vital part of the skills of the second stage. This also includes cultural empathy, which is related to the ability to understand cultural influences in different contexts (Dypedahl & Bøhn, 2020, pp. 86-89).

The third stage of the intercultural learning cycle is by Dypedahl described as the *internal outcome*. Herein lies the abilities of self-monitoring and decentering, also called *metacognitive intercultural awareness* and *metacognitive language awareness*. Entering a stage of metacognition means to have an even higher degree of awareness which makes

monitoring and regulating one's own communication and behavior easier. Consequently, when we are able to master all three stages of the learning cycle, we arrive at the final stage where we are able to communicate fittingly and productively with people from different cultures (Dypedahl & Bøhn, 2020, p. 88).

By adding the element of doing this type of communication in another language than one's L1, we get *intercultural communicative competence* (ICC), as ICC includes both IC and language competence (Byram, 2020, p. 167). Byram developed a model that describes the different skills, attitudes, and knowledges that a person needs in order to master ICC. The first element of the model is *attitudes*, which is a readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and one's own through curiosity and openness (Byram, 2020, p. 174). The second element of Byram's ICC model is knowledge of conventional verbal and non-verbal communication and interaction in both one's own and foreign cultures (Byram, 2020, p. 175). The third element consists of *skills of interpreting and relating*, in other words the ability to interpret and mediate between different and conflicting interpretations of texts or events in different cultures (Byram, 2020, p. 176). The fourth component of the model consists of skills of discovery and interaction. This is described as the ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and its practices through communicating, conversing, and interacting with members of said culture (Byram, 2020, p. 177). The fifth and very last components of Byram's ICC model is the ability of critical cultural awareness. Byram describes this as the ability to critically evaluate one's own and other cultures and countries based on explicit criteria (Byram, 2020, p. 178).

Both IC and ICC can serve as common denominators for the three cross-curricular topics in the core curriculum for primary and secondary education, *health and life skills*, *democracy and citizenship*, and *sustainability*. Being able to communicate, sympathize and demonstrate tolerance towards different mindsets and different ways of life is all connected to these topics cross-curricular topics and to ICC (Dypedahl & Bøhn, 2020, p. 84) which are all relevant in the argument of this thesis.

### 3.3 Critical Race theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) has been a part of the field of education in the US since 1995, and according to CRT, racism and other forms of oppression in society are structurally prevalent and normative, and to fight this the educational field must be designed to create a deeper understanding and awareness of this covert, systemic aspects of racism (Carter &

Vavrus, 2018, p. vii). Working with *The Hate U Give* (2018) in a purposeful way to promote critical thinking and create awareness regarding racism and social justice fits well with the theory of CRT. *The Hate U Give* and CRT have both been banned from being taught in schools in certain states in the US (Adams, Smith, & Tambe, 2021) (García & Pagan, 2021), and as this thesis argues for the importance of using *The Hate U Give* in the classroom, a breakdown of what CRT is seems appropriate.

CRT emerged in the 1970s in the early works of Derrick Bell. It was developed out of the discipline of law, as Bell recognized the slow pace of racial reform in the US. (Carter & Vavrus, 2018, p. 72). The movement to incorporate CRT in the educational field arose from Gloria Ladson-Billings and William F. Tate, who called for a better theorizing regarding issues of race and education during a groundbreaking presentation at the American Education Research Association conference in 1995 (Zamudio et al., 2011, p. 7). CRT argues that inequality within education offers a window into the pervasive racial disparity in the US. Segregation in schools, insufficient funding of schools in poor neighborhoods, gaps in academic achievement and a usage of a Eurocentric curriculum are all elements that contribute to the racial discrimination within the educational field. Applying a race-conscious theory such as CRT might help in moving towards an understanding and an awareness of educational inequality, while also identifying potential solutions. CRT argues that race is the central construct for analyzing inequality and offers both teachers and students with a perspective in identifying effective solutions to the challenges that students of color face in school (Zamudio et al., 2011, p. 2).

Theorists of CRT agree upon a few central assumptions; that race matters, history matters, voice matters, interpretations matter and praxis matters. CRT theorists argue that race matters because race is a central construct in society and permeates every aspect of social life. The practice of valuing the Western literary canon, a Eurocentric curriculum, and the belief that an individual's race can determine their behavior and being, are beliefs and practices that are embedded in the American society as well as the educational system (Zamudio et al., 2011, p. 3). CRT argue that to fully understand racism and social division based on race, one must acknowledge that the European colonization of the Americas, Africa and the Asiatic world laid the foundation for racial inequality in present-day. In other words, history matters. CRT theorists view mainstream education as an institution that historically and still today contributes to the reproduction of racial inequality. Not only has the curriculum in schools historically been curated by and from a white perspective, but this in turn limits what

information students are taught regarding racism and the treatment of minorities in the US (Zamudio et al., 2011, p. 4). Like Adichie, CRT theorists believe that voice matters, and believe in the practice of retelling history from the point of view of a minority perspective, as an oppositional voice to the dominant narrative. They understand that narratives are never neutral but rather a political expression of power relations, and an emphasis on narratives and counter stories told from the vantage point of the historically oppressed is a great contributor to rectifying this imbalance of power (Zamudio et al., 2011, p. 5). When CRT theorists say that interpretation matters, they mean that in order to understand the complexities of race, various academic disciplines must contribute with insights into race. Finally, CRT theorists agree that praxis matters. They argue that it is not enough to theorize about racism and racial inequality, one must also act and live life in a way to actively work against racism. CRT theorists do however respond with optimism to those who feel like the struggle against racism is futile, as they believe this struggle is transformative for all parties involved and argue that all struggle is good struggle (Zamudio et al., 2011, pp. 6-7).

### 3.4 Ethics in education and literature

Gardelli, Alerby and Persson (2014) argue that there are three different approaches to ethics in school. They believe it is fruitful to distinguish between “the descriptive fact about ethics approach” (the DE approach), “the moral fostering approach” (the MF approach), and “the philosophical ethics approach” (the PE approach). The DE approach could be characterized as a sociological approach to ethics, where the students learn social, statistical, psychological, or sociological facts about moral issues. These facts could be about which groups of people in a society are positive towards recycling or using nuclear power etc. (Gardelli et al., 2014, p. 17). The idea of the MF approach has very long roots in Western societies according to Gardelli et al. (2014) and involves teaching the difference between what is wrong and right, to clarify to the students the values of society, such as to be caring and respectful to others. This can all be traced back to Plato and Aristotle, and even to the Roman empire. The PE approach on the other hand, does not set out to teach students what most people believe is right, or to give them a set of alleged values. The PE approach aims to help students learn to reason about ethics, and to be able to think critically for themselves. This approach aims to help students evaluate different moral standpoints, to consider the strength of different arguments and to distinguish between different ways of assigning value (Gardelli et al., 2014, p.18). If schools use the PE approach to teaching ethics, students will engage in normative ethics, applied

ethics, and also meta-ethics. Some might consider the first two approaches (the DE and the MF approaches) to be equivalent, especially when considering that ethical values may depend on social facts. Some might argue that what is considered “good” in a society is the same as what is “favored by the majority”, and this might shape the culture of that society. Others may also argue that there is a correlation between the MF and the PE approaches. Is it even possible to reflect on ethics and values without having been fostered on the topic in some way? Could the aspect of critical thinking in the PE approach even occur without previous exposure to the likes of the MF approach? Gardelli et al. argue that PE approach incorporates some MF, but more on a meta-level, where the students are fostered into regarding a critical dialog as meaningful.

Gardelli et al. also present three reasons for *why* incorporating ethics in schools are of great importance. First, they present the socialization argument, which states that the school has an obligation to foster students to become good, well-functioning citizens, and implementing ethics into the different subjects would benefit towards this. Gardelli et al., refer to many philosophers of education such as Dewey (1897), Lipman (2003) and Althof and Berkowitz (2006), who all argue that schools ought to educate students into being good citizens. One can however ask what it means to be a good citizen, and in their article Gardelli et al. assume that it means embracing typically democratic values, such as caring for others, being able to value others’ arguments and to be able to form a coherent judgement/position and be able to argue for it (Gardelli et al., 2014, p. 20). Though the definition of citizenship may differ, most modern conceptions of citizenship education focus on the development of critical skills and skills of participation, this is also mirrored in the core curriculum which emphasizes the importance of fostering good democratic citizens of the world (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2017).

The second argument Gardelli et al. present, is the quality-of-life argument. Herein lies the argument that teachers and schools have an obligation to help students live better lives, and to help them become people who act in a morally correct way. It has been stated that one of the main purposes of education is to prepare the students for a meaningful life. To live a good and meaningful life seems to be related to being able to make good choices in one’s life, which is connected to the ability to autonomous thinking (Gardelli et al., 2014, pp. 22-23). Aspects of both the socialization argument and the quality-of-life argument can be found in the core curriculum. The final and third argument for why incorporating ethics in school is important, is The Tool Argument. This argument claims that students would achieve better results in

across all subjects in school if ethics was explicitly taught. This argument differs slightly from the other two, by focusing more on the students' abilities to learn other subjects better through usage of ethics in school. The main argument is therefore: If one learns ethics and ethical abilities in one subject, one is more likely to succeed in other subjects in school as well (Gardelli et al., 2014, p. 24). In their article, Gardelli et al. conclude that the best, and most fruitful approach to teaching ethics in school would be through the PE approach, especially because this approach seems to be able to support all three arguments for why teaching ethics in school is important. The DE approach is to be considered a weak fit for supporting all three arguments, much due to its static tendencies, as this approach mainly focuses on teaching facts about the behavior of others. The MF approach would give a slightly stronger support for the socialization argument. If one is successfully educated to hold certain values, one would also rather likely become a more well-functioning citizen than if one did not accept those values. However, the only approach that gives strong support for all three arguments is the PE approach, as this approach values philosophical dialogs, independent thinking, and the ability to examine one's own and others moral standpoints to try and create ethical awareness (Gardelli et al., 2014).

Jacob Buganza (2012) also argues that literature can be an excellent drive for moral education and ethics. According to Buganza, one cannot separate philosophy, literature, and education, as these fields have always been connected. Going all the way back to ancient Greek literature where lyrical literature was used to teach philosophical principles. In many ways literature can be seen as the expression of society and literature in many ways shape society (Buganza, 2012, p. 126). Buganza argues that the very essence of ethics is the acknowledgment of the other, of its humanity, the acknowledgment of what a person is. This acknowledgment does not always happen automatically and may require an effort of will. Historically some individuals and groups have not been acknowledged and have been looked down upon, and dehumanized, such as African Americans, indigenous people, and Jews (Buganza, 2012, p. 127). Literature can be motivated by empathy, and empathy has a clear ethical function because it has to do with our relations to others (Buganza, 2012, p. 129). Empathy is the activity of trying to comprehend the situation and emotions of another human being. Ethics enters empathy when trying to envision the consequences of actions that might have repercussions on the other. In literature the author invites the reader to put themselves in the position of the other and learn their experiences. The reader is affected by what happens to the other, the character, through acknowledgement of their experiences. The reader acknowledges

that the character is a person and that their circumstance might as well have been one's own because it lies within possibility no matter how unrealistic it may be. This breaks down the base of selfishness and contributes to the development of pity and compassion within the reader, which is essential for the growth of social rationality (Buganza, 2012, pp. 129-130). Literature can therefore generate empathetic power as it is intrinsically linked to the readers emotions. Literary works can induce the experience of mercy or fear for the characters but also for oneself. When well-written, literature can let the readers into the inner most personal feelings and thoughts of the characters, and in this way the reader may learn the most important lessons life has to offer. Empathy for others is not just putting oneself in the position of others, but also to feel affected by their circumstances (Buganza, 2012, p. 131). Buganza also states that literature is full of paradigms, or models, of moral action, such as ethics between the so-called heroes and the so-called villains. In this sense, literature can be seen as indoctrination where the reader acknowledges the paradigm and aspires to resemble it (Buganza, 2012, p. 134).

In 2018 Michelle M. Falter and Shea N. Kerkhoff published an article regarding their study on how preservice teachers in a young adult literature course critically conceptualize discussions in schools about race, and to understand the inherent qualities in the usage of the young adult novel *All American Boys* to do so (Falter & Kerkhoff, 2018, p. 257). *All American Boys* is a novel about an incident of police brutality through the perspective of two young men, Rashad (who is black) and Quinn (who is white). In the novel we follow Rashad as he tries to heal from the assault, as well as trying to confront the racist act he survived. We also follow Quinn as he learns to recognize his own white privilege. In the end of the novel, all characters join in on a march against police brutality (Boyd & Darragh, 2021, pp. 38-39). This novel contains storylines and themes similar to *The Hate U Give* (2018) and therefore the arguments made in this article are applicable to this thesis.

Falter & Kerkhoff argue that there is very little research tackling racial injustice and police relations through young adult literature in the classroom, and as video documentations of racism and police brutality increases with the rise of smartphones, the lingering issue about police and race in America (and the world) is more relevant than ever. Many teachers struggle with knowing how to engage with these tough and uncomfortable, politically, socially, and culturally charged discussions within their classrooms, and it has also been documented that teachers, and specifically preservice teachers (PSTs), avoid race talk altogether. In their article, Falter & Kerkhoff examine the potential of young adult literature as a critical

pedagogy tool in both secondary English language arts classrooms and in teacher education for tackling topics like racism and police brutality (Falter & Kerkhoff, 2018, p. 258). In their article they argue that research has shown how narrative fiction has a great impact on empathy building and prejudice reduction, even more so than real life encounters. Multicultural young adult literature gives adolescents the opportunity to read about issues relevant to their own lives through the perspective of diverse characters in their own age group. This can work as a mirror reflecting their own experiences but also as a window through which they can view other's experiences, and even as a sliding glass door in which the reader can enter another's world socially, culturally, and racially. In other words, reading young adult literature can be a powerful tool for students in developing empathy and critical thinking that can lead to social responsibility and social action. Falter & Kerkhoff also agree with Adichie (2009) in arguing that young adult literature challenge the "single story" by presenting counter-narratives to that of mainstream stereotypes and generalization (Falter & Kerkhoff, 2018, p. 259). Falter & Kerkhoff also found is very useful to engage in critical race theory (CRT) when making sense of the discussions in the classroom around the chosen young adult novel, as CRT is designed as a counter for deficit storytelling. Some of the central elements of CRT that helped inform this study were: racism is prevalent inside and outside of American schools, colorblindness is a problematic solution to racism and education should promote action for social justice to help eliminate oppression (Falter & Kerkhoff, 2018, p. 260).

### 3.5 The curriculum

The core curriculum in the curriculum for primary and secondary education is made to give direction for the teaching and training of the different school subjects, and all the subjects contribute to realizing the broader purpose of education. The core curriculum clarifies the responsibility of the schools when it comes to education but also an all-round development of the students, the so-called *Bildung*. The objective of the core curriculum is to guide teachers and schools to base their practice on values rooted in human rights, which are values that unite the Norwegian society. These values are at the very foundation of our democracy and are made to help us to live, learn and work together in a complex and unpredictable future (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2017, p. 4). The core values are very valuable and relevant for the objective of this thesis, and I will therefore present the four core values I deem most relevant and useful. The four core values to be presented in the following

are: *Human dignity, identity & Cultural diversity, critical thinking & ethical awareness, and Democracy & participation.*

### 3.5.1 Human dignity

The core curriculum states that schools must strive to uphold human dignity in their education and to focus on the objective that all people are equal regardless of what makes us different. Human dignity is obtained when schools and teachers care for their students and acknowledge each individual. This core value is built upon human rights and the UN convention on the Right of the Child. Another aspect of human rights and human dignity is to acknowledge people's differences and appreciate the diversity in our society and in our student groups. Not only should schools and teachers uphold human rights, but the students themselves must also acquire knowledge about these rights and be given the chance to reflect on how they can prevent the violation of human dignity (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2017, pp. 4-5). Though the core values in the curriculum do not use the term racism explicitly, I interpret the element of human dignity to be a part of preventing prejudice and racism in Norwegian schools and society.

### 3.5.2 Identity & cultural diversity

The objective of this core value is for the schools and teachers to give the students historical and cultural insight that will give them a good foundation to preserve and develop their identity in an inclusive and diverse world. In order to feel a part of *and* identify with their society the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training argues that it is important to have insight into our history and culture. This common framework must give room for diversity, and students must be given insight into how we in unity while acknowledging and appreciating our different perspectives, attitudes and views of life. Schools and teachers must ensure that students can experience and encounter different cultural expressions and traditions, so to encourage ideals of inclusiveness and diversity. A part of the objective of this core value is to make sure students gain knowledge about the groups of national minorities in Norway. By gaining knowledge of traditions, culture, history and societal life of our society's minorities, stigma and social injustice towards these group will hopefully diminish. Schools and teachers must therefore facilitate for an educational space where diversity is celebrated and acknowledged (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2017, pp. 5-6).

### 3.5.3 Critical thinking & ethical awareness

The objective of this core value is to facilitate for the students to develop and utilize critical thinking skills and to act with ethical awareness. Schools and teachers must let the students inquire into, scrutinize, and criticize both new and established ideas and truths. Students must be taught how to assess different sources of knowledge and think critically about how knowledge is developed. Students must also gain tools on how to develop and act with ethical awareness. Students must be given the chance to develop the ability to make ethical assessments and be conscious of ethical issues. To be able to balance different considerations is a big part of becoming a reflecting and responsible human being. Both critical thinking and ethical awareness are important skills in the process of becoming a well-rounded being (Bildung) (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2017, pp. 6-7).

### 3.5.4 Democracy & participation

Schools and teachers have a responsibility to promote faith in democratic values and in democracy as a form of government. The education must implement an understanding of the basic rules of democracy and why democracy must be protected. Being a well-functioning being in society means to emit tolerance and respect for others and their individual freedom of faith and speech, and to value free elections. Important aspects of democratic values are to counteract prejudice and discrimination, and students must therefore learn and understand that all citizens of a democracy have equal rights and opportunities to participate in decision-making processes. Nurturing diversity and protecting minorities is an important principle in counteracting prejudice and discrimination. Therefore, all students must develop awareness of minority and majority perspectives and be open for collaboration, dialogue and disagreement (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2017, p. 9). The core curriculum also emphasizes the importance of implementing three interdisciplinary topics into each subject. One of the most relevant topics for the English subject and for this thesis is democracy & citizenship. This interdisciplinary topic bares many similarities with the core value of democracy and citizenship, in that is stresses the importance of learning and valuing democratic principles such as freedom of speech, the right to vote and freedom of association, as well as recognizing the preponderance of the majority and the rights of the minority (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2017, pp. 14-15).

### 3.6 Working with literature

Few studies have been done on how to best promote critical thinking and ethical awareness regarding racism and social justice through reading literature. However, the few that exist seem to agree that group work, discussions and working in literary circles are the most fruitful. A qualitative study by Lindsay Wexler Joseph (2021) looked at how literature circles encourage critical thinking and reflection on social justice and equity, as well as encourage reflection on race and privilege. The data is based on a literacy method course done by 16 predominantly white teacher candidates. Though the research participants are adults, the results of this study might very well apply to upper secondary students as well. Wexler Joseph argues that literature circles can help students to deepen their appreciation and understanding of literature, that it gives students the chance to reflect on their own beliefs and experiences. Literature circles are small group discussions, led by students, using books selected by the students themselves. Literature circles can provide students windows, mirrors and sliding glass doors into their own lives and the life of those who have different lives experiences. Working with literature this way may allow for difficult but necessary conversations, such as those about racism (Wexler Joseph, 2021, p. 465). Wexler Joseph refers to Howlett et al. (2017) and writes how integrating high-quality literature into coursework may give students opportunities to reflect on their own beliefs and experiences. In the study, Wexler Joseph chose four young adult novels, including *The Hate U Give* (2018). The participants could choose from the selection provided by Wexler Joseph, and they were encouraged to choose a novel that would provide them with a new perspective. The study groups were made up of four students who got together 30 minutes a week for four weeks total. Each group made their own reading schedule, and they assigned each member of the group with a discussion role, such as discussion director, questioner, summarizer etc. Wexler Joseph found that assigning such roles in advance made sure that everyone came prepared and encouraged participation from all individuals. The students were also provided with discussion guidelines, such as discussion norms, sentence starters and question stems (Wexler Joseph, 2021, p. 467). The results of the study showed that the selected novels offered the participants a way into conversations about social justice, and an authentic engagement in such discussions (Wexler Joseph, 2021, p. 470). The study also proved that through the discussions about and the reading of the novels themselves, the candidates learned new information that countered their previous understanding of the world. In some instances, the novels encouraged the participants to consider the role of race and privilege and to recognize the privilege associated

with their own whiteness. The participants began to understand that race plays a role in lived experiences, and this gave them different perspectives (Wexler Joseph, 2021, p. 471).

In the group discussing *The Hate U Give*, some of the participants brought articles and statistics on fatal police shooting in the US, fatal shooting of black men, and how the media portray these victims, often labeling them as drug-dealers. This led to deeper reflections and discussions on their own prior understandings and the importance of perception, in example how white people in America experience and feel about the police versus the experiences of black people in America. They also questioned things such as how the situation would be portrayed by the media if the races were switched. The participants also noted that *The Hate U Give* offered important personal points of view that the media often lack (Wexler Joseph, 2021, p. 472). Wexler Joseph states that the study highlights the importance of working with literature in an interactive way, through discussions and references to current events. The novels, all written by BIPOC authors, captivated and engaged the participants in an authentic way, and they engaged in deep, and at times, uncomfortable conversations such as that of racism and police brutality. The discussions allowed for race-related discussions, recognition of white privilege and really learn new knowledge countering previous understandings and decentering (Wexler Joseph, 2021, pp. 473-474).

Although this study proved that working with literature in an interactive way such as in a literary circle made some of the participants recognize and confront their own white privilege, the study also showed that other participants continued to demonstrate white fragility and white privilege. Some of the participants also seemed to believe that police brutality began in 2017 and failed to understand the long history of police brutality in the US. Wexler Joseph notes that some of the participants also struggled to recognize that the way they experience things may be different from the experience of others due to their race and privilege. Consequently, literature circles such as these are important, but alas there is more work to be done (Wexler Joseph, 2021, pp. 472-473).

Forementioned Linder (2021) also offer some advice on how to teach social awareness through literature. She notes that it is important for teachers to be aware of the potential challenges of using multicultural literature in schools. For one, teachers should be aware of their own prejudices and preconceived notions, and how this can affect their teaching and their student's perspectives when reading multicultural literature. Linder argues that teachers should examine their own biases by acquiring background knowledge on the themes and topics of the chosen literature. This will help when the students are exposed to characters with

different backgrounds than themselves and questions may arise. Some students, particularly white students, might at times resist reading texts where matters such as white privilege are discussed or texts without any white characters, because they are used to reading a certain type of texts. To this Linder points out, every student's reaction and interaction with a text is a result of previous experiences and values they bring with them when interpreting the text. This might cause discomfort, but a necessary discomfort that also can serve as a catalyzer for deeper discussions and perhaps altering long-held beliefs (Linder, 2021, p. 37).

According to Linder, working with multicultural literature can be an important component of social emotional learning (SEL). Parts of the definition of SEL focuses on the process where children and adults understand and manage emotions and feel and show empathy for others. Studying and reading multicultural literature can help improve student's social awareness, by understanding oneself and the world better. Multicultural literature can help students learn and sympathize with the world beyond their immediate surroundings. Reading literature about characters who display negative and imperfect behaviors can in fact very valuable, as this can lead to discussions and reflections on why people sometimes are tempted to act in less acceptable ways. Linder also argues that a critical literacy approach to literature is beneficial for the development of social awareness. Falter & Kerkhoff also argue that applying critical literacy is recommended when working with literature for this purpose, as this method goes beyond decoding the written word, and focuses on how understanding occurs in the intersection between context and text. Studying the text through real world happenings makes it possible to shed light on social injustice, inequity, and racism on a bigger scale (Falter & Kerkhoff, 2018, p. 260). According to Linder, a critical literacy approach can be characterized by these features: a) critical literacy acknowledges and expands views of the text and recognizes that texts are not created neutrally, b) it focuses on sociopolitical issues of power, c) it recognizes the agency of the individual to question and challenge the status quo, d) it encourages examination of issues from multiple perspectives, and e) it promotes reflection, transformation and taking action (Linder, 2021, p. 38). When teachers and students analyze multicultural texts in a critical way, they gain a deeper and more nuanced understanding of injustices experienced by the characters due to inequality and imbalance in power (Linder, 2021, p. 39).

In their article *Teaching for Social Justice: Using "All American Boys" to Confront Racism and Police Brutality* (2021), Ashley S. Boyd and Janine J. Darragh argue that reading texts about youth of similar age to themselves will potentially help students understand how they

are affected by racial relations in their own lives, and to reflect on what they can do to combat the negative effects of racial inequity. They explain how racism is a systemic issue and is therefore more than one person, although individuals do maintain racism both knowingly and unknowingly. Racism goes hand in hand with white privilege, such as obtaining financial loans, being represented in classroom curriculum, and being assumed as the “norm”. Boyd & Darragh argue that people with light skin are by society deemed honest, responsible, and safe, thus white privilege happens through the oppression of people of color. People with darker skin are often presumed to be unsafe, powerless and less deserving of resources such as health care (specifically in America) (Boyd & Darragh, 2021, p. 38).

All of these well-known facts about how racism and inequity manifests in society every day, is why Boyd & Darragh wrote this article, on how to teach awareness and hopefully inspire activism against racism, through working with young adult literature. Boyd & Darragh focus on the novel *All American Boys* by Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely (2015). Boyd & Darragh argue that this novel is a particularly valuable novel as it tackles both white privilege and racial oppression simultaneously. This provides the students multiple perspectives and the chance to reflect on the social problem in a thoughtful way that also prompts dialogue. They also note how it is important as teachers to be aware of the student group and their level of knowledge and familiarity on discrimination and racism. Often, students of color will be very familiar as they might have experienced it personally, and often white students may be less familiar and might therefore need an introduction to the concept. To make sure that the student group is prepared, Boyd & Darragh recommend providing them with a vocabulary list from the chosen novel, with which to discuss the topics of the book and the social problems it addresses. These terms could be white privilege, oppression, micro-aggression, discrimination, prejudice and race, to name a few. It is particularly important that the students understand the difference between discrimination and oppression, as discrimination can happen against anyone by another being, but oppression works on a larger scale and is institutionalized (Boyd & Darragh, 2021, pp. 39-40). It would also be beneficial to dive deeper into the significance of terms such as people of color, Black and African American, before reading the novel. To do this Boyd & Darragh recommend reading informational texts on the topic. Furthermore, Boyd & Darragh also recommend spending time on understanding white privilege as a system. This could be done by making lists of the benefits and unearned advantages that white people experience in everyday life, such as finding bandages that match their skin tone, or not ever having to represent or be held responsible for their entire race

when making mistakes. Scholar Peggy McIntosh has made such a list which would be very useful for the students to work with when making their own (Boyd & Darragh, 2021, p. 40). She describes white privilege as an invisible, weightless, knapsack of unearned assets which all white people are inherently oblivious to. She argues that white people are taught to think of their lives as morally neutral, average, and normal, so that when we work to help others it is seen as work which will allow “them” to be more like “us” (McIntosh, 1989, p. 1). In her article which was published in the magazine *Peace and Freedom* in 1989, she presented 26 conditions in her everyday life from which she benefits solely based on her white skin color. Among these are seeing people like herself represented on TV or in the papers, finding band aids that match her skin tone, not being asked to speak for all the people of her racial group, or not being pulled over by the police because of her race (McIntosh, 1989, pp. 1-2). White privilege can in other words be anything from something as big as being taken seriously when going to the doctor, to something as seemingly small as finding the right shade of foundation in the makeup aisle. Many of these things might seem miniscule to white people, and many white people struggle with accepting and recognizing the greater effect this has on society.

Though McIntosh’s article is relevant still today, some argue that her take on white privilege as something unseen and unconscious, in fact overshadows the conscious and historic aspect of white privilege (Collins, 2018). In her article “*what is white privilege anyways?*” Cory Collins states that white privilege should be viewed as a built-in advantage unconditioned from one’s level of income or effort (Collins, 2018), and refers to author Frances E. Kendall (2013) who presents a more up to date definition and understanding of white privilege.

Kendall argues that white privileges are institutionalized benefits granted to those who by race resemble the people who hold the power of our institutions, and one of the primary white privileges is having greater access to power and resources than people of color do, purely based on skin color (Kendall, 2013, p. 62).

While reading the novel teachers should select a point in the story where tensions rise and ask students to compose a diary entry, tweet, or Facebook post from the perspective of one of the characters. Another idea they suggest is to let the students write a letter to the character they most identify with and tell them why they feel connected. According to Boyd & Darragh, such text-to-self connections are vital for making sure every voice in the student group is valued (Boyd & Darragh, 2021, p. 41). Another exercise during reading is to ask the students to empathize with the different decisions of each protagonist. In example, much like Starr in *The Hate U Give* (2018), Rashad does not wish to be the face of the movement at first.

Teachers can ask their students about these decisions and feelings of Rashad, *why do you think he does not wish to be on the news?* At the same time, Quinn finds it complicated to understand his white privilege and his responsibility as a witness in the case. Teachers could ask their students *why is it difficult for Quinn to speak up and report what he saw to the police? What does Quinn sacrifice by making a report?* Another important aspect of racism that this novel shed light on is media representation related to race. Rashad's brother is very aware of which photo they should release of Rashad to the media. This could prompt a task where the students could begin to analyze movie poster to see the difference in color of clothes and lighting etc. between white character and characters of color, which is a great way to open up for discussions and reflections on stereotypes in the media (Boyd & Darragh, 2021, p. 41).

This novel does not have a typical happy ending where everything sorts itself out, and racism magically goes away. For some students this might be hard to process, as they are often used to reading stories with a tidy ending. To help the students process such an ending, Boyd & Darragh suggest that teachers let the students compose or act out scenes they imagine could happen after where the book leaves off. It is however also an important ending, as the realistic ending demonstrates the complex nature of the topics tackled in the novel. Researching the history of resistance, the civil rights movement and the Black Lives Matter movement could be fruitful in understanding why the novel ends the way it does. As classroom curricula often tend to romanticize these matters, it is important for the students to understand that the oppression of the past is still very much alive today. Boyd & Darragh also recommend letting the students dive into how much and what kind of training is mandatory for national and local police or do a project on cases of police brutality by examining court documents, news articles and firsthand narratives. They also emphasize the importance of unpacking the concept of implicit bias with the students, as this is also a big factor to the reproduction of racism and inequity. This will help students discern that though some actions or expressions are not meant as racist, it is in fact still racist. These biases that affect how we respond to and treat other people is so deeply embedded in our culture and can infiltrate the mind of all members of society (Boyd & Darragh, 2021, p. 42).

The article also presents some tips on how to get the students to become active and engaged in social action. They suggest letting the students organize their own resistance movements, on either something national/global like police brutality or something more local, such as racism at school or online. The students can design posters for the movement or campaign they choose, hang them up in the halls of the school and post about them on social media, to

encourage their peers to join in and work for change. The students could also design a survey to implement at their school on any of the topics from the novel. When they have analyzed their findings, the teachers should facilitate an opportunity for the students to present their findings to school leaders, board members or local politicians (Boyd & Darragh, 2021, p. 42).

As previously mentioned, Falter & Kerkhoff (2018) performed a study on teacher candidates and their attitudes towards racism and social justice. They performed the study on 19 undergraduate and 5 graduate students enrolled in a young adult literature course at two universities in the Southeast USA and the Midwest. Both universities are primarily white institutions. 21 of the participants were preservice teachers, two were teaching assistants and one was a middle school educator. 84 % of the participants identified as white and 91% as female. The participants of the two study groups were assigned roles such as disrupter of the commonplace, interrogator of multiple viewpoints, advocator of social justice and connector of socio-political issues. The focus through the semester was reading and discussing critical theories, listening to, and discussing TED Talks. The work on the novel itself (*All American Boys*) lasted three weeks and happened at the same time at both universities (Falter & Kerkhoff, 2018, pp. 261-262).

The study found that in the beginning of the project the majority of the participants talked about the importance of hearing both sides of the story when discussing police brutality. The participant who argued that they needed “the full story” stated that they were scared to talk about race in the classroom because they felt that they were not well-informed. Others argued that police officers were being treated unfairly in the media and in the novel itself. As the study progressed however, some students started to realize they had grown up only hearing a single story (Falter & Kerkhoff, 2018, p. 265). There was also a tendency where participants stated that all sides to the story and all beliefs on the matter are valid. Many felt this way because they argued that as future teachers, they needed to be neutral in such matters. However, some of the participants began to question their own neutrality and the notion that classrooms are apolitical. Some of the participants argued that if discussing race is a political decision then *not* discussing race would surely also be a political decision, hence the classroom is in fact not an apolitical space (Falter & Kerkhoff, 2018, pp. 266-267). The study also found that some of the participants felt that discussing racism in the classroom would cause tension and should be avoided to prevent students from feeling offended or to protect students of color (Falter & Kerkhoff, 2018, p. 268). In general, the participants felt that the novel was successful in showing the systematic nature of racism and a useful tool to initiate

classroom discussions. Most of the participants did not display great shifts in their opinion on racism and police brutality through the use of the novel, however some did. For example, in the beginning of the study one white undergraduate broke down crying asking, “why is everybody against white people”. As the study progressed however, she began to understand why we need to consider minority perspectives and accepted the notion that racism is prevalent. In conclusion Falter & Kerkhoff state that though they saw some change in their participants there is more work to be done, but using young adult literature can certainly open the door to important discussions about racism and inequality (Falter & Kerkhoff, 2018, p. 271)

## **4. Literary Analysis**

The following chapter will consist of a literary analysis done through a close reading of *The Hate U Give* (2018). This analysis will point out literary devices and important segments in the novel which will demonstrate how this novel is useful in a classroom setting for promoting critical thinking and ethical awareness regarding social injustice and racism. I have chosen to focus on literary devices applied by the author that show how racism is a covert cultural mechanism as well as an overt attack on people of a different race. Within the theme of racism lies several topics such as code-switching, white privilege, police brutality, and institutionalized racism. I will also focus on other literary devices such the language of the novel, the point of view the novel is written in, the setting and certain characters. I will specifically investigate the importance and significance of the different characters, important moments in the story, and the characters growth. I will demonstrate how Angie Thomas reflects upon the covert and overt racism within social mechanisms in the US, and how these themes can be used to teach Norwegian students to be critically aware of topics of racism and social injustice.

### **4.1 Summary of plot in the Hate U Give**

In Angie Thomas’ *The Hate U Give* (2018), we follow 16-year-old Starr Carter, who lives in Gardens Heights, a mainly African American inner-city community somewhere in the southern part of the United States, where poverty, gang activity and drug abuse lingers. Starr attends a predominantly white private school, Williamson Prep, located far away from Garden Heights. Throughout the novel we follow Starr as she navigates between these two worlds. In

Garden Heights she can be herself but has lost touch with many of her old friends on account of switching schools. Meanwhile, though she enjoys going to school at Williamson Prep, she feels like she must code-switch when being there. She is careful in the way she speaks, both when it comes to slang and intonation, trying to avoid being viewed as the “angry black girl” or as “hood” or “ghetto”. She rarely allows her two worlds to meet and purposely keeps them separated.

The novel opens with Starr attending a spring break party in her hometown. The crowded and busy party takes a turn for the worse when a fight breaks out and gun shots are fired, so Starr catches a ride home with her long-time childhood friend Khalil. On the way home they listen to music and catch up, and suddenly see and hear a police car behind them. This is when the main event of the novel takes place, which lays out the premise for the story: The police officer questions Khalil. Khalil complies with the officer's demands, but the officer gets aggravated by Khalil's tone of voice and soon the situation escalates. The officer demands Khalil step out of the car with his arms above his head, while Starr is ordered to keep her hands on the dashboard. As the police officer walks back to his car to check Khalil's license he tells Khalil not to move, but Khalil leans into the car to ask how Starr is doing. As he opens the driver's door, he is shot three times by the police officer, instantly killing him. As Starr witnesses the murder of her childhood friend, she becomes an important factor in the investigation into what happened. We follow her as she struggles with the fear of testifying and the longing to fight for Khalil and to do what is right. She eventually agrees to let the police interview her but is left with a feeling that the police are not looking for the truth but rather looking to protect their own and blame Khalil for his own death. We also follow her as she agrees to stand in front of a grand jury to tell the truth, and when she agrees to go on national TV to try help rectify the way Khalil has been portrayed in the media. As the grand jury decide not to indict the police officer, demonstrations and riots break out in Garden Heights, and we follow Starr and her friends through the grueling night, both as participants and bystanders.

## 4.2 Racism

The overarching theme of *The Hate U Give* is racism. Racism is a multifarious and complex range of cultural and linguistic signifiers. In order to narrow it down for this thesis I have chosen to focus on certain elements of racism that seem to be the focal points of the novel, institutionalized racism, white privilege and code-switching. Focusing on these topics will

hopefully help promote critical thinking within the students and help them understand the multilayered reality for people of color and how many people need to anticipate racial or cultural stereotypes and code switch in order to avoid prejudicial assumptions.

#### 4.2.1 Institutionalized racism

Institutionalized racism can be defined as discrimination or unequal treatment that typically happen to minorities and marginalized people of a particular racial or ethnic group (Oxford English Dictionary, 2021). This can be found in many societies across the globe, and in a nation like the US, racism and institutional racism can be traced back to how white settlers treated the Native Americans, and to when the first Africans were enslaved and brought to America in chains. Slavery, abolition, the Civil War, Jim Crow, segregation, The Civil Rights Acts and Black Lives Matter are just a few historical periods and events that have led to where the US society stand today. With institutional racism affecting everything from unequal income and opportunities, and injustice and discrimination within the legal, health care and educational system, it is safe to say that there is still a lot of work and healing to be done in the US today (NAACP, 2022). Angie Thomas touches upon all these elements of institutional racism in *The Hate U Give*, all through the point of view of Starr.

In the novel we are presented with Starr's two worlds, Garden Heights and the area surrounding Williamson Prep. Thomas' depiction of Starr's two worlds can be seen as a way of presenting the inequality in economy and opportunity that is a result of institutional racism in the US, to the readers. Starr's uncle, and most of her classmates and friends from school live in a gated community close to Williamson Prep. Their neighborhood is described through Starr's point of view as a place where the air is fresher, the sun shines brighter, kids can play on the sidewalk and in their big yards, there are lemonade stands and joggers, and it is quiet and safe (Thomas, 2018, p. 154). While Garden Heights on the other hand is described as a battlefield where two gangs are fighting over the territory (Thomas, 2018, p. 20). Throughout the novel Starr's mom wants to get her family out of Garden Heights, as she is worried her children might get shot while they play outside (Thomas, 2018, p. 178). In Garden Heights instructions like "lock the door, stay inside, and don't let anybody in" (Thomas, 2018, p. 119) are normal for parents to give their children. In the beginning of the novel, Thomas describes these differences, and the struggles of Garden Height in a matter-of-fact way, describing to us how Starr views her own neighborhood; not questioning the situation, just accepting how things are.

Thomas also brings up the repercussions of systemic oppression in the conversation between Khalil and Starr moments before they are stopped by the police. Khalil explains the meaning of T.H.U.G.L.I.F.E. in the car to Starr, as a sort of foreshadowing of the story to come (Thomas, 2018, p. 21). The meaning behind the famous Tupac-track is said to be “The Hate U Give Little Infants Fucks Everyone”. When using this book for teaching ethics and awareness regarding social injustice, this quote would be a great opportunity early on in the novel to serve as the starting point for a discussion about systemic oppression. As a variant of “you reap what you sow” or “what goes around comes around”, *The Hate U Give Little Infants Fucks Everyone* points to how if you oppress and mistreat people from infancy you cannot expect them to be able to easily overcome their hurdles, all the while functioning and contributing to society. Therefore, people affected by oppression and mistreatment from society and their government, may therefore have no option but to resort to illegal ways to get by in life. This will in turn affect even the privileged, as everyone suffers in a dysfunctional society. One could also view the country of the USA as the *infant*, and at its birth slavery was introduced, a decision which ultimately “fucked everyone”.

Thomas makes sure that institutionalized racism works as a red thread throughout the novel as we as readers follow Starr and her growth in awareness and critical thinking surrounding the hardships facing her friends and loved ones in Gardens Heights. This is often done through conversations with Starr’s father, who once was caught in the cycle that typically comes with lack of job opportunities and desperation for income. At one point Starr asks her father why there are so many drug dealers in their neighborhood. This leads to a bigger conversation about the nature of this repetitive cycle that seems to make sure the oppressed stay oppressed:

“Lack of opportunities,” Daddy says. “Corporate America don’t bring jobs to our communities, and they damn sure ain’t quick to hire us. Then, shit, even if you do have a high school diploma, so many of the schools in our neighborhoods don’t prepare us well enough. (...) It’s easier to find some crack than it is to find a good school around here. (...) You got folks like Brenda, who think they need them (drugs) to survive, and then you got the Khalils, who think they need to sell them to survive. The Brendas can’t get jobs unless they’re clean, and they can’t pay for rehab unless they got jobs. When the Khalils get arrested for selling drugs, they either spend most of their life in prison, another billion-dollar industry, or they have a hard time getting a real job and probably start selling drugs again. That’s the hate they’re giving us, baby, a system designed against us. That’s Thug Life.” (Thomas, 2018, pp. 168-169)

This conversation serves as another very important step in attaining a deeper understanding of the hardship of Garden Heights and other communities like it in the US and would therefore be an important part of the novel for students to analyze and discuss in class. This conversation is a nod to the prevalent cycle of poverty that in many ways confine the lives for many African Americans today. I would argue that Thomas made sure this conversation took place at such a late stage in the novel to give us as readers time to ponder about this ourselves up until this point. In the very beginning of the novel discussing the conversation between Starr and Khalil about the meaning of THUGLIFE would be a good way to start talking about the shackles created by poverty and lack of opportunities, while this conversation between Starr and her father serves as a way do dive even deeper into the matter.

#### 4.2.2 Police brutality

Injustice and discrimination within the legal system may be one of the biggest aspects of this novel and of institutional racism. Therein lies police brutality, and this is shown through the killing of Khalil. Though this is a fictional novel, the unprovoked killing of unarmed young black men by police in America is a recurring reality. Though we only encounter the character of one-fifteen in the chapter 2, his presence lingers through the whole novel. This character signifies the great many police officers in the US who misuse their power and act on racist beliefs when encountering African Americans. This character also embodies the overt racism by media in these types of cases. The narrative in the media is that Khalil was a drug dealer and a thug, while one-fifteen was a hero who wanted to make a difference in the lives of the people of Garden Heights. This depiction in the media reinforces the white hegemonic discourse that depicts white people as saviors. Starr recognizes this as she thinks to herself: “Funny. Slave masters thought they were making a difference in black people’s lives too. Saving them from their “wild African ways.” Same shit, different century. I wish people like them would stop thinking that people like me need saving.” (Thomas, 2018, p. 242).

Unjust, fatal police shootings of this kind is not something that typically occur in Norway, but through reading this novel it is possible to understand the graveness of the situation for anyone. Thomas also lets us into Starr’s mental health after witnessing Khalil’s death. She is experiencing flashbacks which gives her physical reactions. One of her flashbacks is triggered by her white boyfriend grabbing her hand (Thomas, 2018, pp. 85-86). Adding these flashbacks and describing the visceral effect it has on Starr, Thomas makes us as readers feel what Starr feels. Thomas also lets the reader into Starr’s mind, and what she automatically

thinks when in the presence of police. “*Keep your hands visible. No sudden moves. Only speak when spoken to*” (Thomas, 2018, p. 97). Like a routine that has been ingrained in her mind and body. Something most, if not all black kids in the US are taught at an early age, and that white people do not ever have to think about - white privilege. This is brought up early on in the novel, when Starr tells the readers of the two “talks” her parents had with her when she was twelve; one was about the “birds and the bees” and one was what to do if a cop stopped her. In addition to telling her how she must act in such an event, her father also tells her to remember to get a good look at the police officer’s face and try to remember their badge number (Thomas, 2018, pp. 24-25). The ingrained fear many black people in the US feel when seeing police officers might feel foreign to many Norwegian readers. On the other hand, it has been reported that many Norwegian teenagers with minority backgrounds have experienced being racially profiled by the Norwegian police and have been stopped and questioned solely based on skin color. In an effort to increase trust in the police it has now been decided that the police in Oslo will participate in a trial run where they must give out receipts to anyone they stop, verifying why they were stopped (Ofstedal, 2021).

#### 4.2.3 White privilege and code-switching

Racism and white privilege go hand in hand, feeding off each other. Angie Thomas has made sure that white privilege is a lingering backdrop in *The Hate U Give*. This is done especially through the character of Starr’s longtime friend and classmate Hailey, as this character represents and comments on a white America that refuses to understand or learn about white privilege. White privilege might be a foreign concept to many Norwegians, especially white Norwegians. Peggy McIntosh (1989) explains that understanding, and also recognizing, white privilege may be hard for some white people, just as it is hard for some men to recognize male privilege

The novel also demonstrates how white privilege is connected to code-switching through the character of Hailey. Starr and Hailey have been friends for years, but throughout the novel it dawns on Starr that Hailey is not a good friend, in addition, Starr realizes that Hailey might just be a racist. Throughout their childhood Hailey has said and done things that Starr is finally starting to realize is outright racist. Hailey stopped following Starr on Tumblr when Starr started posting content about anti-racism and Black Lives Matter and Hailey further portrays her white privilege when she says to Starr during basket practice “Hustle! Pretend the ball is some fried chicken. Bet you’ll stay on it then” (Thomas, 2018, p. 113). Maya, also a

longtime friend of Starr and Hailey from Williamson Prep, confides in Starr and tells her “Hailey asked if we ate a cat. Because we’re Chinese” (Thomas, 2018, p. 248). In the novel Hailey continually refuses to acknowledge her own white privilege nor the insensitive and racist remarks of her past and present. Comments like these shows how Hailey, and white people are used to being able to speak without fear or consideration, while Starr is constantly monitoring her own words and intonation when she is at Williamson Prep.

Starr’s praxis of monitoring herself in the way she speaks depending on where she is and who she is with, is in effect code-switching, and by letting us as readers into this aspect of Starr’s life, Angie Thomas is undoubtedly commenting on the power that lies in language and the prevailing white hegemonic discourse. In his famous work “Black skin, White masks” Frantz Fanon talks of the immense power that lies in possession of language, so much so that the more a person of color assimilates “white language” the closer they come to being accepted as a proper human being in the eyes of the white man (Fanon, 2008, p. 17). Starr can only allow herself to speak and act however she feels when she is at home in Garden Heights with her family. At Williamson Prep she always makes sure to speak in a way that will not label her as hood, gangster or “the angry black girl” in the eyes of her white counterparts:

“That means flipping the switch in my brain so I’m Williamson Starr. Williamson Starr doesn’t use slang – if a rapper would say it, she doesn’t say it, even if her white friends do. Slang makes them cool. Slang makes her “hood”. Williamson Starr holds her tongue when people piss her off so nobody will think she’s the “angry black girl”. Williamson Starr is approachable. No stank-eyes, side-eyes, none of that. Williamson Starr is nonconfrontational. Basically, Williamson Starr doesn’t give anyone a reason to call her ghetto” (Thomas, 2018, pp. 73-74)

According to Harvard Business Review, research in schools suggest that black students selectively code-switch between standard English and African American Vernacular in the English classroom with their peers, because this elevates their social standing with the different audiences. Changing one’s behavior or speech to fit the mold of what white society deem proper, normal or polite often occurs in spaces where black people wish to avoid fitting into negative stereotypes (McCluney et al., 2019), and this is exactly what Starr is trying to avoid. Fanon explains that the black man is under constant surveillance by the white man and cannot afford a single mistake. If he fails it is over for him and for all those that come after him, because the black man must always stand trial for a whole race and is never deemed the opportunity to be judged as an individual (Fanon, 2008, pp. 83-84).

Starr code-switching in predominantly white spaces is something many black people will recognize. An added layer to this is how many African Americans often code-switch in the presence of police officers. Even when Starr is down at the police station to testify, she automatically code-switches. Her voice changes, she makes sure to pronounce every word correctly and carefully, because “(...) I can never, ever let anyone think I’m ghetto” (Thomas, 2018, p. 97). One of the powers of white privilege is the benefit of the doubt, as white people are more likely to receive compassion and a benefit of the doubt when making mistakes. They are more likely to be treated as individuals rather than representatives of a stereotyped racial grouping. If a person of color step out of line in any way that is not deemed “normal”, be it esthetically, behaviorally, or linguistically they are often judged in a negative way with less compassion (Collins, 2018).

Another aspect of code switching is how people of color in many ways are made to feel ashamed by their linguistic heritage or way of life, because the norm is to do it the white way, any other way is deemed wrong or absurd. In addition to altering her way of speaking and acting as to avoid being casted into wrongful stereotypes, Thomas also show the reader how Starr does not let her Williamson Prep friends visit her in Garden Heights, as she is ashamed of her house versus theirs: “I never invite them over. Why would I? They live in mini-mansions. My house is just mini.” (Thomas, 2018, p. 39) She made the mistake of inviting Hailey and Maya once in seventh grade and it forever changed her view of Garden Heights versus Williamson Prep.

“Hailey didn’t come. Her dad didn’t want her spending the night in “the ghetto.” I overheard my parents say that. Maya came but ended up asking her parents to come get her that night. There was a drive-by around the corner, and the gunshots scared her. That’s when I realized Williamson is one world and Garden Heights is another, and I have to keep them separate” (Thomas, 2018, p. 39)

Hailey’s comments towards Starr and Maya are as mentioned derogatory in that they play into stereotypes about people of color. These types of comments are in many ways attached to the white hegemonic discourse that feeds into more insidious stereotypes such as that black teenagers are likely to be carrying guns and should therefore be shot by police for not obeying commands instantly. In the off-chance Hailey meant no harm, even allowing herself to say such remarks shows her white ignorance and privilege even more. After the airing of a TV-interview of the father of one-fifteen, Hailey expresses sympathy for his family: “His son lost everything because he was trying to do his job and protect himself. His life matters too, you

know?” (Thomas, 2018, p. 244). I believe this is a comment on the rhetoric behind “all lives matter”. This way of thinking is also a product of ignorance and white privilege. Not being able to, or not being willing to understand that “black lives matter” does not mean that other lives matter less.

In many ways I would argue that the character of Hailey represents the part of an ignorant white America who refuses to learn, and therefore are the root to why racism and discrimination is kept alive. Most people are not inherently or actively racist on purpose. However, though your intentions are not racist, that does not mean that your words or actions are not. Discussing intention versus perception with students in class might be helpful in understanding how racism and white privilege manifests itself in a subtle way in everyday life. Being able to discuss these racist and insensitive remarks by Hailey and trying to understand why she would say such things plays into the element of decentering, found in the second stage in the model for acquiring intercultural communicative competence by Dypedahl (Dypedahl & Bøhn, 2020, p. 85). Being able to understand a situation from someone else’s perspective, to decenter from one’s own world view, is a part of practicing empathy. I would argue that it would be a great challenge for the students to try and see things from Hailey’s perspective and recognize that trying to understand something is not the same as agreeing with it. It will be easy for the students to have sympathy for Maya and Starr, but a greater challenge to understand where Hailey is coming from. Understanding Hailey would also mean to understand that she is shaped by the white discourse hegemony in society around her, in many ways a product of her surroundings. It is also vital to facilitate for the students a discussion that enlightens that though this might be an explanation for Hailey’s remarks, it is certainly not an excuse.

The novel also challenges the reader to understand the unrealistic expectations of good versus bad, right versus wrong, and that most humans operate on a spectrum between the two. Hailey sympathizes with one-fifteen, the officer who killed Khalil. She joins in the demonstration for Khalil as an excuse to get out of school, and she dismisses Khalil as simply a drug dealer. By adding these layers to Khalil’s story, Thomas is demonstrating how cases such as the killing of Khalil is nuanced. Hailey’s dismissal of Khalil as a drug dealer could be seen as a racist stereotype, but the fact is that he *was* a drug dealer. Starr, and in effect the reader, must learn to separate the white hegemonic discourse that says drug dealer equals someone inhuman, and therefore equals not worthy of life. Thomas is nudging the reader to understand that Khalil’s identity as a drug dealer does not invalidate his identity as a good human being and friend.

Instead, there are in fact socio-economic reasons for him choosing a ‘bad’ life. At first glance Hailey’s character might seem like an outright racist, but one would argue that Thomas is trying to tell us that what Hailey believes is much more sinister: it is the justifications and beliefs behind racism and white privilege. I also believe that the fact that Starr and Maya have been friends with Hailey for so long before confiding in each other about how Hailey is mistreating them, is Thomas’s way of commenting on how people of color often tolerate and placate such covert racist remarks so as not to be seen as “causing a fuss”.

As a counterpart to Hailey and her continuity of systemic racism and white privilege, there is Chris. Chris is Starr’s white boyfriend. Chris’s character represents the part of white America that are ignorant of their white privilege but are willing and eager to learn and better themselves. In many ways Starr feels like she can be herself around Chris, but even with him she still watches how she speaks to some degree, and she does not initially tell him about knowing Khalil and that she witnessed him being killed, as she thinks Chris will not understand. Though Chris does not always understand Starr, he is not afraid to ask questions to better understand, or to apologize and recognize his own white privilege. In response to Chris being upset realizing Starr had not told him the truth about Khalil, Starr yells

“You’re white, okay?” I yell. “You’re white!” Silence.

“I’m white?” he says, like he’s just hearing that for the first time. “What the fuck’s that got to do with anything?”

“Everything! You’re white, I’m black. You’re rich, I’m not.”

“That doesn’t matter!” he says. “I don’t care about that kinda stuff, Starr. I care about you.” (Thomas, 2018, pp. 160-161).

This interaction shows how Chris sometimes struggles to understand Starr’s point of view and his own white privilege. I also believe that Chris answering that he doesn’t care about “that kinda stuff” hints towards the failed notion of colorblindness. Many white people claim they do not see color, and some societies claim they operate in a colorblind fashion. Zamudio et al. (2011) argue how many in the US argued that because Barack Obama got elected president, the US became a colorblind society. What this notion fails to consider is that political rights do not equate real-life social equality. If a society claims to be operating in a colorblind fashion, they in fact operate from a white point of view as whiteness is the default standard (Zamudio et al., 2011, pp. 21-22).

By adding Chris's character, and making him the way he is, Thomas allows for a likeable white character who demonstrates how to be a good ally. Implementing this type of character may make it easier to identify with for the white readers, and this character might also make it easier for some white readers to understand and recognize their own white privilege. In the novel we see that Chris actively tries to understand Starr's point of view, even asking her to help him understand. Though some may argue that it should not be the responsibility of Starr to teach a white male about his inherent privileges, we should also recognize the positive sides of Chris asking her to help him better understand. McIntosh questions whether white people will truly get distressed and outraged when learning about and understanding white privilege, and if so, what will they do to help lessen it. She argues that merely disapproving of the system will not be enough to change it – individual acts can relieve but not end these deep-rooted, systemic problems (McIntosh, 1989, p. 3). Though the killing of Khalil might not affect Chris's life in any way close to how it affects the lives of Starr and her family, Chris chooses to stay with Starr and her friends when the riots and demonstrations are happening in Garden Heights after one-fifteen ends up not being prosecuted. "I'm staying" Chris nods, as if he's settling with himself. "Yeah, I'm staying." "You sure you up for this?" DeVante asks. "It's gon' get wild out here". "I'm sure." He eyes me. "I want everyone to know that decision is bullshit." (Thomas, 2018, p. 385). In this decision Chris's character understands that he must use his privilege in society to actively try to make a difference. Though an individual talking about and recognizing white privilege may not change the system, white people actively demonstrating against racism and police brutality may help the system slowly change, as argued by Critical Race Theorists; all struggle is good struggle (Zamudio., 2011, p. 7).

Though the novel does not end with a happy ending where racism magically vanishes, Thomas does offer the readers some hope. Throughout the novel Starr seems ashamed of her house, her natural way of speaking and of her somewhat complicated family relations. However, in the end of the novel it seems as though Starr is starting to heal, as she finally confronts herself about this in a conversation Kenya whom she shares a brother with:

"You ashamed of me too." "I've never said that." "You didn't have to, Starr," she says. "You never invited me to hang out with you and them girls. They were never at your house when I was. Like you ain't want them to know I was your friend too. You were ashamed of me, Khalil, even the Garden, and you know it." I go quiet. If I face the truth, as ugly as it is, she's right. I was ashamed of Garden Heights and everything in it. It seems

stupid now though. I can't change where I come from or what I've been through, so why should I be ashamed of what makes me, me? That's like being ashamed of myself. Nah. Fuck that" (Thomas, 2018, p. 435)

In the end of the novel Thomas also connects real-world happenings to her novel once more, by listing names of real-life people who are victims of fatal police shootings, along with Starr's final thoughts and pleas on the situation, working almost as a petition to those reading the novel. "Khalil, I'll never forget. I'll never give up. I'll never be quiet. I promise." (Thomas, 2018, pp. 437-438).

## 5. Discussion

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the possible benefits of reading and working with *The Hate U Give* (2018) in the upper secondary English language classroom in Norway, to promote awareness and critical thinking regarding social justice and racism. The following will present these possible benefits by building on findings from previous research and theories on teaching ethics and critical thinking through literature, along with the literary analysis of the novel while simultaneously justifying doing it in a classroom setting in connection to elements from the English curriculum and the core curriculum for primary and secondary education.

### 5.1 Choice of texts in the English language classroom

As stated in the English curriculum, one of the main purposes of using literary texts in the English subject is to create a deeper understanding of both ourselves and others (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020). In order to encourage students to reflect on social injustice and racism, we as teachers must provide them with the tools and facilitate opportunities to be able to do so. It is in fact decreed that schools and teachers have a responsibility to encourage students to scrutinize and criticize established ideas and truths, as skills of critical thinking and ethical awareness are important in the process of becoming a well-rounded human being (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2017, pp. 6-7). Introducing students to educational material that challenge the prevailing Eurocentric power structure of society is an important step in questioning the status quo. One way of doing this is to incorporate texts and novels that are not typically on the reading list in the English subject. Many teens feel like literature represents values and ideas of the social and

academic elite with which they do not identify. If the elite decides which texts are to be deemed “good”, then the literature chosen will only reflect the values of that elite (Munden & Sandhaug, 2017, p. 385). As the study by Marit Elise Lyngstad (2019) showed, the majority of teachers in Norway still focus on novels written by white, Anglo-American men, that have been used in the English subject for decades, such as *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck (1937) and “The Sniper” by Liam O’Flaherty (1923) (Lyngstad, 2019). Though reading such texts and novels can be enjoyable in their own sense, it does on the other hand only provide students with “a single story”, a story from one voice, one perspective that reproduces stereotypes, which should be actively avoided according to Adichie (2009), Critical Race Theorists and other scholars. Critical Race theorists agree that to take action against structural racism, educators must challenge this one-sided discourse, and one way of challenging the dominant, white hegemonic discourse is by selecting counter narratives when choosing educational material and literature for usage in the classroom (Zamudio et al., 2011, p. 92).

As discussed in chapter 2, reading literature can be useful in more ways than just for enjoyment and entertainment. Reading literature in schools can puncture stereotypes as they offer stories that give a fuller and more nuanced picture of different cultures (Munden & Sandhaug, 2017, p. 386), and since most young people may not yet have had the chance to travel around the world, allowing for introductions to different people from different cultures which will give them a wider perspective, reading and discussing literature can offer a doorway into different societies, cultures and people (Munden & Sandhaug, 2017, p. 375). Another valuable aspect of reading literature is that reading literature allows the young learners to enter into a “third space” where they decenter by trying to understand and sympathize with a different point of view than their own. Decentering through literature happens when the reader is exposed to authentic language in engaging settings. The ability to decenter is essential in the development of intercultural competence, and as such, literature is a great way of opening that door (Carlsen, Reading literature, 2020, p. 210). This is also backed up by Linder (2021) who claims that reading mindfully selected, authentic, multicultural literature will give young learners the chance to decenter by living through the experience of characters who may have a different cultural heritage than themselves. Reading this type of literature can thus enhance the development of social awareness within young learners (Linder, 2021, p. 36), which in turn will encounter attitudes of prejudice and racism. Choosing to work with *The Hate U Give* (2018) in the classroom is therefore very suitable, as this is a multicultural novel, written by a black woman depicting the lives of young minorities.

Gardelli et al. argue that learning ethics in one subject in school, would help students be more likely to succeed in other subjects in school as well (Gardelli, Alerby, & Persson, 2014, p. 24), and so spending time reading and working with literature on social justice in the English subject would indirectly be beneficial for other subjects as well. Gardelli et al. also argue that the best approach to teaching ethics in school is the philosophical ethics approach, or the PE approach. The PE approach aims to let the students explore ethics and think critically for themselves on ethical topics, and the students are not given a ready-made list of what is right versus wrong as they are encouraged to reflect on the many layers of these ideas (Gardelli, Alerby, & Persson, 2014, p. 18). Through discussions about the many sides of a person like Khalil, and the fact that he was not purely “good” or purely “bad”, the students get to inquire into the difficult question of what is right and wrong. It might also be safe to assume that many of the students in upper secondary have previously been taught ethics in life and in school, through a MF approach, because as Gardelli et al. point out this method has been the most common in Europe. It is also worth mentioning that Gardelli et al. admit it might be difficult to teach ethics through the PE approach if the students have not already been taught about ethics through the MF approach.

As previously discussed, Buganza (2012) argues how literature can promote empathy within the reader as the readers are intrinsically affected by what happens to the characters through appreciating their experience and point of view. As the readers immerse themselves in the narrative, they react and respond to the circumstances as if it was happening to themselves no matter how unrealistic the story (Buganza, 2012, pp. 129-130). When literature is well-written the readers can dive into the inner most personal thoughts and emotions of the characters, and in this way learn some of the most important lessons and values in life (Buganza, 2012, p. 131). Nation (2009) also argues that reading literature is well suited for acquiring knowledge about the world and other perspectives than one’s own (Nation, 2009, p. 49). Thus, even though the setting in *The Hate U Give* is placed in the US, and even though the main character is African American, I would argue that due to the authenticity and realism of the novel, even white teens in Norway can take on, and feel the emotions and thoughts of Starr.

As mentioned, it is important that teachers are mindful when choosing literature for meaning-focused input. By choosing books, novels and texts with characters and settings where underrepresented and minority students can see themselves is crucial when fighting the lingering white hegemonic discourse. These types of texts are not only important for representation and inclusion in the classroom, but also for students who fit into the group of

the majority to gain new perspectives and to challenge their world view (Linder, 2021, p. 39). Luckily, many works of literature written specifically for young adults are often stories that criticize stereotypes and traditional attitudes. They often shed light on topics that are important to young people such as racism, discrimination, and violence, thus making them both interesting and motivational to read for young learners (Carlsen, Reading literature, 2020, pp. 219-220). The study by Wexler Joseph (2021) argues how working with literature in literature circles can provide students with windows and doorways into the lives of people who are different than themselves, and thus can promote and encourage reflection and critical thinking on difficult and important topics such as social justice, racism and privilege (Wexler Joseph, 2021, p. 465).

### 5.2.1 Why The Hate U Give

Incorporating a novel such as *The Hate U Give* in the English classroom is a great way of promoting critical thinking, ethical awareness, tolerance and decentering. I believe working with and reading *The Hate U Give* will open up for many tough and thought-provoking conversations and discussions in the classroom, which allows for ethics to be taught in a PE approach, through exploring autonomously by applying critical thinking. The novel itself is both authentic and multicultural as it is written by Angie Thomas, an African American woman, and thus choosing to work with her novel does disrupt the dominant tendency of choosing novels written by white men. Purposely choosing this novel will therefore also disrupt the tendency to expose students to “the single story” which Adichie warns us about (Adichie, 2009). In addition, this novel can be described as a counter narrative of the white hegemonic discourse, as it describes the personal experiences of young people of color in the US. Furthermore, the novel could also be seen as a counter narrative to the repeated depiction by the media, of black men being shot and killed by the police. Initially in such cases the media will often provide a one-sided depiction of the man, with the intention to justify him being shot, such as him stealing something or being a drug dealer, and that this fact somehow makes the killing of him less awful. As the study done by Wexler Joseph (2021) proved, reading and working with *The Hate U Give* lead the participants to engage in deeper reflection on the concept of perception.

Reading this novel is a great way of learning about other cultures and societies than one’s own, which is essential in promoting attitudes that counteract racism and prejudice. Promoting such attitudes and values in the classroom is a part of the responsibility of the

educational system in Norway (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2017). And as we have seen, results from UNICEF's latest report on racism in Norway (UNICEF Norway, 2022) clearly demonstrates that a lot more must be done in schools to promote attitudes of tolerance, and inclusivity to counteract racism. Understanding the many layers of racism is important in the process of destroying racism in society. To understand that certain remarks or actions are racist even though the speaker/doer did not mean for it to be racist, is very important. However, perception goes deeper than just racist profanity. How minorities and people of color have been portrayed in literature and media for hundreds of years has had great effect on societies perception of "the other". Backed by Critical Race Theory this thesis argue that is vital to understand history to comprehend racism today. In most human cultures, certain groups of people have been held responsible for problems in society and therefore been deemed as "the other". This has provided communities with a standard of who is to be accepted and treated as the norm (us) versus those who are to be excluded and viewed as different (them) (Kearney, 2003, p. 26). Depicting the other as at fault or "bad" to justify mistreating them can be found in ancient texts even in the bible, where the aboriginal inhabitants of Canaan were described as frightening giants, a means to justify the Hebrew settlement of the Promised Land. We also see dehumanization of minorities throughout history, in example in The Unites States, where Native Americans have for a long time been talked of and portrayed as savages, in order to justify hundreds of years of abuse and exploitation (Cohen, 1996, pp. 7-8). This goes back to how Khalil is depicted by the media. We as readers get to follow Starr as she gains a deeper understanding of why Khalil has had to resort to selling drugs in order to get by in life. This part of the novel also opens up for reflections and discussions in the classroom about bigger issues in the African American community in the US, such as the reproductive cycle of poverty caused by forces of structural racism.

Working with a novel such as *The Hate U Give* would be greatly beneficial in the process of acquiring intercultural competence and as a result values of anti-racism. It always seems relevant to come back to the development of intercultural competence, as fostering young human beings to become tolerant, empathetic, and inclusive towards diverse cultures, ways of living and with world views different than their own, is the very epitome of intercultural competence. As discussed, intercultural competence is mentioned in the third core element in the English subject curriculum, *working with texts in English*, and thus it is reasonable to view this type of competence as rather important. As stated in this core element it is specifically

through working with texts in English that the students will have the chance to develop knowledge of cultural diversity and gain insight into different ways of living and thinking within different cultures and societies (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020). Arguably, reading a book such as *The Hate U Give* which include depictions of actions for justice, could in fact inspire the young learners to take action for justice themselves. In the interdisciplinary topic of *democracy and citizenship* found in the core curriculum, we are told that schools and teachers must stimulate students to become active citizens who exercise their right to participate in political activities that influence developments in civil society (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2017, p. 15). The participants in the study by Wexler Joseph noted that *The Hate U Give* offered important personal points of view that the media often lack (Wexler Joseph, 2021, p. 472), therefore reading and working with *The Hate U Give* in the classroom will undoubtedly provide many students with new perspectives and knowledge on social justice and racism. Understanding such matters is a part of being able to decenter and reflect upon what we as individuals can do to change for the better. Being able to decenter and self-reflect are instrumental in a society that values democracy and attitudes that counteract prejudice and discrimination, which are important factor in the core values *democracy and participation* in the core curriculum (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2017). The English curriculum also states that the English subject must help students understand that their own view of the world is culture dependent. This can in turn open for new ways of interpreting the world and ultimately help prevent prejudice (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020).

Building on Buganza, this thesis argues that reading *The Hate U Give* is excellent for developing empathy (Buganza, 2012, pp. 129-130), which is an important part of acquiring intercultural competence and dismantling racism. This novel offers a window into both the physical and emotional life of Starr, and as the novel is written in a first-person narrative, we as readers are affected by what happens to her. When reading about the trauma that manifests physically within Starr, from watching two of her childhood friends being shot and killed, we as readers step into Starr's mind in a state of empathy. Buganza argues that empathy is a vital part of ethics, and in literature authors invite the readers to step into someone else's point of view. Therefore, even though most students in Norway might not recognize the feeling of being afraid when seeing the police, as there are very few killings by police in Norway, the novel is so well-written that the depiction of Starr's deep-rooted fear activates empathy within the readers. The readers are induced into Starr's feelings of fear and panic, and this allows the

readers to be affected by her circumstances, which is the definition of empathy (Buganza, 2012, p. 131).

### 5.3 Classroom suggestions

Building on the findings of Gardelli et al. (214), this thesis argues that it would be very fruitful to work with the *Hate U Give* in a way that will allow for discussions with a PE approach to ethics. The PE approach seems to be the best way to ensure that students participate in discussions that allow for autonomous, critical thinking. To facilitate for these kinds of discussions the teachers should find certain passages or moments in the novel where the characters act or say things that cannot easily be deemed either wrong or right. There are several moments like this in *The Hate U Give*, one of them being the one-sided depiction of Khalil in the media. Even though it is true that Khalil was a drug dealer, he was so much more. This one-sided portrayal greatly upsets Starr, and at first she does not want to believe it to be true as this clashes with her own perception of him, but as mentioned the readers gets to follow Starr's journey of coming to terms with the many layers of Khalil. Discussing the issue of the media's depiction of Khalil and people of color in general would be a very beneficial way of promoting critical thinking in class. Questions to start of this discussion could be: *Why was Khalil labeled "the bad guy" and one-fifteen the "good guy"? Does the killing of Khalil become less wrong because he was a drug dealer? How does the media present black men and women that are victims of police brutality? How has Hollywood historically described the bad guys?*

Some of the participants in the study by Wexler Joseph (2021) brought articles and statistics on fatal police shootings in the US, fatal shootings of black men, and how the media portray these victims, often labeling them as drug-dealers. This type of work and discussion led to deeper reflection on their own prior understandings and the importance of perception and how white people in America experience and feel about the police versus the experiences of black people in America. Looking into real life cases like this, also made the participants of the study reflect on things such as how the situation would be portrayed by the media if the race were switched (Wexler Joseph, 2021, p. 472). Working with *The Hate U Give* in this interactive way, by looking into real-life cases of police shooting or police brutality both in the US and in Norway, would therefore be a great while-reading activity.

Working with *The Hate U Give* would be most fruitful if done in some form of literature circle or group work. Building on findings and theory by Falter & Kerkhoff (2018), Wexler

Joseph (2021) and Boyd & Darragh (2021), working with literature in groups both before, during and after reading is a great way of making sure that every single student participates in the project. Assigning different roles or tasks to the students has also proven to make sure that everyone is prepared for class and that they in fact read the novel. Therefore, a great way of working with *The Hate U Give* would be to divide the class into smaller groups and assign responsibilities to the group members before each class. One segment of the book which would require some preparing would be discussing the deeper meaning of the title of the book, which stems from the famous Tupac song THUGLIFE. As previously discussed in the literary analysis chapter, the deeper meaning of this song title acts as a red thread throughout the novel. First, Starr has a conversation with Khalil about the meaning behind the song title, and then later with her father. Both these segments of the novel allow for while-reading discussions, where the students would benefit from looking into the negative reproductive cycles caused by hundreds of years of structural racism and how and why this in turn can lead to a cycle of lower levels of education, criminal offences, and mental and physical health issues. Reading about and understanding the concept of institutional racism may be difficult to grasp for students in upper secondary, especially if they have no prior knowledge on the topic. As Boyd & Darragh suggest, it would be wise to prepare the students with a list of vocabulary and topics to discuss and investigate before, or even while reading the novel, especially big topics such as systemic racism and white privilege (Boyd & Darragh, 2021, pp. 39-40). Even so, this might not be enough to make Norwegian students fully comprehend this type of racism, as it might feel too distant and abstract when we are talking about the US. Therefore, it is important to talk about and investigate racism and systemic racism within Norway as well.

Showing students articles and facts about racism in Norway could be very eye opening. As a journal from the Norwegian Medical Association showed, patients in Norway are being discriminated based on implicit prejudice and stereotypes by their doctors. The article reveals that studies have shown how Norwegian doctors treat people differently based on skin color and gender. A study in Norway has also shown that implicit prejudice within health care workers has had a negative effect on pregnant immigrant women, their birth experience, and outcome (Alnæs-Katjavivi, 2021). A reason for this implicit prejudice towards women and people of color stem from wrongful practice and theory within the medical education. Doctors and health care workers in training have for years been taught categorical pattern recognition, to look for “the typical” in medicine. This is vital, as the typical is the most normal. But, in an

ever changing and more ethnically dynamic society what is medically “normal” is changing. Making medical decisions based on outdated norms and stereotypes can be dangerous, and this practice must therefore change (Alnæs-Katjavivi, 2021). It has also come to light how medical students in Norway are taught that Somali people will typically exaggerate their symptoms by expressing pain they do not really have (Baksaas , 2020). Such derogative claims and practices are both racist and outdated but are still happening in Norway today. Furthermore, a study done in Bergen, with participants of minorities, revealed that 40% of the participants had experienced discrimination when applying for jobs and 25% had experienced discrimination when looking for a place to live (Sandven , 2021). It would also be most valuable to introduce the students to the latest report on racism in Norway by UNICEF. The numbers from this study are quite revealing and important. As mentioned, 37% of the participants had experienced racism and 57% of these experiences had occurred in school. The second arena where the participants had experienced racism was on social media platforms (UNICEF Norway, 2022, pp. 10-11). These are all just a few examples to demonstrate how institutional racism rears its ugly head in Norway as well. Introducing students to these reports and numbers will help them see that racism and institutionalized racism is very much alive in Norway. It would also be important to discuss the happenings of the terrorist attack on July 22<sup>nd</sup>, the killing of Benjamin Hermansen, the terrorist attack in Bærum and the killing of Johanne Ihle Hansen, to understand how racist beliefs and attitudes are dangerous not only to individuals, but also to our society and democracy. However, as these events are so brutal and monumental, it might be easier to connect the dots between racism in the US and racism in Norway with the type of racism that happens more often and more quietly. Introducing students to facts such as these, will better prepare them for reading and working with the topic of institutional racism and white privilege.

Another moment in the novel that could prompt critical thinking and ethical awareness is the night of the demonstrations and riots in Garden Heights. Discussing the events of this night with a PE approach would allow for discussions on right versus wrong, and how in certain situations the line between the two is far from clear. Here it would be beneficial to assign different roles to each student. As argued by Falter & Kerkhoff, the students would benefit greatly from being given roles such as disrupter of the commonplace, interrogator with multiple viewpoints, and advocates for both sides of the case to make sure that the discussion will allow for perspectives from both sides (Falter & Kerkhoff, 2018, pp. 261-262). Going back to the importance of promoting action for justice, reading a novel such as *The Hate U*

*Give* might inspire the young learners in this regard: In the novel, Chris is at first apprehensive about staying to join in on the demonstrations and protests in Garden Heights after one-fifteen ends up not being indicted with the murder of Khalil, especially when Starr's brother Seven says "Fuck this. Starr, whatever you wanna do, I'm down. You wanna burn some shit up, we'll burn some shit up. Give the word." (Thomas, 2018, p. 384). Chris reacts with shock to this and tries to tell Starr and Seven that such actions will not solve anything. Despite this, he chooses to stay in support of Starr and the protests. As mentioned, I believe Thomas in this instant depicts what it is to be a good ally, to show up and stand up for something even though it might not directly affect you. Chris is also demonstrating to the reader the importance of using our civil rights to protest happenings in society in hopes to influence and change the narrative.

We as teachers must encourage young learners to make use of their voices, and it goes without saying that we encourage their actions to be in a non-violent manner. Destroying properties and looting is perhaps not the most constructive way of asking for change in society, and Thomas gives her readers the opportunity to ponder this as well. As the protests in Garden Heights take a turn for the worse and burning and looting of shops ensues, a discussion of what is right and wrong starts between the teens. While Starr's friend DeVante says their community has had enough and that peaceful protests have gotten them nowhere, Starr points out that these actions are in fact destroying their neighborhood and thus in the end will only harm their community (Thomas, 2018, pp. 388-392). This segment of the book would be a great place to stop and discuss within the literature circle. Discussing a situation like this, where there is no clear answer as to what is right and what is wrong will allow for ethics to be approached in the PE manner which emphasizes autonomous critical thinking (Gardelli et al., 2014). This approach also goes hand in hand with the third core value of the curriculum and the interdisciplinary topic of *democracy & citizenship*, both of which emphasize the importance of critical thinking. This discussion also fits well with the learning cycle of intercultural competence, which emphasized the importance to show tolerance and respect for other ways of thinking than one's own.

To dive deeper into the many layers of right and wrong and facilitate for the PE approach when teaching ethics, the students could be asked to empathize with different decisions made by different characters in the book. For example, one could ask the students to sympathize and argue for why Starr initially does not wish to testify and speak to the police, or why she does not want to talk to the media. Another example could be to ask the students to sympathize for

why Starr's father does not wish to leave their hometown and move somewhere safer, or to sympathize with Kahlil and why he sold drugs. This kind of reflection could be done verbally in an open discussion but could also be done by asking the students make a diary entry (either written or in vlog style) in the point of view of one of the characters, where they justify their own actions. Doing such text-to-self connections are important to make sure that every student is actively reflecting, and to help them decenter (Boyd & Darragh, 2021, p. 41), which is a staple in the process of acquiring intercultural competence as well.

Another way of working with this novel would be to discuss and look into the concept of the term "white hegemonic discourse". This is closely linked to structural racism, and within this we find other important terms such as white privilege and code-switching. For the students to understand the elements of institutionalized racism at play in Starr's world they need to understand the complicated history and struggle of African Americans in the US. In the novel Thomas makes reference to historic figures such as Emmet Till, Dr. King, Huey Newton, The Black Panthers and Malcolm X (Thomas, 2018). They are mentioned in the novel mostly without further explanation and so to understand the historic importance of these people and therefore their importance in connection to this novel, students would benefit from learning about them as a pre-reading activity. Researching these historic figures and about important historic events that they are known for would be a great pre-reading and while-reading activity. As well as learning about these historic figures to understand the context in the novel, teachers would also do well in introducing terminology such as white privilege, code switching and institutionalized racism, so to make it easier to discuss these topics during the reading project. Boyd & Darragh recommend providing students with a list of vocabulary from the novel and working with these vocabularies by reading informational texts on the topic (Boyd & Darragh, 2021, pp. 39-40). In preparation of understanding the concept of white privilege it could be valuable to ask the students to make lists of benefits they believe white people gain from in everyday life and then compare the lists to that McIntosh's lists (McIntosh, 1989), and also present the students with Kendall's more up to date presentation of white privilege (Kendall, 2013).

Discussing and researching why Hailey's fried chicken comment and cat eating comment are racism and stem from harmful stereotypes is a great way to discussing elements of white privilege. Through characters such as Hailey and Chris, Angie Thomas allows the reader to see how perceptions and opinions are culture dependent. Hailey undermines the awfulness of Khalil's death when she talks about him as a drug dealer "I mean, it's kinda messed up that

we're protesting a drug dealer's death, but—" (Thomas, 2018, p. 181). This statement implies that a drug dealer's life is *less than*, and it also shows Hailey's view of the world. As mentioned previously, I believe Hailey's character represents white Americans who are not willing to acknowledge how prevalent racism is, nor their own white privilege. Hailey's racist remarks towards Maya about her Chinese culture and the comment towards Starr about friend chicken are based on wrongful stereotypes, that are typically passed on from generation to generation. Such stereotypes are culture dependent, and we also find "Hailey's" in Norway. It would be likely to assume that most people in Norway have encountered individuals who deny the existence of racism in this country. This is a type of ignorance that only reinforces the issue, and this type of world view is most definitely culture dependent. Having discussions in class or in smaller groups about stereotypes and how minorities have been portrayed historically would be very relevant. Where you grow up, which grouping of people you go to school with and surround yourself with, what kind of news you follow, what movies/tv shows and music you listen to, and what type of literature you are exposed to are all elements that go into culture-dependent knowledge of society and the world. Learning and understanding that our world views are culture dependent goes hand in hand with the ability to decenter, which is an important step in the learning cycle towards gaining intercultural competence. The model for intercultural learning mention elements such as openness and willingness to understand others, respect and tolerance, empathy and cultural empathy (Carlsen et al., 2020, p. 85). The importance of gaining intercultural competence is specifically mentioned in the English subject curriculum

By reflecting on, interpreting, and critically assessing different types of texts in English, the pupils shall acquire language and knowledge of culture and society. Thus, the pupils will develop intercultural competence enabling them to deal with different ways of living, ways of thinking and communication patterns (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020).

Implementing a novel with a counter narrative, such as the *The Hate U Give* presents, into the English subject might change the way many of the students view the world, as this novel does not shy away from difficult topics. *The Hate U Give* is valuable to teach in the classroom as the novel touches upon both racial oppression and white privilege, which provide the students with a wider perspective on systemic racism. Seeing systemic racism from multiple perspectives can prompt important dialogue and discussions (Boyd & Darragh, 2021, pp. 39-40). Learning about how Starr struggles with code switching between her two worlds, about

white privilege found within characters such as one-fifteen and Hailey, and about the institutionalized racism that the African American community in the US face, might make the students experience a level of epiphany. Some might begin to understand their own white privilege or their own prejudice towards certain groups of people, as this was the achieved within some of the students in a study that worked with *The Hate U Give* (Wexler Joseph, 2021, p. 471).

In the novel we also learn how white people linguistically are held to another standard than people of color: “Williamson Starr doesn’t use slang—if a rapper would say it, she doesn’t say it, even if her white friends do. Slang makes them cool. Slang makes her “hood.”” (Thomas, 2018, p. 73). Herein lies the notion that if a person of color does not speak white mainstream English, they will automatically be seen in a negative light, but if white people speak “slang” they are seen as cool. However, people of color are not afforded this “coolness” and must therefore code-switch. Always having to edit and monitor yourself essentially means that you are not living an authentic life, and in many ways code switching takes something away from those forced to do so. Losing a sense of self, in addition being made to feel embarrassed by your culture and way of life is something that follows Starr through her struggle with code-switching. In the US black and African American students still experience being silenced and corrected by teachers when using African American vernacular, and thus forces them to codes-switch to avoid this type of discrimination (Baker-Bell, 2019, p. 9). To show Norwegian students that English is so much more than white mainstream English, and to avoid prejudice and stereotyping towards different types of English dialects and vernaculars, it is vital to expose students to a great variety of English. Being exposed to presentations of a people or dialects in a one-sided way will in the end greatly affect how we view them, and this is the danger of the single story (Adichie, 2009). The type of self-monitoring that Starr constantly has to uphold will most likely be very unfamiliar to most white Norwegian students but reading about it can open up for reflections and discussion regarding why historically some dialects have been valued more than others. Discussions of topics foreign to one’s own reality is valuable and necessary in the development of intercultural competence. As mentioned, the ability to decenter is an important part in the cycle of intercultural learning. Being able to change perspective demands skills of both empathy and cultural empathy, as these skills can help the students relate and empathize with the converser (Dypedahl & Bøhn, 2020, pp. 88-89). Introducing students to theoretical concepts such as white linguistic hegemony, ethnocentrism, and stereotypes as a part of the

reading project of this novel will help them gain deeper understanding of these issues (Dypedahl & Bøhn, 2020, p. 90). This can also be discussed again towards the very end of the novel where as mentioned, Starr finally realizes that she has been ashamed of her life in Garden Heights and decides to change her perspective. Here, Thomas shows growth within Starr, and hopefully by this stage in the novel many of the readers will have achieved some growth as well.

Another while-reading activity could be to take note of phrases and words in *The Hate U Give* that would typically be viewed as “slang”, which could open up for a discussion on another part of the white hegemonic discourse, that of language. This goes into the aspect of code-switching as well. Angie Thomas has made sure that this novel is written in a very authentic way with authentic language. As previously discussed, Starr struggles with code-switching as she is very aware of the way she talks and acts when she is at Williamson prep and when she is around white people in general. She monitors herself to avoid being seen as hood or ghetto, because if she talks freely like she does at home, this is what people will think of her.

However, when she is in Garden Heights, she can speak the way she likes, because African American vernacular is the “norm” there. African American vernacular might be new to many Norwegian readers, as they have been taught throughout their education to always speak and write in a grammatically correct way, according to the white hegemonic discourse still at play in English language learning. Examples from the novel such as “Why you ain’t tell me you was coming?” (Thomas, 2018, p. 12) challenge the rules taught to Norwegian students about the subject-verb relation. Other examples from the novel also challenge what is deemed as appropriate to say, and for who: “Ne-gro, please. If I kill Tyrone, I’m going to prison. If a cop kills me, he’s getting put on leave. Maybe.” (Thomas, 2018, p. 55) As seen above, the curriculum states that students should get to know different communication patterns, but does that mean that it is OK to imitate or appropriate the sound patterns and slang of other languages?

Usage of the n-word is still greatly debated in Norway, as well as in the US. Arguably most young people should know and understand the negative, historic connotation connected to this word and thus understand that especially white people should never use it. Then again, numbers from the UNICEF study on racism in Norway might suggest otherwise. Thomas provides a nod to the importance of this word in the novel, and how it is not appropriate for white people to use: “DeVante and Seven yell out the lyrics. Chris nods along and mumbles the words. He goes silent every time Cube says “nigga.” As he should.” (Thomas, 2018, p.

388). The n-word is mentioned eight times in the novel, and it would be wise to take extra care to not choose any of these passages for reading out loud in class. Instead, this example from the book where Starr thinks to herself “as he should”, would be a good place to stop and discuss and reflect upon whether it is appropriate to appropriate the speech of a minority group. Discussing whether it is appropriate for white Norwegians to sing along to the chorus of the song “*hvite men som pusher 50*” by Norwegian rap duo Karpe, or if Herman Flesvig’s humoristic character Ola Halvorsen is culturally insensitive are just a few examples to discuss when trying to connect it to Norwegian pop culture. Though we would like to believe that usage of the Norwegian version of the n-word is all but gone, buried with a past generation, the fact is that usage of this word still exists and not only behind closed doors. Recently a young Norwegian-Pakistani man was told during a job interview that some of the responsibility of the position he was applying for involved so-called “negerarbeid” or in translation “negro-labor”. A spokesperson for the cooperation apologized afterwards saying it was a “slip of the tongue” and admitted that usage of such word is undoubtedly racist. However, they later concluded that they did not violate any law of discrimination by using this term during a job interview (Jordheim & Rustad, 2022). Discussing usage of this word in class will most likely feel very uncomfortable for the students, so it is advisable to have a thorough plan of action for this, and perhaps the teachers should be more involved as mediators in discussions on such a heavy topic.

The power of the white linguistic hegemony can be seen in many different arenas. In Hollywood movies the “nice guy” or the “hero” speaks so-called proper British or American English, while the violent “bad guys” will typically speak in English dialects that are not deemed proper, such as Russian-English or African American vernacular. If a foreign character is portrayed as stupid or less intelligent, they will likely speak English with an Indian accent or African-English, and if an African American character is supposed to be poor or less unfortunate, they often use African American Vernacular. Young people watching movies and tv-shows with these kinds of stereotypes will likely come to believe that there is a correlation between being less educated, poor, and violent with African American lingo. The idea of proper English or academic English in many ways helps maintain the covert racist practice of white linguistic hegemony in society and in schools. While students who speak white mainstream English come to school already with an advantage, most linguistically and racially diverse student arrive with a disadvantage as their language and culture is automatically viewed as “other” and non-academic (Baker-Bell, 2019, pp. 9-10).

The issue of white linguistic hegemony can most definitely also be applied to the Norwegian society, and so the students should be encouraged to reflect inwards and discuss if they can recognize this in our own society. For example, speakers of so-called “kebabnorsk” are automatically deemed linguistically challenged and their way of speaking is by society viewed as incorrect Norwegian. This way of speaking has become linked to young adults from minority backgrounds, and the discourse surrounding “kebabnorsk” contributes to the construction and prevalence of stereotypical perceptions of youth from multicultural and multilingual parts of Oslo. This depiction of “incorrect Norwegian” versus “clean Norwegian” also contributes to the prevailing idea of “the other” (Svendsen, 2014). A discussion regarding “kebabnorsk” might be helpful in connecting the issue of code-switching to the Norwegian society, and some Norwegian students will also be able to recognize this on a personal level. Discussing the white hegemony that prevails in the English language as well as in the Norwegian language is an excellent way of practicing decentering. The ability to move away from one’s own reality and to become conscious of cultural and linguistic stereotypes are important steps towards intercultural and language awareness (Dypedahl & Bøhn, 2020, p. 90). This topic also ties in well with the discussion regarding how Khalil is portrayed by the media versus how the white police officers is portrayed.

Many students in upper secondary might be accustomed to reading books and novels with a somewhat happy ending where everything works out in the end. As *The Hate U Give* does not have a happy ending, this might be hard for some students to process. To help students process this unusual, but very real ending, Boyd & Darragh (2021) suggest asking the students to either write add-ons to the ending or even act it out. What happens after the final page of this book, what does Starr’s life look like a few months later? With that said, the fact that *The Hate U Give* does not have a stereotypical happy ending is also why this novel is so important. Typically, classroom curricula about racism and oppression tend to downplay the pervasiveness of the issue, and so this ending is important to counteract this narrative (Boyd & Darragh, 2021, p. 42). Engaging in counter narratives is an important part of Critical Race Theory. The importance of presenting students with counter narratives of “the single story” is also supported by the study done by Falter & Kerkhoff (Falter & Kerkhoff, 2018, p. 265).

Teachers in Norway are typically told to be politically neutral in the classroom, so to not steer students one way or another. However, studies have shown how preservice teachers found it difficult to stay neutral, and they started to realize that classrooms are far from apolitical. The teachers in the study argued that if discussing racism in the classroom is political, then not

discussing racism would surely also be a political decision (Falter & Kerkhoff, 2018, pp. 266-267). *The Hate U Give* has in fact been banned from certain schools in the US, and so has teaching critical race theory (Adams, Smith, & Tambe, 2021). School boards in Texas and Pennsylvania have decided to ban *The Hate U Give* from classroom usage, because of profanity but also because the novel has been accused of promoting an anti-police message (García & Pagan, 2021). Meanwhile, an excerpt of the novel has been added to an English coursebook in Norway. The VG1 coursebook *Citizens* by Cappelen Damm (Andersen, et al., 2020) has incorporated an excerpt from the passage where Starr listens to Tupac in the car with her father, and they discuss the meaning of *The Hate U Give* (Thomas, 2018, pp. 166-170). This is a step in the right direction as it shows that makers of newer coursebooks in the English subject are not afraid to dive into important topics.

## 6. Conclusion

The object of this thesis was to investigate the potential benefits from implementing *The Hate U Give* (2018) by Angie Thomas in the English language classroom in upper secondary, to promote critical thinking and ethical awareness regarding social justice and racism. The specific research question was:

1. How can reading *The Hate U Give* promote critical thinking and ethical awareness regarding social injustice and racism?

To answer the research questions stated above, I looked into previous research on using young adult literature on social justice in the classroom to teach critical thinking regarding racism. I found that literature can act as a doorway into thoughts and emotions of others and allows the readers to empathize with the characters. As we read, we step into a third space where we decenter and see the world from someone else's point of view, which coincides perfectly with the skill of intercultural competence. Intercultural competence is arguably closely linked to the abilities of critical thinking and ethical awareness, and intercultural competence is also specifically mentioned in the English curriculum in regard to working with English texts. This thesis argues that every aspect of intercultural competence could be viewed as important assets in developing anti-racist attitudes and values. It always circles back to intercultural

competence, as empathy, decentering, tolerance, and critical thinking can all be linked to intercultural competence, but also to values of anti-racism.

Findings from previous research and theories strongly suggest that multicultural, young adult literature is especially valuable in this sense as young adult novels tend to tackle highly emotional and potent topics such as discrimination, violence and racism, which are also topics that are important to young people. It is however, important that we as teachers choose literature wisely if we want decentering and critical thinking to take place. Studies have shown that many teachers in Norway still tend to choose literature written by white men, and leaning on Critical Race scholars, Adichie (2009) and Falter & Kerkhoff (2018) this thesis warn against exposing young learners to literature that only comes from “a single voice” and tell “a single story”. Several studies claim that choosing well written multicultural literature that offer a counter narrative to the prevailing white hegemonic discourse would be most beneficial in the quest to foster young anti-racists. Thus, choosing *The Hate U Give*, which is written by an African American woman, offering the perspective of young people of color in the US, is a great start in this quest.

Through thorough research I found that the best way to teach ethics in general is through the philosophical ethics approach (the PE approach), as this approach values autonomous, critical thinking. Approaching ethics in this way is rather demanding, as the students are not given the answers as to what is right and wrong, and through my literary analysis I found that *The Hate U Give* offer its reader several instances where such discussions would be fruitful. I also found that in order to be able to work with *The Hate U Give* properly, it would be best to do some pre-reading and while-reading work with the class. Based on previous studies this thesis argues that working with the novel would be done best in literature circles or group discussions. As previous research has shown, working with young adult literature to teach awareness regarding racism is done best as a longer project. A study by Wexler Joseph (2021) showed good results when working with certain elements and terminology from the novel as pre-reading exercises. This study also found that working with literature over time, in literature circles, can function as windows into the lives of others and may facilitate for difficult conversations in class, such as conversations about racism. Leaning on these finding I would therefore argue that working with this novel in class would be done best if the students are divided into study groups, where each person has a responsibility before meeting with the group. Assigning roles and responsibility in advance will help every student come prepared and this will also encourage active participation by everyone.

*The Hate U Give* presents the reader with big and difficult topics such as systemic racism, white privilege and code switching. To make sure that the young learners understand the importance of these terms this thesis recommend working with these terms and their significance either in advance or during reading. To dive back into racism throughout history, especially in the US, would also be of great importance when working with this novel, as the novel touches upon real-life incidents and people. But understanding the historic mistreatment of people of color is also important to understand how deep rooted the issues is. Working with *The Hate U Give* in the English subject in upper secondary fits well, as one of the competence aims after *VGI-programe for general studies and vocational education-programs* states that the student is expected to “explore and reflect on diversity and social conditions in the English-speaking world based on historical contexts” (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020). I would also argue that such discussions in class would require students to think critically about society as they know it and make them question why young boys such as Khalil are targeted by the police and also why he had to resort to drug dealing. The ability to do a reflection of this sort is also an important part of the core curriculum in the English subject. The core curriculum expresses how teachers shall help students to question and scrutinize established ideas and encourage them to think critically about how knowledge is developed (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2017).

*The Hate U Give* also depicts police killings and the deep-seated fear many African American people have towards the police, which is not that common in Norway, thus in order to fully understand this layer of structural racism, this thesis suggest that it is important to let the students link this to the Norwegian society. However, I also found that well written literature makes us take on and understand the feelings of the characters, no matter how distant the plot or happenings of a story might be from the reader’s reality. This thesis argues that this novel illustrates ways in which both overt racism such as police brutality and covert racism such as elements of white-privilege and institutional racism is a prevailing and recurring issue in the US. Therefore, this thesis argues that by working with this novel, the important thematic issues of the novel, and connecting and comparing these issues to the Norwegian society, can model for critical thinking and understanding of how social structures and systemic problems relate to both language and representation.

Furthermore, in *The Hate U Give* Angie Thomas brings up how structural racism and racial inequality in the US is still prevalent in all fields of society such as law enforcements, education, and economic opportunities. Therefore, this thesis argues that working with and

reading this novel will facilitate opportunities to question social and systemic structures in the US and in Norway, an important part of critical thinking as described in the core curriculum for lower and upper secondary education and in the English curriculum itself. The core curriculum emphasizes the importance of critical thinking, and how we as teachers must encourage this within our students. It is also decreed that we as teachers must encourage our students to question established truths and the different power structures of society. The core curriculum also states that the students should gain insight into different ways of living and different cultures, to appreciate diversity and to value a tolerant and inclusive society that do not discriminate. But the curriculum also stated the importance of understanding our own history, and so this thesis also argue that it is important to look into racism in Norway both historically and today. I found that a vital part of understanding racism is to understand the prevailing white hegemonic discourse, in both the US and in Norway.

Reading *The Hate U Give* is an excellent starting point in understanding this vast topic, as the readers are let into Starr's struggles of self-monitoring and code-switching. Discussing and reflecting on why many people of color code switch would arguably be very important, and especially for white Norwegian students. Looking into how certain dialects and ways of speaking have more value in society, even in Norway would be a great way for the students to connect the events of the novel to real life. Understanding that possession of language holds great power, and how people of color have been made to feel ashamed of African American Vernacular is very valuable when discussing code-switching. This thesis looked into research about racism in Norway today to further solidify the need for teaching this topic. Studies have shown that speakers of so-called "kebabnorsk" are often looked down upon because it is not viewed as correct Norwegian. Fanon (2008) also wrote of this, explaining as long as the black man masters the intonation and sound patterns of white people, he is viewed as proper human being. Minorities in Norway have also experienced racism when applying for jobs or homes to rent, and I also found that there are traces of structural racism within the Norwegian health system. Furthermore, results from a recent study by UNICEF clearly shows that racism is alive and well in Norway and that we have a lot of work to do to change this. 57% of those who had been subject to racism said that it had occurred while at school. The study also revealed that they had received no help from employees at the school when it happened. In addition, a report from Norwegian Police Security Service could reveal that there is a constant risk for acts of terror by right wing extremists who believes in white supremacy and racist

rhetoric. These numbers and results only solidify why it is vital that anti-racism be taught in school, thus I would strongly argue that the objective of this thesis alone is very relevant.

The core elements in the English curriculum state that “working with texts in English helps to develop the pupils’ knowledge and experience of linguistic and cultural diversity” (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020) and continues on to say that “by reflecting on, interpreting and critically assessing different types of texts in English, the pupils shall acquire language and knowledge of culture and society. Thus, the pupils will develop intercultural competence” (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020).

Reading and working with *The Hate U Give* offers the students a window into cultural and linguistic diversity, which will help them gain knowledge of different forms of culture and society and ultimately help them on their way to develop intercultural competence. Reading authentic novels with authentic written English is an important step to offer students counter narratives that fight white linguistic hegemony. The novel is written in a very authentic way as the language reflects how a young, black, inner-city girl, along with her family and friends might converse and express themselves. Seeing as the novel is written by a black woman, the vernacular feels credible and authentic.

A possible limitation of the findings of this thesis is that it is solely based on previous theories and a few previous studies. On the other hand, these studies and theories agree that thorough group work with multicultural literature holds great potential in promoting critical thinking and ethical awareness regarding social injustice and racism. Therefore, I strongly argue that *The Hate U Give* is an excellent novel, and that the content and themes are very suitable for this task.

Thus, this thesis concludes that by implementing a novel such as *The Hate U Give* that presents valuable perspectives and counter narratives on racism and discrimination, into the English subject in upper secondary in Norway would greatly promote both critical thinking and ethical awareness regarding social justice and racism.

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