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We are Between Migrants and Finnish Culture

Educators and Diversity in Finnish Education for Adult Migrants

Miitta Järvinen

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University of Turku

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Doctoral Programme in History, Culture and Arts Studies, Juno

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the social construction of diversity in Finnish education for adult migrants' integration. The study focuses on the educators who work in basic education for adults, integration training and liberal adult education. It asks: 1) how the educators of adult migrants construct diversity emerging from their everyday interactions with their students, 2) how their position is reflected in their accounts of diversity, and 3) what means the concepts of intersectionality and superdiversity offer for the analysis. The interdisciplinary nature of the study is based on the study of religion, gender studies, and migration studies.

The research material consists of interviews. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the interviews were conducted on the Zoom Meetings online platform. In the spring of 2021, sixteen educators participated in thematic interviews that were supplemented with the prompt interview method: quotations from the core curricula of the education were presented, on which the educators were asked to reflect and comment. Two focus group discussions were organized as a follow-up in the spring of 2022. The focus group participants had all attended the individual interviews. The core curricula, together with other relevant authoritative documents, serve as the background material for analysis.

The theoretical framework of the study is an assembly of intersectionality, superdiversity, and affect theory. As intersectionality marks the meeting-point of social differences, such as gender, race, religion, and education, it forms the foundation for understanding diversity as a socially constructed concept and something that is connected to power relations. Superdiversity shifts the focus to the effects of international migration on contemporary societies, including the different types of migration, local services, and community responses. Affect theory steers attention towards emotional engagement, through which educators make their accounts of diversity.

The study exhibits that the educators' constructions of diversity are often stereotypical categorizations of migrants as women/mothers, Muslims, and forced migrants. These accounts are grounded in a complex position in which educators navigate their personal values and commitments, structures of migrant integration, and encounters with their students. The structures of integration foster labor market-driven diversity that problematizes Muslim migrants and may even contribute to the racializing of migrants. Simultaneously, the structural framework of education does

not adequately support educators when encountering matters affecting their students' lives, such as racism or past traumas. These are not merely issues of knowledge and resources, but also emotional and personal engagement.

Based on the finding of the educators' intricate position as civil servants, this study calls for attention to the structures and policies of migrant integration: the funding of labor market education reinforces the labor market logic of the education, while narrowing the understanding of diversity. Educational structures all around need to incorporate anti-racist and trauma-informative practices to better support both educators and students.

KEYWORDS: adult education, affect, diversity, forced migration, gender studies, intersectionality, labor market education, migrant integration, migration studies, superdiversity, Muslims, prompt interview, racism, religion

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TIIVISTELMÄ

Tämä väitöskirja tarkastelee moninaisuuden sosiaalista rakentumista aikuisten maahan muuttaneiden kotoutumista edistävissä koulutuksissa Suomessa. Tutkimus keskittyy kouluttajiin, jotka työskentelevät aikuisten perusopetuksessa, kotoutumiskoulutuksessa ja vapaan sivistystyön koulutuksessa. Tutkimus kysyy, 1) kuinka aikuisten maahan muuttaneiden kouluttajat rakentavat sitä moninaisuutta, joka kumpuaa arkipäivän kohtaamisista opiskelijoiden kanssa, 2) miten heidän positionsa heijastuu moninaisuutta koskeviin käsityksiin, sekä 3) mitä välineitä superdiversiteetin ja intersektionaalisuuden käsitteet tarjoavat moninaisuuden tarkasteluun.

Tutkimusaineisto koostuu haastatteluista. COVID-19-pandemian vuoksi haastattelut toteutettiin Zoom Meetings -verkkokokousohjelmassa. Keväällä 2021 kuusitoista kouluttajaa osallistui teemahaastatteluihin, joissa hyödynnettiin virikemenetelmää: koulutuksia koskevista opetussuunnitelman perusteista esitettiin sitaatteja, joita kouluttajia pyydettiin reflektoimaan ja kommentoimaan. Haastattelujen jatkoksi keväällä 2022 järjestettiin kaksi fokusryhmäkeskustelua, johon kutsuttiin aiemmin yksilöhaastatteluihin osallistuneita kouluttajia. Opetussuunnitelmien perusteet ovat muiden viranomaisdokumenttien tavoin taustoittavaa tutkimusmateriaalia.

Tutkimuksen teoreettinen viitekehys koostuu intersektionaalisuuden ja superdiversiteetin käsitteistä sekä affektiteoriasta. Kiinnittäessään huomiota sosiaalisten erontekojen, kuten sukupuolen, rodun, uskonnon ja koulutuksen, kohtaamispisteisiin, intersektionaalisuus on lähtökohta moninaisuuden ymmärtämiseen sosiaalisesti rakentuneena ja valtasuhteisiin kiinnittyneenä käsitteenä. Superdiversiteetti siirtää huomion kansainvälisen maahanmuuton vaikutuksiin nyky-yhteiskunnissa, mukaan lukien maahanmuuton eri tyypit sekä niihin liittyvät paikalliset palveluratkaisut ja yhteisöjen vastaukset. Affektiteoria ohjaa huomioimaan emotionaalisen kiinnittyneisyyden, joka myötävaikuttaa opettajien moninaisuutta koskevien käsitysten muodostumiseen.

Tutkimus osoittaa, että kouluttajien konstruoiman moninaisuuden taustalla ovat usein stereotyyppiset kategorisoinnit maahan muuttaneista naisina/äiteinä, muslimeina ja pakkomuuttajina. Nämä kuvaukset perustuvat kompleksiseen positioon, josta käsin kouluttajat navigoivat henkilökohtaisten arvojen ja sitoumusten, kotoutumisen rakenteiden, ja opiskelijoiden kohtaamisen välillä. Kotoutumisen

rakenteet edistävät työmarkkinalähtöistä moninaisuutta, joka problematisoi maahan muuttaneet muslimit, ja saattaa myötävaikuttaa maahan muuttaneiden rodullistamiseen. Samalla koulutusten rakenteelliset puitteet eivät riittävästi tue kouluttajia heidän kohdatessaan opiskelijoiden elämäntilanteisiin vaikuttavia ilmiöitä, kuten rasismia tai traumataustaa. Kyse ei ole pelkästään tiedosta ja resursseista, vaan myös emotionaalisesta ja henkilökohtaisesta sitoumuksesta.

Perustuen tulokseen kouluttajien monisyiseen positioon viranomaisina tämä tutkimus peräänkuuluttaa huomion kiinnittämistä kotoutumispolitiikkaan ja sen rakenteisiin: työvoimapoliittisen koulutuksen rahoitus vahvistaa koulutuksen työmarkkinalogiikkaa kaventaen samalla ymmärrystä moninaisuudesta. Antirasistisia ja traumainformatiivisia lähestymistapoja tulee sisällyttää läpileikkaavasti koulutuksen rakenteisiin, jotta ne tukevat paremmin sekä kouluttajia että opiskelijoita.

ASIASANAT: aikuiskoulutus, affekti, moninaisuus, pakkomuutto, sukupuolentutkimus, intersektionaalisuus, työvoimakoulutus, kotoutuminen, maahanmuuttotutkimus, superdiversiteetti, muslimit, virikehaastattelut, rasismi, uskonto

Acknowledgements | Kiitokset

This study addresses a multilingual field par excellence, and thus in the spirit of multilingualism, these acknowledgements are both in English and Finnish.

Writing a dissertation can be a tediously lonesome project. This is particularly true for us who began our research simultaneously with the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic. During the long years of the pandemic, the meaning of human interaction, support, and humor truly crystallized, and I count myself enormously lucky to have had so many people around me during this period in my life. Without you, I would never have finished this dissertation.

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Tampereella 12.3.2026
Miitta Järvinen

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List of Original Publications

This dissertation is based on the following original publications, which are referred to in the text by their Roman numerals:

I Miitta Järvinen 2023: Moninaisuuden ulottuvuudet maahan muuttaneiden aikuiskoulutuksissa. In Tuomas Martikainen & Sari Pöyhönen (eds.): *Super-diversiteetti: Näkökulmia maahanmuuton monimuotoisuuteen*, 209–236. Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura. https://doi.org/10.21435/skst.1489

II Miitta Järvinen and Tiina Suopajärvi 2024: Differences in the Classroom: Gender, Race, and Trauma as Affective Hotspots in Finnish Education for Adult Migrants. *NORA - Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, 33(1): 86–100. https://doi.org/10.1080/08038740.2024.2367753

III Miitta Järvinen, Terhi Utriainen and Marja Tiilikainen: "Tiptoeing around Religion" in Adult Migrants' Education – Culturalized Lutheranism, Whiteness and Labor Market Logic of the Finnish Lens on Religion. *Temenos - Nordic Journal for the Study of Religion*. In press.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background and Objective of the Study

> From a societal perspective, I think, we are between the migrants and Finnish culture. And if we mess up our job, then we also sort of mess up the students' chances of becoming part of this society as soon as possible. (TKU/A/26/15)

As I finalize this dissertation in early 2026, societies across the globe seem to be in a watershed; the first half of the 2020s has been determined by remarkable global phenomena: the COVID-19 pandemic, the Black Lives Matter movement, the Russian war of aggression in Ukraine, the genocide in Gaza by the Israeli government, the assaults by the ICE in the USA, and most recently the strikes on Iran. Meanwhile, in Finland, political attitudes, especially towards migrants, have hardened, and historical welfare cuts have been administered by the right-wing government. Along with the rest of Europe, far-right parties and anti-immigration attitudes are strengthening.

Simultaneously, international migration continues to increase in Western societies and professionals from all sectors of society will come across people with varied cultural, social, educational, health, and religious backgrounds. Although some decades later, compared to the rest of Western Europe, Finland has come to face these developments. International migration to Finland has continued over three decades, yet migration and its influences on Finnish society remain topics for public debate.

In this dissertation, situated at the crossroads of the study of religion, migration studies, gender studies, and educational sciences, I examine diversity in education that promotes the integration of adult migrants, focusing on the position of the educators who work in these settings. This work is interdisciplinary, as it builds the research of the aforementioned fields and engages in dialogue with them, but mainly because intersectionality as its theoretical foundation derives from gender studies. My aim is to unravel the social diversity in which the educators operate daily; not only the perceived diversity between their migrant students, but also in relation to their own position as part of it. I examine how 'diversity' is constructed in the educators' accounts.

The educational settings examined in this dissertation are basic education for adults, integration training, and liberal adult education (see Table 1). They are part of the Finnish integration system, which is based on the Integration Act (681/2023). Education providers range from private vocational institutions and folk high schools to municipalities. The education provides migrants competence for language and communication, as well as citizenship and working life, all-around education, and other training relevant to their target groups.

The theoretical framework of this study is based on the concepts of intersectionality and superdiversity, which strive to deconstruct diversity from their specific contexts of research: Intersectionality arises from the activism of black feminist movements and subsequently, the field of race/class/gender studies. As for superdiversity, its background lies in the study of international migration. Apart from the two, affect theory has been employed to examine the role of emotional engagement and expressions in the educators' construction of diversity. The research material consists of the educators' one-on-one interviews (n=16) and focus group interviews (n=2). The current core curricula of the education, drafted by the Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI), are used as prompt material for individual interviews and thus serve as a background against which the educators' accounts are mirrored.

The core curricula include objectives for transversal competences perceived as relevant in daily life, as well as studies on society and working life. The contents are similar across the education but have somewhat different emphases (Finnish National Agency for Education, EDUFI 2017ab, 2022). The task of integration training in the current *National core curriculum for integration training* is defined as:

> The task of integration training is to improve the student's proficiency in Finnish/Swedish and other capabilities that promote the student's access to employment, own agency and social inclusion, and enable the student to have an equal position in Finnish society. (EDUFI 2022, 11)

The same idea of inclusion is expressed in the quotation opening this dissertation, where the educator locates their professional and social position between migrants and Finnish culture. Here, "Finnish culture" stands as a kind of panorama for life in Finland, and the understanding of it – something the educators seek to communicate to their students. Studies have indicated that, despite the noble endeavors, an equal position for migrants in Finnish society is far from being accomplished, and furthermore, that these educational institutions may also contribute to the societal structures that reproduce social inequalities (Masoud 2024; Kurki 2019).

The objective of this study is two-fold: firstly, to understand the forms and consequences of diversity as constructed by the professionals of these educational settings. Secondly, to unpack the prevailing power relations in their accounts of diversity. As such, it participates in the paradigm of critical emancipatory research, which strives towards social justice and to cultivate principles of democracy, with its critical agenda of transformation and empowerment (Nkoane 2012).

Most researchers probably share the humble motivation that their knowledge would contribute to the well-being and equality of all. As a white, native Finnish researcher who studies the conceptions of white nationals, I focus on the functions of my own society by making its capabilities and restrictions visible. I elaborate on the positionality and the ethical repercussions of the research frame in Section 4.5. In the next section, I introduce the research questions.

1.2 Research Questions and Article Perspectives

I adhere to feminist sociologist Patricia Hill Collins's statement that "Individuals and groups differentially placed within intersecting systems of power have different points of view on their own and others' experiences with complex social inequalities […]" (Collins 2015). This means that when I consider diversity in the educational settings, my research seeks to understand the educators' perspective and their own positioning in diversity that emerges from the everyday interactions with their migrant students. "Diversity" is a highly contested concept itself. According to Thomas Hylland Eriksen (2006), the public sphere has been relatively supportive of diversity, if it refers to the apparent and neutral expressions of cultural difference. In her criticism of diversity, Sara Ahmed connects a similar understanding of cultural diversity, reifying the "difference as something that exists 'in' the bodies or culture of others" (Ahmed 2007, 235). On the organizational level, this attitude leads to a situation where diversity is just "left being" instead of committing to it with action (ibid. 244, see also the criticism of "happy talk" in Section 3.1.1).

I understand diversity as a socially constructed concept, whose meaning depends on the research project and the materials used. It is insufficient to merely name the differences that are brought out by these concepts. The educators cannot describe diversity that exists independently of themselves, but instead, in their speech, they construct it. Therefore, I also ask *how* this construction is done, with the following empirical research questions:

1. **How do the educators of adult migrants construct diversity emerging from their everyday interactions with their students?**
2. **How are the educators' positions reflected in their accounts of diversity?**

The first research question aspires to understand the process by which certain differences become foregrounded, and what contexts they arise from. The purpose of the second research question is to elaborate that the educators cannot be examined outside the diversity that they encounter. It also provides information about the position that the educators occupy. Intersectionality as a critical theory calls attention to its consequences in the lives of the people it pertains to. The foregrounding role of intersectionality and superdiversity in the analysis of diversity led to the formulation of a third, theoretical research question:

3. **What means do the concepts of intersectionality and superdiversity offer for analyzing the differences constructing the educators' accounts of diversity?**

Having set these research questions that pertain to the study as a whole, the three research articles illuminate the above-mentioned questions from their specific perspectives. Each article has its separate thematic emphases and specific theoretical framings. While the article's perspectives are briefly introduced here, their in-depth discussion belongs to Chapter 5. With their specific research questions, the articles produce answers to the overall research questions from the following perspectives:

I Conceptual account of diversity: The research question of the first article was almost equivalent to the theoretical research question. In the article, I asked what kind of understanding the concepts of intersectionality and superdiversity can offer for the study of adult migrants' education. The concepts were used as heuristic tools in the analysis of the interview material. In the article, I sought to answer which dimensions of diversity the concepts of superdiversity and intersectionality could capture, and what elements the concepts emphasized.

II Affective diversity: In this article, which was co-authored with supervisor Tiina Suopajärvi, our starting point was on the so-called emotional hotspots (MacLure 2013) that demanded attention in the analysis of the interview material. We asked: how do the categories of difference that constitute diversity become constructed through the educators' expressions of emotion? And what could the emotions attached to these categories tell about instruction as affective labor?

III Religion within diversity: Co-authored with supervisors Terhi Utriainen and Marja Tiilikainen, the third article zoomed into the category of religion and its place and treatment as part of diversity. Our research question was how religion was reflected and interpreted by adult migrants' educators. We also examined what kind of religion the educators' Finnish lens emphasized and preferred.

1.3 Previous Research on Migration, Diversity, and Religion

1.3.1 Perspectives of Migration Studies

This dissertation contributes to the field of migration studies, which has been conducted in various fields for over a century and became established a specific research field of its own in the 1990s and early 2000s. In this sub-section, I give a condensed overview of migration studies in the Finnish context. The previous studies on professionals and education is to present the evolution of the dominant conversations in the field, which I joined at the turn of the 2020s. As a scholar of religion studying the educational authorities of migration, I enter the field that has traditionally belonged to other disciplines, such as social sciences and education.

Migration scholars Peter Scholten, Asya Pisarevskaya, and Nathan Levy (2022) characterize migration studies as an area of study, focusing on a shared topic while drawing on a wide range of disciplines; the most traditional fields include anthropology, economics, geography, history, and sociology. The contributing fields have expanded to various areas, like political sciences, law, demography, cultural studies, languages, education sciences, gender studies, and health studies. The interdisciplinarity of this dissertation describes the pluralistic nature of the field, which manifests itself not only by the variety of research topics but also by the broad use of theories and methods that range from ethnography to quantitative analyses (Scholten et al. 2022, 4–5).

Before the 1990s, migration-related research in Finland had mainly focused on emigration, whereas during the decade, the arrival of refugees and asylum-seekers from Somalia and the former Yugoslavia turned attention towards immigration to Finland; the trending research topics of the 1990s included language questions, different levels of education, forced migration, cultural encounters, multiculturalism and integration, as well as identity and ethnicity-related matters (Leinonen 2019, 18–19). The turn of the millennium brought about an international interest in transnationalism, a concept which refers to the border-crossing connections that migrants have from their countries of residence to those of their origin (Pyrhönen et al. 2017, 27).

In the 2000s, several popular issues of the previous decade resumed in research, but the decade also marked a new focus on the labor market, and as Johanna Leinonen (2019, 21) remarks, the labor market integration of migrants: “Integration is discussed in Finland (and in the Nordic countries, more broadly speaking) often precisely in relation to employment; it is one of the most commonly used indicators of integration.” In the 2010s, researchers became increasingly critical of labor market participation as a measure of integration (e.g., Näre 2016). Critical perspectives

similar to this study, such as race, intersectionality, and postcolonialism, became more popular in the latter half of the 2010s (Leinonen 2019, 27–29).

International research on the integration of migrants has focused on integration models and policies in different countries (e.g., Bertossi and Duyvendak 2012; Joppke 2007). In Finland, Pasi Saukkonen has examined migration policies in several studies (Saukkonen 2006; 2013; 2020; 2010; Saukkonen and Pyykkönen 2008). Ville-Samuli Haverinen (2025) explored integration policies from the perspective of international forced migrants at different stages of their settlement in Finland, as attributed in the discourse of integration within the context of asylum reception services. Finally, Sari Hammar-Suutari's dissertation (Hammar-Suutari 2009) examined the encounters of cultural diversity in Finnish civil service work.

Apart from a few examples, migration professionals and authorities, to which the educators examined here belong, have traditionally been studied in social sciences rather than humanities and cultural studies. Since the 2000s, there has been research on encountering cultural diversity in social work (Anis 2008; Anis and Turtiainen 2021). Migration, gender, and equality issues in customer work have been examined from the perspectives of multicultural youth work (Honkasalo 2011), guidance of migrants (Vuori 2009), and more recently, from a queer perspective on the asylum system and social work (Söderström 2024).

Research on migrants' integration is also active in educational sciences, as the education sector is a central part of the integration system in Finland (see Chapter 3). Dissertations in the field have noted the emphasis on cultural and language issues when examining migrants' learning (Kärkkäinen 2017), and that educational policies often contribute to marginalization (Kurki 2019). Lately, attention has been given to the unequal power relations of integration and the disparities between the official policies and migrants' lived realities (Masoud 2024).

Language is a key issue in education that contributes to the integration of adult migrants, which also makes it a relevant interest for linguists. In Finland, Sari Pöyhönen and Minna Tarnanen have studied the relevance of language to the integration policies, learning, and individual identities (Pöyhönen et al. 2018; 2019; Pöyhönen and Tarnanen 2015). Regarding the educator's position, relevant literature has internationally been conducted in linguistics: language teachers have been recognized to have a joint role as representatives of the receiving country (Cooke 2015), implementors of government policies (Van Hoof et al. 2020), respondents of the settlement process vis-à-vis their students (Brookie 2018), and generally, integration workers (Lønsmann 2023).

Since the 2000s, education has been frequently studied by scholars of different fields who share an interest in religion, migration, and education, including theology and didactics of religion. The study of religion has also contributed to this research early on (Sakaranaho and Jamisto 2007). The role of religion and worldviews, or the

position of minority religions in Finnish education, has been greatly studied (Khalili et al. 2024; Lipiäinen and Poulter 2022; Niemi et al. 2020; Rissanen et al. 2020; 2023; Sakaranaho and Jamisto 2007; Ubani 2013; 2018). Similar themes have also been popular in Sweden, where Jenny Berglund has observed the "marination" of religious education in the majoritarian Lutheranism (Berglund 2023). What both Finnish and Swedish studies in the field share is the focus on schools, where the students represent children and youth, and who attends school together with their majority peers.

A critical strand of migration studies has highlighted that integration is not an innocent concept (Schinkel 2018; Rytter 2019). Although its Finnish-language correspondent "kotoutuminen" (see Chapter 2.2 on the terminology) has a more convivial undertone with the reference to "home," it shares the same problematic framework. In the Finnish context, Johanna Leinonen (Leinonen 2015, 6) has noted "integration" is often used loosely in public discussion, without a clear understanding of the desired outcome of integration, either for immigrants or for the receiving society. Peter Kivisto (2015, 10) extends this casualness to migration scholars as well. As Rytter (2019) remarks, with its social imaginaries about the nation and welfare state, integration reflects and promotes an asymmetrical relationship between majorities and minorities: it legitimizes discourse in which culture, ethnicity, religion, and race merge (Rytter 2019, 679, 685).

With this dissertation, I join this critical standpoint: it is essential to acknowledge that *who is to be integrated* and *who integrates* is an active work of difference that separates a supposed 'inside' from an 'outside' (Schinkel 2018). In the following, I will not view 'integration' from a legal and normative perspective, but instead as an emic category[1] used by the research participants and in the contexts in which they operate, and those contexts inform their work. The next sub-section covers the position of this dissertation in the study of religion.

1.3.2 Positioning and Interdisciplinarity in Study of Religion

A traditional way to classify the study of religion is based on the materials, methods, concepts, or theories used in a specific study (Pesonen and Utriainen 2020, 31–32). According to this classification, my dissertation belongs to the sociology of religion; put broadly, it examines the relationship of religion and society (Hjelm 2021c). I approach religion as a component in the spectrum of diversity constructed in the

[1] The distinction between *emic* and *etic* concepts, that were brought to anthropology from linguistics, to illustrate the separation of the concepts formulated "inside" the field (emic) from those made by the researcher from the "outside" (etic) (Headland et al. 1990).

educators' interviews. What kind of part, where it is located, and how it relates to the whole of diversity, are not predefined, but remain part of the research questions (see Article III). Due to this open-ended approach to religion, my focus is not primarily on a specific religion.

With the open-ended definition, this study shares common ground with the discursive study of religion, which analyzes the meanings of religion in texts and interaction (Hjelm 2021b). Moreover, scholars in the field have examined how religion becomes defined in seemingly secular settings. For example, in her dissertation, Helmi Halonen (2024) examined the category of religion as an instrument of border control in asylum determination by the Finnish Immigration Service (Migri) officers. This sort of research is not limited to discursive studies: like Halonen, theologist Ilona Blumgrund (2023; Blumgrund et al. 2022) has also studied Migri's asylum decisions in which conversion to Christianity was the ground for the asylum application. The authoritative interpretation and understanding of religion are central issues in both dissertations. I joined this quite recently emerged branch in the study of religion and sociology of religion, which focuses on different authorities' perceptions and actions regarding religion, by my examination of the operation of educational migration authorities and their understanding of religion.

Many international studies focusing on religion in secular contexts are conducted in legal sciences and/or analyzed legal cases or other public debates (cf., Halonen 2024, 32). Scholars of religion have also examined such legal cases and debates. Lori Beaman (2013) has explored cases concerning religious symbols, such as crucifixes or statues, in public spaces. The majority religion is often cast as tradition in such spaces, to an extent that it becomes "banal," when its practices and symbols are re-framed in a secular way (Griera and Clot-Garrell 2015, 28). Focusing on Spanish penitentiary institutions, Griera and Clot-Garrel found banal Catholicism as taken-for-granted and present in the routines of everyday life: for example, priests and chaplains had great freedom in prisons and were treated as their regular staff (ibid., 27–28).

Education, presumed as secular space, is among the foremost fields of study, as the symbols, traditions, and impacts of the majority religion leak into its everyday and are often justified as a shared cultural heritage (e.g., Taira and Beaman 2022; Astor and Mayrl 2020). Moreover, the preservation of tradition without the acknowledgement of its religious background on the grounds of non-confessionalism can lead to "taking the religion out of the holidays" (Rich 2021, 32). This is by no means neutral strategy as its impacts are being disregarded.

As exhibited above, different disciplines examine religion in contemporary Western, multicultural, and assumedly secular societies, including educational and social sciences, as well as gender and migration studies. The study of religion is interdisciplinary by nature because its subject (i.e., religion) cannot be examined

separately from the economy, politics, gender system(s), racial matters, social institutions, and the power relations of other cultural practices (Taira 2015, 58). The preceding studies on religion and migration also display this interdisciplinary lens. They have typically focused on specific religious communities, of which Islam has been studied the most (Tiilikainen 2003; Isotalo 2015; Pauha 2018; Vähärautio-Halonen 2021; Karhunen 2024). Alongside the interdisciplinary frame of my research, I have been trained in the ethnographic tradition of study of religion, where my methodological position is rooted. The method of acquiring the research material and conducting analysis, both of which are described in Chapter 4, stems from this tradition.

Professor Emeritus Veikko Anttonen writes in his book, which I studied almost religiously for my university entrance exam: "Broadly seen, study of religion examines all human thinking and activities that, based on different criteria, could belong to the range of the concept of religion" (Anttonen 2010, 17). Rooted in the study of religion, the interdisciplinarity of this dissertation proceeds from the field of study and theoretical approach: firstly, educational institutions form the field, linking the study to research conducted within educational sciences. Secondly, the theories guiding the formation of the research material and its analysis derive from specific disciplines, namely gender studies, and migration studies.

1.4 The Structure of the Dissertation

This article-based dissertation comprises three peer-reviewed research articles and a summary section. The summary section includes seven chapters and a postscript. Thus far, I have outlined the background and objectives of the study, formulated the research questions, and briefly introduced the research articles' perspectives – all of which was followed by a short overview of previous migration research.

Next, Chapter 2 provides the setting of the study field: first, I present an overview of the migration context in Finland, including migration history, the sentiment and policy mindset concerning migrants and their integration, and my critical stance towards the concept of migration. In the second part of the chapter, I introduce the EU influence, legal framework, and implementation of integration policy. The third section consists of the description of the specific field, education for adult migrants. In Chapter 3, I introduce the theoretical framework of the study in which intersectionality, superdiversity, and affect are woven together.

Chapter 4 constitutes the methodology of the study: first, I describe the process that shifted the research design, after which I formulate the methods of online interviews that included prompt interviews with individual educators and focus groups as the follow-up. This is followed by the description of the analysis method. I end the chapter with the consideration of the research ethics, clarifying my

solutions about the management of the research materials and communication with the interlocutors, as well as the requirements of critical research.

The main contents of the articles underlying this article-based dissertation are presented in Chapter 5, which contains three subsections, one for the reflection of each research article. The main research findings are presented in Chapter 6, which also includes the evaluation of the research process and its significance and shortcomings. Finally, in Chapter 7, I discuss the further relevance of this study, the societal contribution, and the recommendations for future research.

2 Setting the Field

The immigrant integration system in Finland has been extensively elaborated in several recent dissertations (e.g., Kurki 2019; Masoud 2024; Välimäki 2019). Drawing from the aforementioned, my overview will be compact. In this chapter, I provide an overview of the central stages and characteristics of migration in Finland after World War II, with relation to migrant religions. In the following sections, I will illustrate the basic legislation and the main principles of migration/integration policies in the country, conceptions of integration and diversity, and their implementation in Finland, as well as the organization of the field of this study, education for the integration of adult migrants.

2.1 Post-1990s Immigration, Religious Groups, and Public Sentiment in Finland

Narratives that presume the historical homogeneity of the Nordic countries present diversity as a product of larger-scale international migration, beginning in some countries in the 1960s. They assume diversity as an import of newcomers, rather than a process or interaction in which the whole of the society, including the majority population, participates. Although proven inaccurate in research, these narratives continue to have social popularity (Keskinen et al. 2019; Ryymin 2019). Having said that, in post-World War II Europe, the decolonization of the areas ruled by the United Kingdom, France, and the Netherlands, as well as the demand for laborers in Germany, marked significant changes for the continent and the social experience of people (Gatrell 2019).

In the Nordic countries, and in Finland especially, similar changes took place later, slowly increasing after the 1980s. Similarly to the rest of Europe, the Second World War had caused significant migratory movements; due to territorial losses to the Soviet Union, over 400,000 people were evacuated from Karelia and resettled into different parts of the country (Martikainen 2020, 13). Unlike other Nordic countries, international migratory movements have started to significantly affect Finland only since the 1990s, as the post-war economic climate did not demand a vast contribution of labor migrants (Turtiainen et al. 2020, 3). In fact, Finland has historically been a country of emigration; in the 1960s and 1970s, over 500,000 Finns

emigrated to Sweden for work. Consequently, immigration to Finland largely consisted of Finnish return migrants from Sweden and North America until the 1980s (Korkiasaari et al. 2000, 160–61).

In the 1980s, immigration overtook emigration, mainly due to the latter's decrease, a ratio that has since remained (Välimäki 2019, 55). In the 1990s, migration increased even more rapidly after the collapse of the Soviet Union, coinciding with the country's globalizing economy and membership of the European Union (EU) in 1995 (Forsander 2002; Martikainen et al. 2012). The immigration growth led to the diversification of both countries of origin and reasons for migration, comprising marriage-related immigration, both low- and high-skilled workers, entrepreneurs, international students, refugees, and asylum seekers (Martikainen et al. 2012).

Among the first migrant groups in Finland were refugees from Chile in the beginning of the 1970s and the boat refugees from Vietnam since 1979 (Koikkalainen 2021). Together with the Tatars,[2] the Vietnamese have been regarded as integration success stories, founded on a narrative of hard-working and grateful citizenship, and interestingly, the relative invisibility of their religions in the Finnish public (Härkönen et al. 2023; Konttori 2022; Nguyen 2021).

In the 1980s, the arrival of quota refugees, particularly from the Middle East, started to gradually increase the Muslim population of Finland (Martikainen 2013, 111). The arrival of Somali asylum-seekers in the 1990s marked the beginning of larger-scale migration, and with their explicit Muslim identity, Islam became visible to the Finnish public for the first time. While migratory patterns have diversified since the 1990s, most Muslims in the country share a forced migration or family reunification background (ibid.). Along with these developments, the Muslim population of the country has tripled over the past 25 years, resulting in the current estimate of 120,000–130,000 individuals (European Commission 2025; Pauha and Martikainen 2022).

The year 2015 marked the largest flow of asylum seekers to Europe since the 1980s, as over 1.3 million migrants applied for asylum (Connor et al. 2016). Finland received over 32,000 asylum-seekers in 2015.[3] As it is the northernmost member state in the EU, Finland has typically received fewer asylum-seekers than its Scandinavian neighbors (Wahlbeck 2019, 300). In 2015, the influx of forced migrants resulted in asylum policy becoming a key political issue in Finland (Wahlbeck 2019, 300). The increased migration and the hardened policies in

[2] Tatars are the Finland's first Muslim community that emigrated from the Russian Empire from the 1870s until the early 1900s (Konttori 2022, 23; Martikainen 2013, 11).

[3] The majority of asylum-seekers in 2015 were from Iraq (20.000), followed by Afghanistan (5,000) and Somalia (1,900), Syria and Albania (Finnish Migration Service 2015, https://migri.fi/documents/10197/5798793/64996_Tilastograafit_2015_valmis.pdf)

response to it, both nationally and EU-wide, have contributed to harsher stances towards migration and border management. Additionally, the growing social exclusion and uncertainty following from the neoliberal restructuring of Nordic welfare states have been accompanied by populist nationalist parties and anti-immigration positions and politics (Keskinen et al. 2016, 324). Currently, in the mid-2020s, one tenth of the population of Finland are of a foreign background, and almost half of them reside in the Helsinki capital region. A considerable number of the population with a foreign background come from outside of EU or ETA countries, including the large number of Ukrainian citizens since the Russian war of aggression (Statistics Finland, 2025).

While acknowledging these criticisms, I treat the analyzed differences as the educators' interpretations that are affected by their personal standing and professional commitments.

It is challenging to estimate the religious distribution in the migrant population of Finland due to the limited data available. The *Act on the Freedom of Religion* (453/2003) obliges the communities to keep a register of their members, but membership alone cannot represent the significance of religion for the individual (Pauha and Martikainen 2022, 5). Based on the background countries of the persons with a foreign background and the religious distribution of the said countries, Pauha and Martikainen (2022) have estimated the following propositions: Christianity 40%, Islam 25–27%, non-religiosity 20%, Buddhism 5%, Hinduism 2%, folk religion 1%, and Judaism 0.1%.

Despite Christianity being the majority religion among migrants, the public discourse revolves around Muslim migrants. In a post-2015 Finland, the anti-Muslim biases towards asylum seekers are widespread in the Finnish public by international comparison; in Scandinavian surveys, Islam is commonly considered a threat to national cultures (Bansak et al. 2016; Lundby et al. 2017). Furthermore, a survey by Pew Research Center in 2018 indicated that Finland's score in anti-Muslim attitudes was particularly high, with 62% in agreement that "Islam is fundamentally incompatible with the [national] culture and values" (Pew Research Center 2018, 66). Similar attitudes were found in a study about Finnish media coverage on Islam (Maasilta et al. 2008). In a statistical analysis from 2015 (Pauha and Ketola 2015), anti-Christian attitudes, national pride, orientation towards social power relationships, age, social class, education, and Christian right-wing conviction were found to be the most relevant psychological and demographic factors affecting Finnish anti-Islam attitudes.

Social psychologist Göksu Celikkol argues in their dissertation (2021) that in a country with a relatively short history of migration, nationals may experience the change as sudden and increasing and thus be more prone to perceptions of threat and negative sentiments towards migrants. These sentiments are not separate from the

perceived insecurities in the economic climate in the country (Celikkol 2021). Furthermore, the legal categories of migration do not adequately capture the social realities of the people involved, either. If they are allowed to dominate academic thinking, the dynamic processes of migration may be concealed, instead of revealed (ibid., 50). This has been found to hold up within the Finnish asylum system, where integration is also expected from asylum seekers, who are, in fact, excluded from integration services (Haverinen 2025, 111). Bearing these restrictions in mind, I will now move onto the legal framework of immigrant integration in Finland.

2.2 EU-influence on Diversity Issues, Legal Framework, and Implementation of Integration Policy in Finland

"Unity in diversity" is the motto of the European Union, introduced in 2000,[4] and quite aptly, Finland's membership in the EU considerably affected the adoption of the diversity mindset in Finland. International norms concerning migration largely determine the Finnish migration-related legislation, as Finland has ratified most of the associated international treaties (Makkonen and Koskenniemi 2013, 71). The adoption, planning, and implementation of integration measures, programs, and services, including integration training and other education studied in this dissertation, took place in unison with the legislative processes, both at the national and EU levels.

In 1984, the first Aliens Act (400/1984) concerning the legal position of foreign citizens in Finland took effect. Because it did not adequately secure migrants' legal position, the second Aliens Act came into effect in 1991 (378/1991). Finland's commitment to the integration of Europe has impacted the migration and asylum policies, as well as aliens policy: especially in consequence of the EU membership in 1995, the development of the common European migration and asylum system intensified (Välimäki 2019, 90).

In 1999, the European Council set the objectives to "develop common policies on asylum and immigration," to "ensure the integration into our society of those third country nationals who are lawfully resident in the Union," and called for "a more vigorous integration policy […] granting them rights and obligations comparable to those of EU citizens" (European Parliament 1999). In her dissertation, Ameera Masoud illustrates that although integration had been prominent on the agenda of the

[4] The EU motto "signifies how Europeans have come together, in the form of the EU, to work for peace and prosperity, while at the same time being enriched by the continent's many different cultures, traditions and languages." (European Union, https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/symbols/eu-motto_en)

meeting, on the EU level, its definition had remained narrow, practical representations vague, and without legal validity (Masoud 2024, 41; see also Van Wolleghem 2019). In the 2000s, several EU-wide instruments on migrant integration were issued.[5]

When preparing the first *Integration Act* (493/1999) in Finland, the legislators were reluctant to include the Finnish form of the foreign word *integraatio* in the legal text. To separate from the EU terminology, the Institute for the Languages of Finland (Kotimaisten kielten keskus, Kotus) suggested Finnish-based terms that have their root form in the word *koto*; poetic language for home, *koti*. In legislation, the verb *kotoutua* ("settle oneself at home") came to refer to a migrant's process of settlement into a new society, while maintaining their own cultural characteristics. *Kotouttaminen* ('settling one at home') then meant the ways migrants are assisted by different institutions, civil servants, and NGOs during this process, mainly with services and benefits (Länsimäki 1999; Moilanen 2003).[6]

The first *Act on the Integration of Immigrants and Reception of Asylum Seekers* (493/1999) took effect in Finland in 1999. Other central legislation concerning migration, migrants, and their rights have been enacted since the 2000s.[7] Compared to its predecessors, the current *Aliens Act* (301/2004) better addresses human and fundamental rights and defines the rights and obligations of foreigners (Makkonen and Koskenniemi 2013, 71–73). The *Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration* has been reformed twice in 2011 (1386/2010) and 2025 (681/2023), both of which have been in effect during this study.

Anu Mutanen and Pekka Kettunen (2025, 69–73) illustrate in their analysis that the reforms in the legislation have determined which authorities have been responsible for migrants' integration: the 1999 Act entailed that integration was organized as standard services, each administrative sector responsible for providing the services within its own area of expertise, dividing the responsibility between several authorities. During the preparation of the first reform, the goal was to form a coherent whole of integration services and measures. In 2011, the *Integration Act* focused on humanitarian migrants and enhancing the monitoring and evaluation of integration. The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment (FMEE) had the

5 *The Communication on Immigration, Integration and Employment* (2003) and *The Common Basic Principles for Immigrant Integration Policy* (CBP, 2004).

6 In compliance with the current Integration Act (681/2023), the Working group for the Glossary of Integration recommends foregoing of the derivatives of the term "kotouttaminen" due to its association with migrants not having an active role in their integration (Työ- ja elinkeinoministeriö 2025).

7 Including the *Citizenship Act* (359/2003*),* the *Act on the Reception of Persons Applying for International Protection and on the Identification of and Assistance to Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings* (746/2011), and the *Non-discrimination Act* (1325/2014).

main responsibility for development, guidance, and monitoring, with cross-cutting collaboration between employment authorities, municipalities, and NGOs. The current 2025 *Integration Act* passed the responsibility of migrants' integration into municipalities, which now have several duties and relatively wide autonomy on how to carry them out (Ibid).

The development of the policies for migrant integration initially focused on the resettlement of refugees, emerging within the framework of Nordic welfare state policies that emphasize the role of work for the integration of citizens (Martikainen et al. 2012). The model for social protection in Finland is citizenship- or residence-based universalism: the social security covers everyone whose residence is considered permanent (all residence permits valid for at least 12 months), and who is registered as a resident of a city, town, or municipality (Koikkalainen 2021; Wahlbeck 2019). The system has been considered a central inclusion mechanism, based on the idea that the basic accessibility of benefits and services enables wide participation in Finnish society (Martikainen et al. 2012; Wahlbeck 2019).

Along with the 1999 Integration Act, Finland adopted a premise of liberal multicultural policy, which not only prioritizes the adaptation of migrants but also supports societal diversity in a way that language and cultural minorities are able to maintain the special features of their background (Välimäki 2019, 87). This has been interpreted as an explicit statement of multiculturalism[8] that supports linguistic and cultural diversity, such as by providing education in pupils' own language and religion at public schools (Martikainen et al. 2012).

In 2000, the directive implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of their racial or ethnic origin (2000/43/EC) was passed by the EU. The directive entails that the member countries prohibit ethnic discrimination and take action against it in education and the supply of and access to goods and services. The same year, the Directive on equal treatment in employment and occupation (2000/78/EC) was passed, prohibiting discrimination based on age, disability, sexual orientation, religion, or belief. However, despite the communications, CBPs, agendas, and directives mentioned above, Masoud (2024, 44) notes that on the EU level, "reference to any anti-discrimination and anti-racism policies or concrete solutions was minimal, until 2020, when the EU launched its first-ever anti-racism action plan" (European Commission 2020).

[8] In migration studies, countries are typically distinguished as assimilationist or multiculturalist, based on their strategies on minority rights and migrant integration; assimilationist countries do not support minority or migrant identities, whereas multiculturalist countries recognize ethnic and cultural diversity and at least somewhat support minority rights (Favell 2001, 181; Saukkonen 2021).

In Finland, the first *Non-discrimination Act* based on the EU directives took effect in 2004. In the 2015 reformation (1325/2014), non-discrimination was extended to all public and private activities, apart from private and family life and the practice of religion. The ban on discrimination was added to origin, nationality, language, opinion, political activity, trade union activity, family relationships, state of health, and other personal characteristics. Additionally, the new act obliged not only authorities, but also education providers and employers, all of whom are required to have a plan for the necessary measures for the promotion of equality[9] (Valtioneuvosto 2014).

The European Integration Fund (EIF) was founded in 2007, followed by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) in 2014, both of which are mechanisms for Member States to implement the CBPs (Council of the European Union 2007; 2014). Beneficiaries of the fund are state and federal authorities, local public bodies, non-governmental organizations, humanitarian organizations, private and public law companies, and education and research organizations (AMIF 2021–2027). Thus, much of the implementation of diversity, integration, and non-discrimination policies have been project-led.

By international comparison, Finland ranks high in terms of its approach to integration. The Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) measures governments' policies to integrate migrants.[10] In the latest MIPEX ranking (2025), Finland stood second after Sweden. All the top ten countries are characterized as adopting a comprehensive approach to integration by guaranteeing equal rights, opportunities, and long-term security for migrants and citizens. The high ranking has been criticized for focusing on the normative descriptions, such as legislation and policies, without acknowledging the practical consequences of the said policies, and the experiences of migrants and other minorities (Masoud 2024, 46). Furthermore, Helmi Halonen (2024) notes in her dissertation that the authorities' non-recognition of the asylum seekers' religious meaning-making in asylum determination can be an example of structural violence towards migrants.

The next sub-section introduces the institutional setting of education, as well as the professionals and students participating in it.

9 The plan is mandatory for employers of thirty persons or more.

10 The criteria include: Labor market mobility; Family reunification; Education; Political participation; Permanent residence; Access to nationality; Anti-discrimination; and Health.

2.3 Organization, Professionals, and Students of Adult Migrants' Education

Statutory integration measures, including education for adult migrants' integration, begin after a migrant receives a residence permit. The services are provided by the well-being services counties[11] and/or the municipality in which the newcomer has settled. The proper authorities, such as social workers, assess a person's competence, education, and service needs required to promote integration and further employment. Necessary services, including suitable education, are recorded in an integration plan. The maximum duration for the plan is two years, but based on an individual assessment, it can be extended: for example, disability, sickness, and parental leave are grounds for extension of the integration plan.

The integration services covered by the integration act (681/2023) belong to any migrant with a valid residence permit in Finland, or whose right of residence has been registered, or who has been granted a residence card in accordance with the Aliens Act (301/2004). People whose asylum-seeking process is still underway do not fall into the scope of these services that require valid residence permits (Masoud et al. 2020, 102). Because integration services currently place a significant emphasis on employment, employment authorities are central in their implementation.[12] If the newcomer has no employment, they usually register as a job seeker. Those who are full-time students or absent from the labor market for other reasons, such as old age, sickness, or stay-at-home parenting, do not have to register as job seekers (681/2023).

This study focuses on education that typically takes place during the early stage of migrants' residence, when the persons are not yet employed or in further education: basic education for adults, integration training, and literacy training offered by liberal adult education. If recorded in the integration plan, participation in integration training is a condition for receiving unemployment benefits (e.g., Masoud 2024, 46). The students may have stayed in the country for longer without previously attending any education due to parental leave(s), sickness, or working, to name a few examples.

According to the Integration Act (681/2023), integration training may consist of

1) language studies in Finnish or Swedish.

[11] Well-being services counties are responsible for organizing healthcare, social welfare and rescue services in the area (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, https://stm.fi/en/wellbeing-services-counties).

[12] Integration services support the integration and employment of immigrants. (Työ- ja elinkeinoministeriö, https://tem.fi/en/integration-services)

2) vocational or other training necessary for working life, career guidance, or planning and guidance for further studies or services.
3) other kinds of training that promote societal, cultural, and civic skills.

Integration training is typically provided as labor market training, and as such directed at those who are unemployed. The two other forms of education included in this study are organized as independent study, widening the options to meet the educational needs and different life situations.[13] Since independent studies are equated with labor market training, people participating in them are guaranteed the same welfare benefits (Pöyhönen et al. 2009). As education is primarily organized as full-time studies, attendance may be hard for stay-at-home parents (cf., Vuori 2015) and people who are working. Thus, those with work-based residence permits are typically not present in the education settings studied here.

Municipalities may purchase labor market training from different providers, including private and vocational institutions, or liberal adult education. Training can also be implemented in projects with fixed-term funding. The Ministry of Employment and the Economy (FMEE) and the Ministry of Education and Culture (FMEC) fund integration training: FMEE funding is mainly directed to private service providers, while FMEC funds the integration training that takes place in the public educational institutions, such as liberal adult education providers (cf. Kurki et al. 2018).

The funding source for education varies: whereas the private and vocational institutions are funded by FMEE, liberal adult education institutions receive it from FMEC. In integration training purchased from the private providers, the employment contracts are typically a fixed term, but vocational institutions and institutions of liberal adult education can more often offer permanent employment. As this model produces insecurities for the continuation of training in certain institutions, the continuation of the educators' employment is uncertain.

Integration training must follow the *National Core Curriculum for Integration Training for Adult Migrants*[14] (EDUFI 2022). Based on the migrant's educational needs, education can also be organized as literacy training, following the *Recommended Curriculum for Literacy Training in Liberal Adult Education* (EDUFI 2017), or as basic education for adults, guided by the *National Core Curriculum for Basic Education for Adults* (FNAE 2018). The education providers and their target groups are illustrated in Table 1.

13 Integration training. (Kotouminen.fi, https://kotoutuminen.fi/en/integration-training)
14 The previous core curriculum (then Finnish National Board for Education, FNBE 2012) was in effect between 2012 and 2023.

Integration training is not officially part of the Finnish education system. Yet, it shares the basic values of the system, and the preparation and structure of the core curricula correspond to it; Kekki et al. (2023, 91) locate integration training at the intersection of integration, language, education, and labor force policies. Given the variety of its providers, I place integration training on the outskirts of the educational system, crossing the borders of educational and labor force realms (Article II).

Table 1. Education providers included in the study.

Educational institution	Target Groups	Contents
Basic education for adults	basic education not completed	literacy training, Finnish language, the basic education syllabus
Integration training	sufficient basic education & literacy of the Latin alphabet	language training in Finnish or Swedish, introduction to Finnish society
Literacy training in liberal adult education	- basic education not completed - need flexible/part-time study opportunities (i.e., stay-at-home parents) - benefit from activity-oriented learning	literacy training, Finnish language, civic studies

All three types of education providers, plus one providing teacher education, were represented in this study. Due to the variety of educational settings, I have chosen to refer to my field as education for adult migrants; talking solely about integration training would have diminished this range in the work that is both carried out in the field and meaningful for the professional identities of the people working in the field. For example, the syllabus of basic education for adults largely differs from that of integration training (EDUFI 2017a and 2022) and thus requires different professional skills and qualifications. In the analysis, I do not make distinctions between individual educators' qualifications. I refer to them all as *educators*, a direct translation of the Finnish word *kouluttaja*, which is also often used as a job title for teaching in integration training.

The people who work in the field have differing educational backgrounds. Teaching in basic education for adults requires the qualification of a class teacher in primary education (grades 1–6). The qualification for Finnish as a second language

(S2) is the same as subject teachers in the mother tongue and literature. Both qualifications are provided by law.[15]

In integration training that has been acquired as labor market training, there are no similar qualifications for S2-teaching, although the local organizers usually have their own requirements, which may vary. In 2022, the recommended uniform criteria for S2 teachers in labor market education were drawn, including a master's degree, teacher's pedagogical studies, and basic and intermediate studies in the Finnish language. For citizenship and working life competence teaching, a suitable degree in higher education, teacher's pedagogical studies or a minimum of three years of work experience, and for the non-native Finnish speakers, a certificate of language skills (Ruuskanen and Väänänen 2022). However, not all who teach in the education field studied here, including some of the interviewees, have these pedagogical qualifications.

As illustrated in Table 1, the unemployed migrants are guided into suitable education based on their school histories. The students of these settings have diverse backgrounds from ethnic, educational, and societal perspectives. Labor market-based **integration training** is suitable for people who are assessed to have completed their basic education and have literacy of the Latin alphabet, and student groups can be differentiated into basic, slowly progressing, and rapidly progressing study paths. **Basic education for adults** is targeted at those whose basic education is insufficient and/or those who need support with their literacy and study skills. The target group **of literacy training in liberal adult education** is similar to the previous, but based on their life situations, the students benefit from flexible and activity-based learning (Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö 2019).

Table 2 represents the top fifteen countries of origin in integration training in 2023. Not many conclusions based on these statistics can be made, except that the students' countries of origin, and consequently, their reasons for migration, as well as grounds for residence, are varied. After Ukraine and Russia, the emphasis is on the citizens of third countries.[16] In integration training, all students have some kind of basic education and are unemployed. In the other two, students with little or no

[15] Teacher qualifications Finland (Class teacher: FNAE, https://www.suomi.fi/services/qualification-of-class teacher-finnish-national-agency-for-education/e7edc207-359e-4f51–9315-d3c616343edf; Subject teacher FNAE, https://www.suomi.fi/services/qualification-of-subject-teacher-finnish-national-agency-for-education/663860b8-fcc6-41f8-b3cf-9f9b64352176; Teaching Finnish as second language: Finnish language teachers, https://www.suomenopettajat.fi/opiskelu-suomen-opettajaksi/kelpoisuusvaatimukset/)

[16] The primary interview material with the educators was composed in 2021, before Russia's aggressive war in Ukraine, so its effects cannot be analyzed in this study.

school history are more often from countries where conflicts or other sorts of unrest have damaged the education system.

Table 2. Participants of labor market-based integration training in 2023 by citizenship (Source: Employment Service Statistics, information request September 13, 2024).

Citizenship	N
Ukraine	2,509
Russia	1,575
Iraq	885
Afghanistan	623
India	588
Syria	540
Turkey	527
Iran	412
Albania	408
Thailand	400
Bangladesh	396
Nepal	362
Estonia	342
Somalia	295
China	290
Others	6,019
Total	**16,171**

The picture given in this chapter focuses on forced migration and different actions directed at their integration. This narrow perspective fails to present the diversity of migrants arriving to Finland. Nevertheless, as this study draws from the experiences of educators who are civil servants in the field, the emphasis is intentional; although the 2011 reformation of the Integration Act broadened the clientele of the services outside the unemployed migrants, those with residence permits on the grounds of work, studies or family have been granted the services only based on the consideration of the authorities (Vuori 2015, 397). Furthermore, while the labor market authorities have been unable to answer the manifold needs of migrants, the resources of social work are namely restricted to migrants with quota refugee or asylum-seeking backgrounds (ibid.). Thus, the framing made here is relevant to understanding the context where the educators' accounts arise from: they are not separate from the emphasis of the policy framework, nor the public sentiment and debate.

I understand integration as embedded in a specific national social imaginary (c.f., Rytter 2019, 680), based on both the EU and national policies discussed above, as well as the social attitudes in post-2015 Finnish society. Its definition is ambiguous and in constant flux. The political implications of integration have varied over time, for example, based on the governments of the moment; the current Government Integration Programme for 2024–2027 emphasizes the significance of employment and increases the migrant's responsibility and duties, as opposed to their rights (Bruun 2025). The people working on the street-level of migrant integration do not necessarily share these conceptions – a possible crack between the policy and practical level that also deserves scrutiny.

3 Assembling the Theoretical Framework

3.1 Intersectionality and Superdiversity as Theoretical Concepts

Conceptions of diversity are the theoretical foundation of this study: they are useful when unpacking the ways diversity comes to be in the educators' speech. For this purpose, I have employed the concepts of superdiversity and intersectionality, which address the meanings, interactions, and practical consequences of socially produced differences in different contexts. These concepts have specific histories of origins, and they have been seen as applicable for distinctive research questions and fields (Vertovec 2019).

My history with the concept of superdiversity is very different from mine with intersectionality: intersectionality was the theoretical starting point from the beginning, whereas I came across superdiversity only after beginning my dissertation. While familiarizing myself with the relevant research on migration, diversity, and multiculturality, this concept kept emerging, except it was seldom defined sufficiently for my purposes. While trying to understand superdiversity, I realized that having a research topic concerning exactly what superdiversity was originally set out to tackle (i.e., migration-themed diversity), I would have to be able to somehow differentiate its scope from that of intersectionality.

In this chapter, I first define my use of these theoretical concepts, starting with intersectionality as the foundation for approaching diversity in this study. This will be followed by the introduction of superdiversity as an especially migration-related concept. The chapter will conclude with affect theory, which became part of the theoretical framework through a data-driven observation about emotional engagements in the interviews.

3.1.1 Intersectionality as the Foundation for Diversity

Intersectionality refers to the impacts, co-constitution, and overlapping of various social positions and identities, or more generally, categories. The basic categories include gender, race, class, and sexuality. In the fields of intersectionality and critical

race studies, "race," as other social differences, is not understood as a biological characteristic, but as a social qualification system based on physical appearances or cultural matters (Keskinen et al. 2021, 51). Intersectionality and its effects can be analyzed both in individual and collective lives. The concept has been academically prominent since the 1990s, after it was coined in an article by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw (Crenshaw 1991). Consequently, it was integrated as the concepts of the newly founded field of race/class/gender studies (Collins 2015, 10–11); at the time, the political knowledge projects of the social movements of women of color intertwined with the institutionalization of the field of Women's Studies. The naming of intersectionality has been credited to Crenshaw, according to the academic norms of the ownership of cultural capital, but this is a reductive outlook, especially because it was born from the need of women of color in the social movements to express their experiences of racial/gender oppression (Collins and Bilge 2016, 65; 81).

During the social movements[17] of the 1960s and 70s in the USA, the core ideas of intersectionality were developed by women of color activists, whose experiences of racial and class segregation differed from men of those movements; neither the so-called second-wave feminism with its white, middle-class premises, nor the male-led civil rights movements, were able to tackle the forms of their discrimination. In the 1970s, black women shared their ideas in different creative arenas, including art, edited volumes, essays, pamphlets, and poetry, arguing that "race-only, class-only, gender-only or sexuality-only" frameworks could not solve the oppression they faced. In the 1980s, their activism was brought to universities and other institutions they had primarily criticized, and fostered ideas, such as the multiplicity of oppressions, identity politics, and structural transformation (Collins and Bilge 2016, 65; 78–79). Therefore, Crenshaw's coining of intersectionality "provided a name to a pre-existing theoretical and political commitment" (Nash 2008, 3).

Attention has been brought to the activists' work and influence on the formation of intersectionality, as well as the preceding critique posed in black feminist scholarship about the feminist omission of racial, ethnic, class, and sexual difference(s) (ibid.). However, academic history has not included religious activists as part of it. Quoting feminist theologian Elina Vuola,

> Since the early 1970s, feminist theologians stressed the significance of the interstructuring of gender, class, colonialism, race, and ethnicity, to emphasise their practical and theoretical cooperation with liberation and feminist theologians from the global south. (Vuola 2017, 2)

17 These included civil rights, Black Power, Chicano liberation, Red Power, and Asian-American movements (Collins and Bilge 2016).

Feminist scholars of religion have stressed the importance of considering religion as part of the whole of differences (Castelli 2001, 4–5). Moreover, if Gender Studies has been 'religion blind,' the Study of Religion has traditionally been criticized as 'gender blind,' which has altogether resulted in 'double blindness' in research (King 2005). However, gender blindness no longer applies to the Finnish study of religion, where gender has been a prominent lens for the past few decades, including several dissertations with diverse topics (e.g., Sakaranaho 1998; Utriainen 1999; Tiilikainen 2003; Mahlamäki 2005; Isotalo 2015; Härkönen 2016; Karhunen 2024). The position of religion within the complex of intersectional categories, though, remains understudied – or it has been considered disproportionately. For example, gender studies has been criticized for both ignoring religious diversity and the tendency to present religion as the only explanation for women's status, mainly as the basis for oppression (Vuola 2010, 172).

With these notions, Vuola (2012) poses a wider problem regarding research on intersectionality: who gets to name the relevant differences as categories of analysis, and for what purposes they are named. According to Vuola, intersectionality as an umbrella term is theoretically useful, but only the concrete examples and specific contexts can make research relevant (Vuola 2012, 135). In the end, it is every researcher's responsibility to open the selection process of the examined differences; intersectionality, like any other theoretical concept, is a credible tool only if the researcher explains how it has been utilized and gives reasons for their decisions for doing so.

Adopting intersectionality as the theoretical basis for research requires defining the understanding of the categories of difference that co-constitute and underly it. This definition is essential because I want to avoid representing the categories as naturally existing, static entities. My use of intersectionality is based on the tripartition by feminist sociologist Leslie McCall (2005):

1) *Anticategorical approach* is based on the idea of deconstructing analytical categories; categories, including gender, race, and religion, are understood as socially constructed simplifications, and the inequalities between groups and individuals result from the reproduction of these categories.

2) *Intercategorical complexity* assumes the existence of the categories temporarily, to study, and consequently, affect the formation of inequality between different groups of people.

3) *Intracategorical complexity* acknowledges particular groups and neglected intersections, while simultaneously being aware of the processes in which the categories are constructed, and the persisting relationships they produce in the lived experiences of the people who belong to these groups (McCall 2005, 1774–1774).

Directly after introducing these approaches, McCall continues to remark that not all studies on intersectionality can be classified according to them, and that the approaches are not mutually exclusive: as I have defined especially in Articles I and II, all three approaches are present in this study. I understand the categories principally as anticategorical and socially constructed, and thus deconstructable. By this, I mean that my research aims to unpack my interlocutors' categorizations. Notwithstanding, in the analysis, I also participate in the construction of the categories, as I formulate the emic categorizations of the field into a unified form. These categorizations cannot be separated from my position as a white female researcher, which will be further covered in Section 5.4.

Intersectionality as a frame also requires attention to the educators' perception of diversity, both among their students (intracategorical), as well as between students and themselves as representatives of the majority (intercategorical). Thus, the three approaches may have different functions within a single research project.

Since its original formulation, intersectionality has called for critical attention to race, and how as a socially constructed difference it functions in different contexts. It is vital to factor the racism that migrants encounter in the Finnish society and its presence in the everyday interaction of education, into the analysis of diversity as intercategorical complexity. Examining the processes of racialization shifts the attention from classification to the different customs and practices that maintain racial hierarchies in institutions, policies, and everyday encounters (Keskinen et al. 2021, 51–52). From an intracategorical perspective, the focus on the educators as white majority nationals in authoritative positions highlights the other side of these processes that are examined in critical whiteness studies. This entails that "whiteness" is understood both as a social structure and an embodied position. Treating whiteness as a universalizing and unmarked "default" reproduces racializing divisions (Seikkula 2019, 1004–1005). Whiteness, like all social categories, is intersectional, which is defined by the interplay of privilege and non-privilege.

As intersectionality has become mainstream in Gender Studies, it has also been criticized both in and outside the field. For example, intersectionality has been reproached for facilitating the "Oppression Olympics" – a competition of which group is most oppressed and thus most deserving of the attention and support from the privileged groups (Hancock 2007, 68; Ilmonen 2024, 131; Kantola and Nousiainen 2009, 461). Instead of competition, intersectionality considers the effects of multiple social positions on experiences, as well as societal standings; for doing so, it requires a critical attitude towards the overall systems of power.

The criticism of intersectionality arising from the "inside" usually addresses its depoliticization: if the social differences are understood as arbitrary, instead of originating from the unequal distribution of power that produces different forms of

oppression (Erel et al. 2008, 282). As such, intersectionality can be utilized for neoliberal goals as a "managerial" strategy that, instead of exposing, conceals the overlapping forms of sexism or racism, for example (Bilge 2013, 407; Ilmonen 2024). Sara Ahmed also warns against turning intersectionality into an organizational term, by which organizations use diversity as neoliberal "happy talk," hiding the underlying inequalities (Ahmed 2012, 10;71). Furthermore, representing intersectionality as a "race/class/gender/sexuality mantra" reduces it to a listing of identities and thus homogenizes people from similar intersections (Yep 2015, 87).

Intersectionality is simultaneously a theoretical basis and a form of feminist commitment that recognizes the different and overlapping forms of oppression and acts for dismantling them, and thus takes a stand; it is a *critical praxis*, and by employing it, a researcher "would critique social injustices that characterize complex social inequalities, imagine alternatives, and/or propose viable action strategies for change" (Collins 2015, 17). The critical stance is verbalized in Crenshaw's formulation of structural intersectionality, which means that the structures and institutions of society produce inequalities by failing to acknowledge people's intersecting social positions (Crenshaw 1991, 1245–46; Karkulehto et al. 2012, 18–19). Here, the structures refer to the mechanisms of the Finnish education system and the functioning of the labor market, for instance.

For intersectionality to maintain its critical power, communications scientist Gust Yep (2015) has raised a notion of 'thicker intersectionalities,' which calls for

1) resisting coherent and prematurely closed identities,
2) endorsing the messiness of everyday social experiences,
3) acknowledging the affective investments in people's identity performances,
4) examining identities as embodied experiences in specific temporal and local contexts (Yep 2015, 89).

I follow these principles by focusing on the educators, whose intersection has been mostly overlooked; although their position towards the migrant students is a privileged one, their privilege within the structures of migrant integration is relative. In everyday actions, the educators operate as feeling, bodily subjects who need to position themselves in relation to both local and international policies, educational goals, and their students' life situations.

I will further elaborate in Chapter 5 how intersectionality as a theory had a directive, but not determining, role in the analysis of the material: some of the analyzed social differences preceded directly from the research questions, whereas others emerged in a more data-based manner. Although the differences as units for analysis were raised from the interviews by intersectionality, it was not solely adequate for conducting a nuanced analysis – thus needing supplementary theoretical

approaches. I will examine superdiversity next, and thereafter move onto affect theory.

3.1.2 Superdiversity and the Migration-specific Perspective

Superdiversity was formulated by anthropologist Steven Vertovec. In his article *Super-diversity and its implications* (2007), Vertovec aspired to depict the change that had occurred in the European metropolises, such as London, in the previous decades: whereas Migration Studies had viewed diversity in terms of ethnicity, including more factors in these considerations had become necessary. According to Vertovec, attention was required for immigration statuses and the entitlements and/or restrictions of rights resulting from them, divergent labor market experiences, gender and age profiles, spatial distribution, and local services and residents' responses (Vertovec 2007, 1025); Instead of focusing on ethnically defined immigrant groups, ethnographers have shifted their attention to varying local contexts, such as working-class neighborhoods and suburbs, small towns, transnational migration networks, and contemporary arenas of interaction (Olwig 2013, 473). Superdiversity has been used to examine diversity in (urban) spaces in particular.

The variables listed by Vertovec were not in themselves new phenomena, but in his view, the emergence of their scale and rate and the unpredictability and complexity required new conceptual approaches (Pöyhönen and Martikainen 2023, 17; Vertovec 2007). With the formulation of superdiversity, Vertovec strives to answer the call for Migration Studies to reach "beyond the ethnic lens" (c.f., Glick Schiller et al. 2006), as well as to grasp how different factors coalesce and affect people's lives (Vertovec 2007, 1026).

As was the case with intersectionality, a researcher must define their use of superdiversity. According to Migration and Culture Studies scholar Hans Siebers (2018), the prefix "super" has a dual meaning, which suggests two dimensions for the concept: first, it suggests a change in the lived realities of the people in the field – diversity is experienced in a new, and overall, positive way – marking its *experiential dimension.* Secondly, 'super'diversity also assumes that there is some qualitative novelty to be analyzed, as opposed to what has been previously known – the *analytical or descriptive dimension* demonstrated in research that analyzes those realities (Siebers 2018, 676). I primarily employ the latter dimension for analytical purposes, meaning that it works as a tool for recognizing the different aspects of (migration-related) diversity in the educators' accounts of their professional everyday realities.

Intersectionality would seem to cover most of the factors included in the complexity of superdiversity, a criticism posed by American feminist scholars. In his response, Vertovec discards this idea by stating that, whereas "intersectionality

literature[18] was concentrated on the race-gender-class complex, I called for something focused exclusively on migration-related categories" (Vertovec 2019, 134). He also specifies that neither the USA nor Europe migration patterns and outcomes have been examined with intersectionality (ibid.). This argument is highly questionable, if not incorrect, because in the very article – in which Crenshaw uses intersectionality for the first time – the legal position and rights of migrant women are discussed as an example of structural intersectionality (Crenshaw 1991, 1248).

I accept the argument about the concepts' different contexts of origin and use: intersectionality's origin in the women of color movements' activism in the USA is very different from the migration patterns of post-Cold War Europe, where Vertovec locates the emergence of superdiversity. As he remarks, apart from some exceptions, the literature in America has been less focused on the legal statuses and conditions of migration – possibly due to having fewer categories than in Europe. Then again, despite racism being a prominent problem in Europe, the European studies on migrants have conventionally employed nationality instead of race-oriented approaches (Vertovec 2019, 134–35).

Regardless of the different origins and conventional uses, the research topics of intersectionality and superdiversity may overlap. I follow sociologist Sofya Aptekar's notion that although superdiversity strives to focus on specific dimensions of difference, it is problematic to view those dimensions as separate from the classic intersectional categories; for instance, race-, class-, and gender-based oppressions remain salient in people's lives whether they are affected by the migration-related categories or not (Aptekar 2019, 54–55). Instead of exclusively defining research topics for each concept, I find it more meaningful to establish which functions they have in different contexts.

Defining the function of concepts also helps the task of recognizing the specific contexts of the analytical categories (Ilmonen 2011, 13). In particular, educational scientist Mervi Kaukko makes an analytical differentiation between the categories of asylum-seeker and gender by noting that "asylum-seeking status is legally imposed and very concrete [--] whereas others, such as understanding of gender, might be more self-constituted and flexible depending on the context" (Kaukko 2015, 58). Although Kaukko does not make use of superdiversity, her distinction illuminates its purpose for contextualizing social differences.

Incorporating superdiversity also provides further understanding about the context in which the conception of diversity takes form. The two concepts have the potential to expand each other's reach: intersectionality can uncover the experienced positions and differences beneath the broad categories of superdiversity, but as

[18] At the time of Vertovec's coining of superdiversity in 2007.

structural intersectionality demands, the social structures that produce inequalities should be made visible (Crenshaw 1991). Pöyhönen and Martikainen (2023, 18) interpret Vertovec grasping for the parallel treatment of the "international, domestic, and local power structures in politics, economics, and social life." In the study of immigration-related institutions, superdiversity *is* those structures and thus inseparable from diversity: including superdiversity in the analysis considers the context of adult education, and how it relates to both national and international structures of migration.

3.2 Affective Approach

3.2.1 Affect, Emotion, Feeling

Research following the so-called "affective turn" of the past few decades has had a shared interest in affect, emotion, and embodiment (e.g., Rinne et al. 2020; Ylijoki et al. 2024). According to Anu Koivunen, in different fields of social sciences and humanities, this meant:

> [F]eminist scholars have turned to the question of affect and the topic of affectivity in search of a new critical vocabulary for investigating and conceptualizing the subject of feminism as embodied, located and relational. (Koivunen 2010)

Following Ahmed (2014) and the feminist aim above, my purpose is not to identify what affects are, but instead, what they do: they may bring forth issues that would otherwise be dismissed, or demand attention because it makes the educator feel something. It is important to reflect the embodied position the educators' talk and experience from, and how affects can diversify the understanding of this position and its impact on their perceptions of diversity. While the concepts of intersectionality and superdiversity were chosen as specific tools before the analysis, the adoption of affect theory resulted from an empirical observation, while transcribing the interviews: I realized that the educators' reflection on diversity was emotionally loaded, which led me to include affect as another perspective in the analysis.

I understand affects and the emotional dimension of the educators' accounts as cultural practices, instead of merely internalized feelings (Ahmed 2014, 9). For me, this does not mean disregarding subjective ones (c.f., Massumi 1995; Thrift 2008). Instead, in my analysis, affects manifest themselves in relation to personal histories and experiences, on which meaning-making is based (Rinne et al. 2020; Wetherell 2012, 15). Acknowledging affect does not, however, mean that the discursive should

be abandoned; instead, the discourse, in which diversity is produced, is examined "at the same time as we cast a critical gaze at what lies *beside*s, and give affective valences to them both" (Mortensen and Milani 2020, 420, discursive by authors). As the authors note, this can also contribute to the pursuit of achieving thicker intersectionalities (Yep 2015) discussed above.

Affect and emotion are not easily distinguishable from each other to the point that even the affect theorists Sara Ahmed and Margaret Wetherell, on whose ideas I build my theoretical understanding, do not separate the two. Ahmed views them as parts of the same phenomenon: *Emotions* are not only mental states, but also bodily sensations that are directed to something, and they have a cultural context (Rinne et al. 2020, 10). From Ahmed's understanding, emotions are cultural practices, and by implying "movement," emotions move and make us move. In the process, we form attachments and connections (Ahmed 2014, 9–11). *Affects*, then, are those processes in which individuals leave impressions on, or impress, one another (ibid., 6). Meanwhile, Wetherell describes affect as "embodied meaning-making," which can also be understood as "human emotion" (Wetherell 2012, 4).

Even though I concur with Ahmed and Wetherell about the inseparability of affect and emotion, I make the same distinction in my writing as in Article II: for clarity, I use "emotion" if I need to refer to a named feeling, such as joy, empathy, frustration, and unease. Some of this kind of direct emotional talk appears in the interviews, but more often, emotional engagement is differently detectable. For instance, when addressing racism in Finnish society, the educators may not explicitly state the unease, but instead ask what they can say or do, or describe the action of steering the conversation away from the matter.

"Affect" directs attention to the subtle, even covert expressions of emotion, such as tones of voice, atmospheres, breaks, laughter, and other bodily expressions (c.f., Knudsen and Stage 2015). They represent the educators' emotional entanglement with their students, instruction, and the policies and structures of migrant integration. According to Ylijoki et al. (2024, 20), from Ahmed's stance, affects originate in a relationship between subjects, cultural norms, and societal structures: emotion and feeling are directed inwards an individual, whereas affect reaches outwards.

Movement is inherent to the distinction of emotion and affect, as it recognizes the dynamics of these relationships. I am interested in affects as cultural practices that, through emotional engagement, participate in the meaning-making of the social reality. This social reality is positioned between the cultural/institutional structures of integration and the everyday encounters with students. With the ideas of *affective patterns* (Wetherell 2012) and *circulation of affects* (Ahmed 2014), I explore how affects are composed, and how diversity is conveyed in these compositions: it requires focusing on the verbal and non-verbal expressions that are available in the educators' interviews, and exploring how they elicit emotions and take them up

(Mortensen and Milani 2020, 421). These expressions involve affective engagement, such as when educators position themselves in relation to students' experiences of injustice. Here, affects circulate in the interaction between students and educators, and retrospectively with the latter and the interviewer, too. The circulation forms a pattern, including the involved parties, the interpretations of the injustice, and possibly its connections to the wider social context, as well as that of the education, and finally, the interview.

The study of affect has become especially popular since the 2010s. Overall, researchers use affect in a versatile sense, based on their research topic and design. It is infeasible to give an all-embracing definition to affect, which can be a cause for critical concern: can *anything* emotion-related that seems to escape distinct analytical categorization be defined as affect? Granted, the scope of affect can be suspiciously wide. Furthermore, affects cannot be documented the same way as verbal accounts. The interpretations based on affects are derived from the researchers' feelings, making them primarily subjective. However, as Suopajärvi et al. (2019, 60) have noted, subjectivity is the premise for ethnographic research, and as such, it should not be hidden or denied, nor shunned away. The process in which the interpretations have been made, needs to be made visible and reflected, which is covered in sub-section 4.4.

3.2.2 Affective Labor and Instruction

For the past few decades, emotions and teaching have been studied increasingly in educational sciences (Nias 1996; Schutz et al. 2007; Schutz and Lee 2014; Zembylas 2003; 2006). These studies depict instruction as emotional, or in other words, affective, labor; according to educational scientist Jennifer Nias (1996), educators often invest their 'selves' in their work so fully that the sense of their personal and professional identities becomes closely merged. What the abovementioned studies have in common, however, is that emotions are examined from the perspective of individual teachers' identity and well-being.

I approach instruction as affective labor, since any kind of teaching involves transmission in which emotions, too, have a role: they work in particular ways by aligning individuals and communities, or by binding individuals together (Ahmed 2004, 119). In Ahmed's thinking, emotions do not necessarily reside merely in an individual, which in fact makes them socially binding. For example, the educators may describe calming the classroom in an emotionally intense situation by providing reassurances about the current moment, reminding the students about the task at hand.

Apart from mentioning emotion, this idea of "binding together" is explicit in the core curricula of the studied education. The chosen prompt quotations (Table 2)

display how education strives to commit their students to working citizenship and (pro)active membership in a culturally diverse community, to give an example. According to philosopher Hannah Arendt, education as an institution has been interposed between the domains of private and public, to make the transmission from the former to the latter possible (Arendt 1958). Participation in society requires individuals to adopt common norms, and their transmission is part of the educators' professional duties.

3.3 Theoretical Assembly

Understanding the theoretical framework as a whole requires tying together the use of intersectionality and superdiversity on one hand and affect theory on the other; the different approaches have their own division of labor in the theoretical framework. Intersectionality was the starting point in the examination of diversity altogether, and superdiversity expanded the focus to the migration-driven themes that affect contemporary societies. The incorporation of affect theory into the theoretical framework followed from an empirical notion of the interviews, rather than a precondition for material formation and analysis. The latter, however, applies to intersectionality and superdiversity, which were present in the preparation and formation of the interview material.

Simply put, intersectionality and superdiversity have the task to answer the question of what the educators' construction of diversity entails. Affect theory, then, strives to distinguish the tones in which diversity is addressed. Addressing these tones, affected by and reflective of culture, means observing how affective patterns are formed, and paying attention to the circulation of affects – by asking, for example: What arouses affective accounts?

In truth, the relationship of the three perspectives is more complicated, as both intersectionality and superdiversity are fundamentally interested in the societal processes that produce diversity and its social repercussions. Here, affect theory works as a medium to access the individual, bodily and situated perspective in these processes. This is an attempt to gain thicker intersectionality as discussed in this chapter – and thicker superdiversity for that matter, too.

I now proceed to the methodology of this dissertation. The next chapter comprises the description of the material acquisition and how COVID-19 affected it, as well as the roles that the components of the theoretical framework, established in this chapter, have in the analysis.

4 Methodologies, Research Materials and Ethical Considerations

4.1 Research Design

4.1.1 From Classroom to Zoom

This research was planned to be ethnographic and conducted in educational institutions – accompanied with interviews of the educators. The goal was to observe the everyday interactions in which diversity took place, where it was negotiated and constructed – meeting both students and educators, while becoming acquainted with their environments.

The educators would have been interviewed during the fieldwork, preferably in their workplaces. After only two months of reading, planning, and navigating the practicalities of fieldwork (i.e., research permits, participating in education providers, etc.), society was near lockdown: as the university shifted to remote work, so did every other branch in which it was possible. Thus, my research field – together with the rest of the world – was shut down.

The acute stage of the COVID-19 restrictions was expected to normalize within a few months. By the following summer, the epidemic in Finland had loosened its grip inasmuch that the autumn semester began almost normally at many schools. At this point, I had acquired a few contacts from the education providers and received the necessary permits to study them.

In the fall of 2020, I presented my research in staff meetings facilitated by an individual education provider and another one organized by TE (employment) services for integration training providers in Turku. Consequently, I managed a short fieldwork period in two different institutions, but it was soon interrupted by the worsening epidemic and regulations. Soon, it became clear that the emergency conditions would remain for the time being.[19]

[19] Emergency conditions in Finland during the COVID-19 pandemic (Parliament of Finland,

The circumstances led to the decision to move on with the interviews and conduct them online. The pandemic-enforced shift altered not only the medium of interviewing but also the whole research design, including its regional focus, which raises different ethical issues. These matters will be covered in the following sections.

4.1.2 Choice of Prompt Interview Method

The pandemic did not alter the basic design of the interviews but made them primary research material, without the intended references to shared experiences from the physical field. The original research plan included the idea of supplementing the traditional thematic interview with prompt material. The use of prompts was now revised to better suit the online interview setting.

Prompts, or elicitation techniques, are visual, verbal, or written stimuli used to encourage the interviewees to share their ideas; asking broad, open-ended questions can seem to interviewees as testing, which may result in pressure to provide "correct" answers (Barton 2015, 181). In research settings like mine, where interlocutors are professionals, there is a risk that the interviewees answer as they assume they should, according to their professional decorum (Alastalo and Åkerman 2010, 324). As an attempt to bridge this possible gap, text prompts representing the educators' work field were incorporated into the interview method from the beginning, as anchors to the institutional field.

As background research, I had familiarized myself with the core curricula and several other policy documents. Reading and coding their contents were part of understanding the context of migrant education from early on. Scrutinizing these materials led to further questions, for example, about the aims and goals of education and desired model of citizenship, which are typically defined in curricular texts (Isopahkala-Bouret et al. 2014, 93). Moreover, educational institutions are fields whose operation is defined by statutes and curricula (Lahelma and Gordon 2007, 17). Utilizing quotes from the curricula as prompts provided the interview with a shared understanding of the educational context to begin with, instead of basing it solely on a researcher's presumptions. The curricular representation of the aims of education opened space for critique.

Many authors, forced to conduct ethnography and interviews online during the pandemic, have examined the methodological and epistemological concerns raised by this shift (Howlett 2022; Lobe et al. 2020; Walsh et al. 2023). Since a corpus of this kind did not exist before the data formation of my research, I had to learn the

https://www.eduskunta.fi/EN/naineduskuntatoimii/kirjasto/aineistot/kotimainen_oikeus/LATI/Pages/valmiuslain-kayttoonottaminen-koronavirustilanteessa.aspx)

practicalities and challenges of online interviewing as I progressed further into my project.

Acquiring interview material remotely was not invented during the pandemic, however. In fact, phone interviews have been conducted for decades, whenever there was a need to contact a larger number of participants or to reach interlocutors from rural areas (Ikonen 2017). Literature about online methods has existed for the past two decades, but mediated interviews have been regarded as the "second choice" to "being there" and remained a method to be further developed (Żadkowska et al. 2022).

In-person interviews have also been considered to produce higher-quality data than those conducted via video calls: a study that compared the data produced both ways presented that in-person interviews included slightly larger numbers of topics and individual statements relating to them, thus proposing in-person interviews as more comprehensive than videocalls (Krouwel et al. 2019). The challenge was to facilitate the interviews in a manner that would result in trust, openness, and an engaging conversation between myself and the interviewees. The preparation of the interviews is presented in the following section.

4.1.3 Preparation for Interviews

Curricular Background Material and Prompt Selection

As I prepared for the interviews, I focused on the basics of interviewing by framing the interview body into a form that would best provide answers to my research questions. With intersectionality as a steering theory, I recognized twelve social differences by which students were referred to. These included issues related to students' personal attributes (i.e., age, gender, health, religion), backgrounds (i.e., culture, cause for migration, education, employment, or other unknown factor), and group membership (i.e., family, language group, race) – all of which could be overlapping. Additionally, I singled out fifteen goals, values, and principles of integration measures concerning both the individual students' lives and Finnish society more broadly. I also singled out the category of conflict, which included references to a mismatch between the ideals and the current reality (see Table 3).

Table 3. Subject matters based on thematation from the national core curricula.

Student-centered differences	Goals, values, and principles of integration measures
age	change
culture	civil society & NGOs
cause for migration	democracy
education	development of the system
employment	equality and equity
family	Finnish culture
gender	inclusion
health	interaction
language group	knowledge and skills
race	language skills
religion	learning
unknown (i.e., vague references to background or previous life)	non-discrimination
	safety
	skills for daily life
	supporting culture

A thematic interview (see Appendix 6) allowed most of these subject matters to be placed under four main themes: **personal role(s)**, **labor market position**, **in/exclusion**, and **cultural diversity**, which included religion. These themes cut across the overall objectives of my research, as described in the Introduction. The chosen quotes from the curricula introduced these themes and had an associative function. The themes, quotations, and their source materials are presented in the following Table 4.

The function of the first quote for the theme of **personal role(s)** was to dive into the meanings of roles and agencies that are present in the classroom: the educator's role is articulated in the quote, as well as the view of a human being, but what does being a supporter and guide entail? And how can an educator see their students' tacit knowledge?

The second quote about the **labor market position** derives from the prominence that employment has in the migrant integration policy. This prominence has also been critiqued in research (Kurki et al. 2018). What is seen as realistic? What is the importance of work in society?

The third quote and theme, **in/exclusion**, derives from inclusion being a key element in the integration policy (Penninx and Garcés-Mascareñas 2016; Ronkainen and Suni 2019). Yet, the reality for the migrants is quite the opposite, as Finland is one of the most racist countries in the EU (FRA 2018). In the quotation, the aim of a constructive membership is directed at the migrant students, as is the aim of fighting racism. How do the educators understand this?

The fourth quote for the theme of **cultural diversity** is linked to my research interest as a scholar of religion. I include religion under the umbrella of culture (Ramsey 2000). Culture is often used as the catch-all phrase that covers all that is unfamiliar for representatives of the receiving society (Kärkkäinen 2017). I was interested to see if and how my interlocutors differentiated between religion and culture. The quote also included a quandary: how could invisible cultural differences cause discord?

Table 4. The main themes, curriculum prompts and their sources in the core curricula.

Theme	Quotation	Source
1. Personal role(s)	"The educator is a supporter and guide who sees students' life experience and tacit knowledge as a resource."	Curriculum recommendation for literacy education in liberal adult education 5. Implementation of education: Conception of learning
2. Labor market position	"Students are helped to obtain a realistic, up-to-date picture of working life and their own opportunities in it. It is important for students to understand the importance of work in their own lives and their responsibilities as members of their community and society."	National core curriculum for basic education for adults 2017 3. The task and general objectives of basic education for adults: Working life competence and entrepreneurship
3. In/exclusion	"to support the student to act constructively as a member of a culturally diverse community and fight racism against all ethnic groups."	National core curriculum for basic education for adults 2017 3. The task and general objectives of basic education for adults: Social studies and cultural competence
4. Cultural diversity	"Instruction should aim to identify and deal with such invisible cultural differences that may cause discord or conflicts when encountered."	National Core Curriculum for Integration Training for Adult Migrants 2012 5. Objectives and core contents of integration training: Cultural identity and multicultural interaction

Using different elicitation tools has been seen as a possible equalizer of power relations in interviews (Barton 2015), but just like the interview questions are decided by the researcher, so were my interview prompts.[20] The selection of the prompts was guided by my research questions and the theoretical framework of intersectionality: my aim was to choose quotes that would best produce speech on diversity. Furthermore, I chose themes that were not self-explanatory, but raised further questions and gave room for interpretation, instead.

[20] For examples of interviews where the interlocutors were asked to bring the objects with them, see Barton 2015.

Recruitment and pre-informing the interviewees

Finding, reaching, and acquainting with the interlocutors needed to happen online. My short period in the field made recruiting somewhat easier compared to if it were lacking altogether, as I had met a few active and eager educators who were able to advertise my research to their colleagues. Since I had the contact information of the education providers in Turku, I emailed interview invitations to the contact persons (e.g., employers), who then forwarded them to the educators.

The potential interlocutors were given the basic information of the research in the recruitment phase. Attached to the email were the invitation letter (Appendix 1) and the privacy notice (Appendix 3), both of which contained information about the study. With these, the educators were able to familiarize themselves with the information on how the interviews were carried out in practice, the objectives of the study and the central themes of the interview, as well as the processing and preservation of the data before signing up.

As the sign-ups through the institutions soon fell short, I decided to expand the participant recruitment outside the education providers of Turku, as the interviews were conducted remotely anyway. I forged further contact through the educators' professional organizations and networks. I asked my invitation to be shared on the mailing list of the Finnish language teachers' organization and in the Facebook group of teachers of basic education for adults. I linked a Webropol-form to the emails and social media posts, including the invitation letter and privacy notice, which needed to be read before proceeding with the sign-up survey (Appendix 4). The surveys allowed educators to sign up for the interview effortlessly. Social media proved efficient, and altogether, half of the participants were recruited this way.

After signing up or otherwise expressing their interest in the interview, the educators and I exchanged emails about scheduling. Having set the date, I sent the invitation and privacy notice once again. The overall themes of the interview were also included in the final invitation, as well as the details of the Zoom meeting, accompanied by the Zoom participant provided by the IT-services of the university (Appendix 5). The same format was later used for arranging the focus group meetings.

4.2 Conducting Online Interviews

4.2.1 Interviews with Individual Educators

I conducted individual interviews with educators in the spring of 2021. Altogether, sixteen educators participated in the Zoom sessions between February and May 2021. Half (8) of the participants were recruited via contacts with education

providers in the Varsinais-Suomi area, where they also worked. The other half, recruited via social media and mailing lists, worked in the Helsinki capital region, apart from one participant from Eastern Finland. On average, the length of each interview was two hours. The majority of the educators (10) worked in integration training and liberal adult education, and most of them were trained as subject teachers in the mother tongue and literature, which qualifies them to instruct Finnish as a second language. One (1) participant currently worked in a private institute, but also had experience from integration training. The rest of the interlocutors (5) were from basic education for adults and were class teachers (grades 1 to 6) by education.

After a year of remote work, both the educators and I were quite fluent with video call technology, so the set-up for the interviews was usually routine. Typically, we would have some mundane small talk about each other's day, the weather, or different video call platforms. After that, I asked about their schedule, for example, if they needed to end the interview by a certain time. Once both were set, I put the recording on and proceeded to the matters of informing and obtaining their consent to participate, which are discussed in detail in the chapter on research ethics. The language of the interviews was Finnish.

I began the recorded part of the interview with a warm-up section, during which the educators would describe their educational background and professional history, moving on to freely describe their work and students (see Appendix 6). Even though every interview began with the everyday chat, I regret that I had not considered it to be part of the actual interview; for example, Marnie Howlett describes beginning her interviews, obscured by online presence during COVID-19, with the question "where are you right now?", as an act of constructing a digital and socially meaningful place for interaction (Howlett 2022, 393). Questions, such as "what have you been doing today?" or "where do you come from?" could have helped in creating a co-presence typical for the pandemic.

Luckily for me, the educators were already experts on creating such interactions. Thus, the dialogue was relatively easy to establish by asking them to talk about their own education and vocation. There was, of course, an individual range on how elaborate the educators were throughout the interviews, but the situations were altogether effortless. I presented the Finnish-language quotes on PowerPoint slides with the screen-sharing function on Zoom. Each quote had its own slide, with the source curriculum mentioned under it. Together, the four quotes as prompts and the semi-structured thematic interview body made up a whole that allowed the interviewee to make their own interpretations. Although not all the numerous questions were asked in every interview, they provided support in case the interview situation needed more of my guidance.

4.2.2 Follow-up with Focus Groups

After the shift in the research design, I considered alternatives for capturing some aspects of everyday interactions; educators would nevertheless need to communicate with each other. Therefore, I designed focus group interviews that could stand in for some of the back-stage chat that usually happens on-site, but outside the interviews (Khan 2014, 286).

After finalizing and transcribing the individual interviews, I contacted the interviewees who had originally been interested in participating in focus groups as well. The preparation of the group interviews was lighter compared to the individual ones, as the interviewees were already familiar with the research and me. The goal of the focus groups was to have a free-form collegial conversation between the educators, as well as revisiting some of the earlier themes. The interview body was built around these goals, complimented with current societal issues, such as the pandemic and its effects on teaching (see Appendix 7).

Two separate focus group interviews were conducted online in the spring of 2022, a year after the individual ones. The groups were small, with three or two participants for each interview, whereas the typical number of participants would be between five and ten (Hennink 2014, 1). The participants were carefully chosen, ensuring that all three educational contexts were represented. The interviewees in each focus group did not know each other, and Turku and the Helsinki capital region were represented in both. The length of each focus group was a little under two hours. They were transcribed in verbatim and analyzed in a manner that I will describe in detail in Chapter 5.3.

The focus group interviews managed to mainly facilitate sharing and comparing experiences, complying with the characteristics of the method (ibid.). At the end of the interviews, the educators described liking these conversations, although the flow of the conversation was somewhat limited due to the video call technology, which demanded taking distinct turns while talking. In comparison to individual interviews, where the effect of remote connection was somewhat positive, in the focus groups, it produced a more formal atmosphere and discontinuous interaction.

4.3 Interview Materials as a Whole

The two sets of interview material have their limitations of reach, as previously discussed. Interaction during online interviews is created in the co-operation of the interviewer, interviewee, and technology (Hokka et al. 2022, 115). Representative of the time of their composition during the pandemic, the interviews lacked in-person contact, depended on technology, and were estranged from the everyday routines of the field, although different routines soon became part of the “new normal.” The

accounts of diversity, however, were mainly based on the everyday experiences from life before COVID-19.

Although the short fieldwork period in the fall of 2020 did not accumulate enough data for analysis, it did provide valuable insight into the everyday realities of education, not to mention meeting the few educators who became my key informants. Thus, I understand my interviews as ethnographic, as few of the educators were able to reflect on the situations I had participated in, and others trusted that I could understand the practice of these educational settings, like interaction without a common language.

Despite the presumed better quality of interviewing in person, my experience of the online interviews was that a common space of interaction and sharing was found. Although the power structure could not be erased from the interview, the prompts used in individual interviews created a shared focus between me and the participants (Julien 2022, 1823). In some cases, they provoked a shift of tone in the question–answer model of interview, as the accounts became more emotionally charged with grief, joy, puzzlement, or anger. This expanded the analysis to not merely what was said, but also how it became said.

Since none of the participants in the two focus group sessions knew each other, the collegiality and backstage chat central to ethnography were not realized the way they could have been between co-workers. The goal to deepen the accounts of diversity was not quite met, either, because the conversation much followed the participants' interests and emphases, which were somewhat different from mine; for the participants, it seemed more relevant to share about their acute challenges – such as meeting the desired language proficiency, or vocational guidance – that were somewhat separate from my research questions. For the part that provided some answers, they were much repetitive of the individual interviews, thus supporting the main findings. Nevertheless, the focus group interviews supplemented the research material, by bringing forward the differences in the resources available for different institutions.

Different studies report online interviews as both shorter and more focused (ibid., 10), as well as longer and more in-depth (Howlett 2022, 393). Personally, I lean towards the latter: the remote format made it easier to separate the time for the interview, and there was no need to reserve time for transitions, namely, from work to home. Zoom, in particular, has been estimated as an accessible platform that enables natural conversation for qualitative researchers (Archibald et al. 2019). The participants were given the option to keep their cameras off during the interview, but no one did, apart from one focus group participant who could not turn their camera on due to technical difficulties. The camera contact made facial expressions and other gestures, such as smiling and nodding, feasible, which was essential for engaging interaction. In fact, on the video call, they need to be accentuated, as

participants need to "consciously monitor nonverbal behavior and to send cues to others that are intentionally generated" (Bailenson 2021, 3). Consequently, after each interview, I felt like I had done a sporting achievement.

The different physical locations of online interviews challenge the typical guest-host relationship between the researcher and participants (Żadkowska et al. 2022, 2). Moreover, interviewees are more in control of their physical presence online than in a more formal location (Hokka et al. 2022; Archibald et al. 2019). Some of the educators participated from their workplaces, but the majority joined the video call from their homes, as did I. This alone acted as an equalizer between us, and online communication was also a shared experience, typical for the pandemic.

4.4 Analysis Method

4.4.1 Transcription, Thematization and Directed Content Analysis

An intense transcription period followed completing the interviews: I transcribed both the individual and group interviews verbatim: the colloquial Finnish language was maintained, but no pauses or non-interruptive conversational interjections during speech were included in the transcription. I used neither AI nor other digital assistance in the process,[21] because these technologies were not quite as advanced and accessible at the time. The initial observations and the rough idea of the material were formulated at this stage. Transcribing allowed me to be absorbed in the material. It also helped in distancing myself from the interview situation and created space for seeing the material from different positions (Ruusuvuori and Nikander 2017).

After completing the transcriptions, I started to thematize the materials. Method-wise, this processing roughly corresponds to the idea of a directed qualitative content analysis in which the research questions are focused with the help of an existing theory. However, as opposed to the classical definition of the method, the goal of the analysis was not to test the theory or to demonstrate whether the results support it (Hsieh and Shannon 2005, 1281–82). Instead, intersectionality assisted in recognizing the socio-cultural categories, such as gender, race, education, and religion, from the material.

[21] When translating individual interview extracts into English (in research articles, for example), I used the free AI assisted tool DeepL (versions 0.12.1-1.54.0) for approximate translations, which I finalized and fine-tuned manually. Direct AI translations were never used in the publications or this summary section.

Intersectionality calls for the differences to be analyzed as overlapping and relational, not in isolation from each other (Collins 2015, 14). This relationality, or the co-constitution of differences, is at the core of intersectionality, but the limitations of language require them to be analyzed "one discursive moment at a time" (Carbado 2013, 816). Consequently, the thematization process seemed somewhat mechanical – placing the pieces of material under different titles. The basic social differences that my intersectionality-oriented analysis produced were *culture, the educator's position, Finnishness, religion*, and *students*.

The social embeddedness of intersectionality also entailed that differences could not be found individually from the material. Instead, they might have been implicitly present in other relevant categories of analysis arising from the material. For example, the research questions demanded that the *integration system* and its *goals* be seen as categories of analysis, and the *mismatch* between the two. The category of *affect*, on the other hand, was included through a data-based observation: different expressions of emotion seemed to carry important information about diversity.

After setting the differences as overarching categories of analysis, another level of intersectional gaze needed to be applied, as the categories themselves were intersectional and thus needed to be further thematized. During the primary analysis of the material, I had formed an overall picture of its main themes, and I was able to start working on the research articles. From this stage on, the analysis was guided by the research questions of the individual articles: in their analyses, the chosen differences were emphasized in dialogue with the theoretical approaches.

In the articles, the approaches had different roles. In Article I, the interview material was classified and analyzed based on what kind of diversity the concepts of superdiversity and intersectionality could grasp in it. In Article II, the focus was on the affects present in the material. In Article III, affects were part of the analysis, as religion was treated as a hotspot, which allowed a more nuanced understanding to surface from the educators' accounts. The analysis of Article III was complemented with an *inverted approach* (Hjelm 2021a) by asking: what do the accounts on the religion of "others" say about the assumed and uncontested "us"?

4.4.2 Emotional Hotspots and Further Analytical Approaches

Intersectionality as the cornerstone of my interpretation remained throughout the articles, but to understand the consequences of intersectionality, not merely observing it, other approaches were also required. For a more nuanced approach, I also concentrated on the shifts in the interview. I stopped on moments that Maggie MacLure (2013, 172–73) calls *emotional hotspots* – moments that demand attention both in the field and during the data analysis, but also make it challenging to find

rational ways of accounting for; some stood out already during the interview situation, when the interviewee reacted emotionally, with a specific tone of voice and/or had a physical reaction, or my own emotional state shifted, due to some sort of discord in the interaction between us, for example. Others would arise during the analysis, when observing the interviewees' enthusiasm, pride, or reluctance on certain themes.

Hotspots mark the affectively intensive moments, and they can emerge from speech, texts, and bodily expressions (Ylijoki et al. 2024, 244). The analysis of affect is woven together in the interplay of interview situation and its interaction, reviewing and transcribing the recordings, and reading and analyzing the interview transcripts. Following Ylijoki et al. (2024, 245), the focus is set on thickened moments and strong expressions where meaningful ideas of the research subjects become crystallized: fine-tuned tones in texts, nonverbal communication, and even silences.

I see language as capable of expressing affects, and their recognition is a way of making separating *what* is being said and *how* it is being said – although sometimes they work affirmatively. Hence, in the interviews, the accounts of diversity and religion are mainly constructed by language, but at certain moments, they are comprised in the dynamic interplay of everyday situations, emotional engagements, and migration policy. Sticking purely to the discourse would not adequately capture these dynamics: in feminist studies, affect and affectivity have formed a new critical vocabulary for its subject to be examined as "embodied, located, worldly, contextualized, and relational" (Liljeström 2015, 16).

4.5 Ethical Considerations and Positionality/ies

Research ethics are not limited to any particular stage but remain cross-cutting for the length of the research. The Finnish National Board on Research and Integrity (Finnish National Board on Research Integrity TENK 2019) sets guidelines according to which ethically acceptable research is to be conducted. Research integrity entails that the research participants are informed about the use of research material, both before its acquisition and throughout the research process (Fingerroos and Kokko 2022, 67).

Nevertheless, many practicalities to ensure ethical conduct are often emphasized in the early stage of research. For example, TENK has set guidelines on whether an ethical review statement must be requested from the human sciences ethics committee before beginning the data acquisition. According to the guidelines, an ethical review was not a requirement in my study: the participants were Finnish-speaking, highly educated adults, who would give their informed consent, and there were no apparent risks of causing them harm (TENK 2019, 19).

Even though the review was not required according to the TENK guidelines, in a study with qualitative interviews as its primary data, research ethics must be thoroughly considered and implemented. Not only the engagement with individuals, but also the sensitivity of the subject (migration-related diversity), and the special time frame (i.e., COVID-19 pandemic) with which the research coincided, lay particular stress on the ethical treatment and acquisition of the materials.

Contacting the educators via employers was a disadvantage, as participation in the study should not be interpreted as a work assignment issued by the employer. In the invitation letters (see Appendices 1 and 2), I took measures to emphasize voluntary participation and to make myself and the research approachable with detailed information. This could not quite replace the "back-stage chats" (Khan 2014; Mackenzie et al. 2007) that on-site ethnography would have made possible; as widely noted in the ethnographical literature, unofficial encounters have a vital role in "getting into the field," as well as gaining the interest and trust of the interlocutors.

The pandemic, and especially the exceptional conditions it entailed, was a stressful time, which required extra care when approaching the participants (Newman et al. 2021; Ravitch 2020). Educational institutions needed to adjust themselves to the changing circumstances, which meant that many educators already had their hands full. As my estimate, this affected the recruiting process; I did my best to inform openly, create confidentiality, and approach them with extra humility and respect, by giving them as much power as possible to decide the time for the interview, for example. Still, only sixteen educators ended up being interviewed. Similarly, although most of them expressed interest in focus groups, a year later, only five educators participated in them.

The interviewees were informed about the measures for data protection, both in the written interview invitations and at the beginning of the interview (Appendices 1–5). As the processing of personal data requires lawful grounds, "serving public interest by promoting scientific research" was included in the privacy notice (Appendix 3). We also reviewed my contact details and the objectives of the research, as well as the execution of data collection. The interviewees were also informed of the voluntary participation, their right to decline from answering, and the confidentiality of the information they shared. Consequently, the participants gave their informed consent for the interview, which was recorded. They were also informed about the terms and conditions of The School of History, Culture and Arts Studies (SHCAS) Archives before consenting to archiving the material.

The data management followed the guidelines of Turku University Library.[22] The recorded Zoom interviews were saved in Seafile cloud storage, which is among

[22] Research Data Management (Turku University Library, https://utuguides.fi/researchdata/support)

the recommended storages by the University of Turku, as it is provided by the university's own IT services and data is safe on the university servers. The files, in which both the recordings and their transcriptions were stored, were password-protected. After the completion of the study, only the transcriptions were deposited in the SHCAS Archive, and the recordings were destroyed. The deposition of the material was done according to the rules of the SHCAS Archive.[23]

All the direct identifiers, such as people's names or educational institutions, were faded out during the transcription process: for example, if the interviewees mentioned the name of their institution, it would appear as "our school" in the transcription. The precise geographical location was also changed; instead of cities or districts, I mentioned broader definitions, such as the Turku area or the Helsinki capital region. The interviews were planned with the minimal need for personal information, which was also an ethical choice: fewer personal data, smaller likelihood of identification. I did not systematically ask about the gender, sexual orientation, religion, or political affiliations of the interviewees – all of which can be special categories of personal data or potentially have discriminatory effects on the participants (EU 679/2016, § 9–10, 71). These categories might be relevant factors in the analysis, but because my focus was on the accounts made from their professional position, they were not necessary information.

There are different positions present in this study, which call for specific ethical reflection. According to Soyini Madison, "Positionality is vital because it forces us to acknowledge our own power, privilege, and biases just as we are denouncing the power structures that surround our interlocutors" (Madison 2020, 6). This notion applies both to the researcher and the ones being researched. The educators as research subjects have a power position in relation to their students that follows from the teacher-student relationship. This relationship is further complicated by the students' position as adults with a migration background: from the perspective of age, they are often at least peers with diverse life histories, whose migration has placed them in the role of a learner: it extends from learning the language to other competencies deemed necessary to participate in the receiving society (Fejes et al. 2020). For research not to participate in this "deficiency discourse," the idea of integration needs to be contested; sociologist Willem Schinkel (2018) claims that "immigrant integration" is a neocolonial project, supported by methodological nationalism[24] of migration studies (Schinkel 2018).

[23] Rules of use (Archives of the School of History, Culture and Arts Studies, https://www.utu.fi/sites/default/files/media/K%C3%A4ytt%C3%B6s%C3%A4%C3%A4nn%C3%B6t_2022.pdf)

[24] Methodological nationalism is an intellectual orientation by which research naturalizes the nation-state and reinforces national interests (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2003).

As a researcher, I should not contribute to the othering of migrants when writing about the educators' accounts of their students. For this reason, the educators were asked to reflect on quotes from the curricula – that is, the official discourse with its biases. Simultaneously, the quotes created context for the social structure in which the educators operate. Thus, its relation to the educators' treatment of diversity cannot be dismissed. Nevertheless, the educators' position should be reduced to these structures, neither: they, too, are often critical of the integration policy, and navigate its implementation in various human interactions with a combination of expertise, emotion, and obligation (e.g., Lønsmann 2023).

While interacting with the educators, I noticed that I was mainly treated as a peer. Being a white, Finnish-born, and middle-class woman with a university education, my background was similar to most of my interlocutors' backgrounds. This set-up produces a very different power structure than those studies, where the researcher is considered an "insider" from the migrant perspective. Ameera Masoud describes being positioned as an "insider" because of sharing the language and "many similar lived experiences, especially related to racism and racialization" (Masoud 2024, 74–75). Neither I nor the educators can relate to such experiences.

In my study, the educators seemed to trust that my position as a researcher studying their field guaranteed sufficient knowledge about it, so information was disclosed in a conception of shared understanding. This conception exceeded the knowledge about the integration system and education, including more tacit forms of knowledge. For example, communication with students about Finnish customs, the contents of which were rather implied than explained, would have required me to ask questions for the educators to elaborate – a task in which I did not always succeed. This is a challenge for ethnography 'at home,' where the researcher shares the language, values, and conceptual framework with their interlocutors (Rytter 2019).

Scholars of Refugee Studies, Catriona Mackenzie, Christopher McDowell, and Eileen Pittaway (2007, 300–301) argue that the ethics of the field should reach beyond the standard of harm minimization and additionally recognize an obligation to conduct research that aims to bring reciprocal benefits for the participants and/or communities. My research participants are not refugees themselves, but the educators whose obligation is to implement the integration policy. Therefore, I feel obligated by the argument made by MacKenzie et. al, which corresponds to the activist stance[25] formulated in feminist research in the 1990s, from which a researcher seeks "to unearth, disrupt, and transform existing ideological and/or institutional arrangements" (Fine 2014, 17).

[25] Here, the activist stance is separate from activist research in which researchers collaborate with social groups and participates in their activities.

5 Research Articles and Reflections

The three research articles form the basis for this dissertation. They are also a description of the chronology of the research process: In the early stage of analysis and the first article, I phrased the question to determine what kind of diversity was overall present in the material. The second article was based on the empirical discovery that the educators' speech on diversity was often affective, and thus, I was interested to find out what this affectivity could tell about diversity. By the third article, I knew the material well enough to zoom into the category of religion to locate it in the whole that I refer to as diversity.

Despite the relatively short time during which all the articles were published and submitted, my thoughts and argumentation developed along with their completion. The review and publication processes were long, which allowed time for a deeper understanding to develop within the individual publications, as well as the whole research. Together with this summary section, the three articles form a compact, yet simplified representation of the educators' construction of the diversity that takes place in these educational settings. They also represent the educators' position in the construction diversity as sensitive and complex. Next, I will go through the articles one by one, reflecting on their contents and further implications.

5.1 Article I: Conceptual Account of Diversity

The research article, published in an edited volume dedicated to the concept of superdiversity (Martikainen and Pöyhönen 2023), constitutes of a discussion between the superdiversity and intersectionality; I asked what kinds of understanding of diversity these concepts can bring into the study of integration-oriented education of adult migrants, thus almost directly answering the third research question. I assessed the use, differences, and complementarity of these concepts in the educators' interviews. Superdiversity and intersectionality have different histories of origins, and in my article, I discussed their viability in this context in Finland.

As the process of forming the research material was still incomplete, superdiversity seemed like a nuisance that I was obliged to incorporate into my research: the body of research was extensive, and although it covered questions similar to mine, the perspective seemed incomplete. As a feminist researcher, I also

found it off-putting that the acknowledgement of intersectionality, and the activist-researchers' work preceding it (Collins and Bilge 2016), were lacking in Vertovec's coining of superdiversity (Vertovec 2007), as well as his later answers to feminist scholars' critique for this omission (Vertovec 2019, 134). Furthermore, in his recent book, Vertovec has exclusively elaborated that his call to move beyond ethnicity was about capturing the "intersectionality of categories (specifically concerning migration, not solely the categories of gender-race-class with which much of the existing literature dealt) and new configurations of features surrounding migrant populations" (Vertovec 2022, 8). In my view, with these notions, Vertovec still refuses to recognize the scope of intersectionality, or its further utility in comparison to superdiversity.

While I remain critical of the added value that superdiversity as such brings, its joint use with intersectionality in the analysis proved fruitful. The operationalization of the two concepts as tools resulted in a more nuanced analysis than using only one of them would have, probably due to the extensive literature on superdiversity. This body of research familiarized me with different settings in which superdiversity has been applied. For example, the work of Faten Khazaei (Khazaei 2018) provided me with a more nuanced understanding of the migration-related legal statuses, as well as the levels at which they operate compared to intersectional ones.

The educators' access to background information concerning their students was limited, and many of them allowed more detailed information that would not even be necessary for them. Regarding the information available for them, the country of origin and the native language were often mentioned as indicators of an educational background – all which Vertovec includes in the list of factors of superdiversity (ibid.). Moreover, the educators' reflection on the preconditions of their labor, including criticism of the emphasis on labor market outcomes, and the funding of integration training from the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment in Finland, expands on the final factor of Vertovec's original article that includes responses by local authorities and service providers (ibid.).

In the following articles, I consider the educators' position regarding issues, such as racism: while personally supporting antiracism agendas, the educators find themselves somewhat powerless when it comes to structural racism. Furthermore, the normative framework of their position can also require their contribution to the very same structures that maintain racism.

These matters are essential when considering the bearings of a traveling theory; there have been concerns that while successfully traveling from the margins to the center of feminist research, intersectionality has been depoliticized and thus devoid of its original meaning (Erel et al. 2008; Salem 2018). The recognition of the different positions of power and commitment to anti-racist activism is what

intersectionality brings to the analysis, while superdiversity defines the context in which intersectionality has traveled.

Article I was the most theoretical of the trio, to the extent that the theoretical groundwork pertaining to the whole study was established in it: the exploration of the viability of the theoretical concepts in the analysis of the interview material was close to the testing and comparison of theories. Although testing in a sense that would result in definite answers about the viability of the theoretical concepts was not its purpose, intersectionality presented itself as more informative in terms of the research task. Consequently, its benefit in relation to the following articles was to focus on the diversity that intersectionality could better grasp. Superdiversity, as a broad contextual definer, remained more central for the whole of the dissertation than for the following individual articles.

Having said that, the two concepts proved fruitful in the analysis. I also recognize that the categories that I deciphered for the analysis were quite stereotypical: focusing on gender through the lens of motherhood, and race and racism both between migrants and in larger society, as well as religion primarily read as Islam, raises the question why these categories that are already over-represented in migration studies still surface when studying professionals. I will return to this reflection in the discussion chapter.

5.2 Article II: Affective Diversity

In the second article, which was co-written with Tiina Suopajärvi, we examined the affects that become constructed in the educators' interviews. Our point of departure was the descriptions of the everyday situations in which the emotions and life experiences of educators and students meet. Although the categories in the article concerned mainly students, they were constructed in the educators' accounts. Intersectionality was essential to the recognition of these categories. The educators' accounts, however, did not only consist of descriptions of their observations but were also felt – both at the time of their occurrence, but also often retrospectively in the interviews, too. Thus, we regarded instruction as affective labor.

Suopajärvi's contribution to the article was providing the theoretical background for our use of affect theory. The understanding of affect on which my analysis was built was, on one hand, based on Margaret Wetherell's idea of affective patterns that combine discursive and material experiences, life histories, and cultural elements (Wetherell 2012). On the other hand, we followed Sara Ahmed's notion of the circulation of affects: we asked what kinds of emotions are formed in the affective circulation in the classroom, and what these tell us about instruction as affective labor.

We analyzed the affects that were constructed in patterns, and the intersectional categories of difference attached to them. The most affectively intense categories in the educators' accounts were gender, race, and trauma, which we call unsettling points in the material *hotspots*. Hotspots can occur both in the field and while analyzing the material, and they demand the researcher's attention, as they "glow for a reason" (MacLure 2013, 172–73). Gender and race were the classic subjects of feminist analyses that employ intersectionality, and as such rooted in cultural and structural factors. Trauma, however, was less traditional, which made it more difficult to grasp. These findings further expand on the first research question about the utility of intersectionality by being able to focus on traditional categories, as well as directing attention to newer ones, such as trauma.

Based on our analysis, we argued that understanding the affective patterns of the educators' work could disclose how to encounter differences. These matters are central concerning the context of diversity, as well as the question about the educators' position in it – the diversity, as seen through this position, challenges both the educators' personal, as well as institutional preconditions: The preconceived ideas of gender equality, for example, may differ from their students' material life situations, which becomes visible in the educators' expressions of emotions of worry, frustration and hope. Race appears as a cause for discomfort and silence, as the racism towards the students is, though obvious, against the operating principle of education. The educators' accounts on the emergence of trauma in the classroom are tinged with empathy, insecurity, and cautiousness due to feeling both professionally and management-wise ill-equipped for these encounters.

Our premise was that utilizing affect theory could produce new knowledge of these differences and educators' work. The findings discussed above provide answers to both empirical research questions: the educators' primary task is instruction, but simultaneously, they undergo emotional labor, often without sufficient support mechanisms. As argued in the article, the implementation of pedagogies that center marginalized experiences, such as anti-racist and trauma-informed pedagogy, has a dual purpose, as it may strengthen the capabilities and positive working culture for both students and educators (Brunzell et al. 2021, 102). The educators' sensitive and meaningful encounters with their students could be enriched by these kinds of pedagogies, should they be centered in all levels of education.

5.3 Article III: Religion within Diversity

In the third research article, I zoomed directly into the category of religion. The article was co-written with Terhi Utriainen and Marja Tiilikainen. Utriainen oversaw formulating the background for the "Finnish lens" on religion, through which the

educators reflected on religion. Tiilikainen ensured that the Finnish context for migration and migrants' religions, as well as the public sentiment in the country, was accurately presented in the article.

Although religion was the focal point of the article, it could not be considered in isolation from other social and cultural aspects of life. Our commitment to intersectionality also demanded that we acknowledge the points where religion meets other forms of difference that produce inequalities in the context of adult migrants' education – thus answering the theoretical research question, as well as both empirical ones. According to the educators' interviews, religion is hardly individually present in the classroom; rather, it emerges alongside more central matters – here, the Finnish way of life, and even more importantly, the labor market.

The reason for the religious perspective is that the category of religion has often been disregarded in studies with an intersectional focus (Appelros 2005; Castelli 2001). Drawing from the interview material, we built a theoretical argument that the educators' account of religion is constructed by a special "Finnish lens" on religion and their affective engagement with it. Entangled in the history of Lutheranism and secularity in Finnish society, the lens continues to be present as "unconscious Lutheranism," which to this day has a wide societal influence (Sinnemäki et al. 2019, 14). The lens concerns the educators' position in diversity and their work in which they commit to communicating it to their students; the conception, as well as culturalized aspects of Lutheranism – holidays and traditions – are displayed as contents of instruction.

The educators' Finnish lens is interpreted to represent a whiteness norm, which refers to the "patterns of behaviors that systematically benefit White people" (Chandler and Wiborg 2020, 714). It privileges such forms of religion that advance the interests of the assumed secular/Lutheran majority (Favell 2022, 6). For example, the public/private divide that the educators' speech reinforces may function as a means to exclude what is cast as different: the attempt to restrict religious expression to the private because it deviates from the ideal Finnish working citizenship could result in further marginalization, especially of Islam (e.g., Moosa-Mitha 2005, 377). It is also an example of the inverted perspective: how talking about "the other" is reflective of the self-understanding. This lens is simultaneously affective, as the educators commit to the relationship it posits to religion: private, personal, and low-key, consistent with the Finnish self-understanding (c.f., Ketola 2011), or "the Finnish way of dealing with religion" (TKU/A/26/8), as one of the educators worded it. I interpret this understanding of religion in continuity with the labor market logic of the structures of migrant integration and their covertly racializing mechanisms.

The undertone of speech on religion, especially Islam, is concerned, making religion another affective hotspot demanding attention. The quotation "tiptoeing around religion" in the title suggests caution directed towards navigating religion in

Finnish society. The concern is especially present in the pursuit to ensure that the Muslim students' religious practice (i.e., prayer times and holidays) is compatible with the Finnish working life (Karhunen 2024, 194).

The concerned speech reproduces the problem-oriented attitude towards Islam and Muslims (about religions as social problems, cf., Hjelm 2011). Although the educators do not attach problems to all Muslim students, the predominant discourse also neglects to recognize the intra-religious diversity of Muslims (Rissanen et al. 2020, 47). The article illustrates how the negotiations of religion take place within unequal power relations; migrants are responsible for proving their ability to adapt (c.f., Peltola, Marja 2014, about compensating for labor market participation with a respectable family life), whereas corresponding actions are not necessarily expected from the receiving society.

The educators' stance on religion is representative of their position; as illustrated in Article III, the caution, public/private division, and normativity regarding Islam highlight their ambivalent personal engagement with the religion of the "other," as well as the normative attitude they feel obliged to convey as representatives of the integration system. In a similar vein, Halonen (2024, 197) argues that in the assessment of religion-based asylum claims, authentic religious conversion also seems to demand conversion to a secular understanding of the societal position of religion. According to Haverinen (2025), the institutions that aim at migrants' integration not only guide those that being integrated into Finnish society but also legitimize and justify the existence of this social reality. These underlying principles may contribute to such norms of migrant integration, mainly the labor market-centered objectives, that have also been found to be racializing (Karimi 2024; Kurki 2019; Masoud et al. 2023).

Having reflected on the articles' contents and main arguments, I now move onto the findings of the whole research; in the following chapter, I answer the research questions and evaluate the research process in its entirety.

6 Findings and Evaluation of Research

6.1 Main Findings

I now present the main findings of this study and answer the research questions set in the introduction chapter. Firstly, I clarify that even though there were three research questions and three research articles, their relationship is not simply one-to-one. Instead of each article answering a specific question, all articles have their specific perspectives and as such contribute to all research questions. As I answer each research question in the following sub-sections, the answers are joint results from all three articles, with varying emphases.

6.1.1 Stereotypical Constructions

The notion of social constructedness of diversity is at the basic premise of this study. Focusing on the educators' perspective produced the first research question,

1. **How do the educators of adult migrants construct diversity emerging from their everyday interactions with their students?**

As stated in the formulation of methodology, to answer this question, it was necessary to examine how things were said, instead of merely acknowledging what was said – that is, observing the tones of voices, shifts in the atmosphere, breaks, and bodily expressions. The online medium weakened the intensity of expression, and the researcher–interviewee interaction was mainly straightforward conversation in which answers followed questions, with less back-and-forth interaction than an in-person situation would have probably generated. However, they took pauses for thinking, went back to memorable moments in the classroom, and accentuated their words with repetition, pace, and tone of voice.

In consequence, one answer to the first research question is that diversity is constructed affectively: many significant aspects that constituted diversity became perceptible in affective engagements. The affectively intense differences were gender, race, and trauma. Together with Islam as the main representative of religion in the interviews, the educators also construct diversity in rather stereotypical ways

of categorizing migrants: woman/mother, race, trauma, and religion, as Islam. These categorizations of migrants follow the pattern in which broader differences are reduced to stereotypical definers:

migrant → forced migrant
gender → woman/mother
religion → Islam

The emergence of these differences displays that the outlook on migrants in Finnish society is still rather limited. In a survey from over twenty years ago (Säävälä 2008), local Finns were asked to name a group of foreigners residing in Finland, resulting in the majority answering "Somalis." This stereotypical image was interpreted as a tendency to describe the Other through maximal visible difference – a prejudice that does not allow a more nuanced understanding of migrants as individuals (Ibid,128). Similarly, these differences seem to challenge some of the fundamental norms of Finnishness and integration; Lotta Haikkola (2012, 87) points out that complying with Finnish norms manifests in cultural values of ordinariness and decency. Thus, the diversity that has been studied appears not so (super)diverse.

According to Johanna Leinonen (2012), based on the "politics of visibility" – which in this study are particularly attached to the categories of refugee, woman, and Islam – the notion of an "immigrant" is both a racialized and class-based category. The gaze on migrants is predominantly white, and as Zeinab Karimi (2024, 55) argues, racialized subjects assumed as Muslims "need to provide explanations and information about Islam and the political and gendered values of Muslims."

The treatment of Islam as part of diversity also signifies that despite diversity being celebrated and promoted both by educators and the curricula, it is subordinate to the objectives of migrant integration, especially labor market participation. Thus, the educators' construction of diversity cannot be separated from the structures of integration within which they operate.

6.1.2 The Intricate Position In-between

The interconnectedness of the educators' construction of diversity and the structures they operate in leads to the second research question. This empirical question was:

2. How are the educators' positions reflected in their accounts of diversity?

Focusing on the educators' position was integral to the research gap for this dissertation, and following an inverted approach, studying their perceptions of diversity also led to studying them. Their accounts would typically include references to their obligations and/or personal opinions, problematizing, reaffirming, or merely stating their positioning. Their intricate position was comprised of different, occasionally conflicted roles of a broker, tutor, supporter and civil servant,

and so on. The tension between their experiences of diversity, the structurally desired diversity, and their personal ideal of diversity, became apparent when the educators expressed their disagreement with the restriction of prayer times, while they simultaneously felt obliged with the practice.

Another answer to the second research question about the educators' position lies in affectivity: their accounts of diversity were not straightforward, but involved hesitation, discomfort, and irritation, as well as laughter, excitement, and motivation, all of which are also present in their work in the classroom. They may have a certain core responsibility, like language or literacy education, but they encounter the students and their varying life conditions as feeling, bodily subjects who must react to whatever happens while they "nag about the ending of the partitive" (TKU/A/26/13). They feel obliged to their students and the objectives of integration – and are often caught in the middle.

One theoretical perspective on these positionalities is a "broker" or "mediator" role, which in the study of religion has been acknowledged by focusing on the mediators arising from religious minorities, especially Muslims: in Finland, Muslim parents have been considered as "cultural brokers" between school and families (Rissanen 2020). In a more historical perspective and a larger European context, in the 1970s, Muslim authorities who had been among the first to arrive, and with good knowledge of the host society, its language, and different networks, became cultural intermediaries between Muslims and non-Muslims (Sunier 2023). The actors of the receiving societies have also been studied from this perspective by Melanie Cooke (2023), who found that ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) teachers in Great Britain needed to act as a broker between the students, citizenship programs, and their personal values. The role of a broker does not, however, adequately capture this complex position; the educators had typically trained as Finnish language teachers or class teachers, meaning that their primary expertise was either on languages or learning. Working as an educator in the adult migrants' education promoting integration expands their professional requirements to managing religious diversity, encountering trauma, or helping navigate the labor market.

The empirical observation of the affective charge in the interviews accentuates their position in-between: with their students, they may come across experiences that they are unable to influence. Nevertheless, they need to stay present and resolve the situation to their best ability, to continue the instruction. In a similar Danish context, Lønsmann calls this kind of teachers' position "helpers and mediators, but not friends," meaning that they help and listen to their students when they can, but also set boundaries based on their professional role (Lønsmann 2023, 689–91).

In the educators' position, authority and street-level activity are present simultaneously, and privilege and non-privilege are co-constituted on their subjective level, processes which have been called to be scrutinized by intersectional

theorists (Nash 2008, 11). As Lønsmann's analysis (2023) demonstrates, educators can exercise their discretionary power based on situation: in the study, the educators could sometimes decide not to report if their students arrived late to the class – a practice that in Denmark may lead to the deduction of integration allowance – or more simply, communicate to their students when they disagree with the policies (Lønsmann 2023, 687–88). My aim is not to fade out the privilege and power from their position, but rather to complicate it; my findings represent that binaries, such as advantage/disadvantage, do not capture the educators' position, but instead, that it needs a nuanced analysis which considers their relationship to the varied structures of society.

6.1.3 Back to the Conceptions

Resulting in the operationalization of the concepts of intersectionality and superdiversity, I formulated a theoretical research question. The third research question was:

3. **What means do the concepts of intersectionality and superdiversity offer for analyzing the differences constructing the educators' accounts of diversity?**

My analysis exhibits that intersectionality would independently seem adequate to unpack the diversity constructed in the educators' accounts: of the two concepts, intersectionality seems adequate for framing the educators' positionality in the diversity. Superdiversity considers them respondents of the receiving society but takes little notice of the nuances this position has from the experienced perspective. Based on everyday interactions, the educators' perception of diversity among students is not focused on the grand categorizations of international migration, either. Empirically, the educators' accounts handle matters that can be grasped presently, such as gender, race, and religion – all of which are covered by intersectionality.

This is not to say that superdiversity would be a useless concept for research on diversity in this context. The value of the contextual understanding superdiversity provides is visible in the analysis of the educators' general discourse on diversity: as they describe who their students are, or their students' varying backgrounds, they employ categories, such as refugees, asylum seekers, and labor migrants. As I write in the first article, these migration-specific categories are primarily in the core of superdiversity; legal statuses are one of Vertovec's original seven factors that constitute superdiversity (Vertovec 2007).

Perhaps this is what Patricia Hill Collins ultimately means by stating that one's placement within intersecting systems of power affects their outlook on their own and others' positions (Collins 2015, 14). Superdiversity, too, calls for attention to

such positionings to achieve a more nuanced understanding of diversity in the diverse societies today: local responses to migration, both from residents and service providers, should be acknowledged (Vertovec 2007, 1049). Educators studied in this dissertation represent both local residents and service providers, yet their position is not sufficiently characterized by either of them.

Intersectionality and superdiversity as theoretical concepts conceal a risk of enforcing social categorizations and the resulting discrimination from them. Assuming intersectionality as a merely theoretical abstraction, without any attention to existing power dynamics, may result in its turning against the oppressed groups (Erel et al. 2008). The same goes for the migration-specific categories that superdiversity covers. As migration scholars Heaven Crawley and Dimitris Skleparis point out, "there is nothing 'natural' or 'fixed' about the legal and policy categories associated with international migration: rather, they are in a constant state of change, renegotiation and redefinition" (Crawley and Skleparis 2018, 52).

Furthermore, the categories of migration do not adequately capture the social realities of the people involved, and if they are allowed to dominate academic thinking, the dynamic processes of migration may be concealed, instead of revealed (ibid., 50). This has been found to hold up within the Finnish asylum system, where integration is also expected from asylum seekers, who are, in fact, excluded from integration services (Haverinen 2025, 111). While acknowledging these criticisms, I treat the analyzed differences as the educators' interpretations that are affected by their personal standing and professional commitments.

I have examined how the educators' speech on 'diversity' and its ideal forms are affected by the policy-centered conception of 'integration.' The educators were critical of the integration system and its idea of the "target of integration": in a quotation from the first article, an educator deems this idea "false" and continues to criticize integration training as "joyless," due to the monitoring by the labor market authorities (TKU/A/26/13). The insufficient time for achieving the aspired language proficiency of integration training was also a constant concern. Saukkonen (2020) has argued that "Finnish society must be ready to discuss its own shortcomings and problems, to be capable of realizing its noble principles."

The criticisms of integration discussed in Chapter 2 should also be extended to the concept of diversity, and more precisely, the question of who is considered diverse in the first place. Vertovec's goal with superdiversity was to problematize the conceptions of "diversity," which has in corporate language and institutional structures become a banal notion of recognizing and valuing social difference (Vertovec 2022, 205). Ahmed (2012) has targeted "organizational intersectionality" with similar criticism (see Chapter 4.1.1). My reluctance for superdiversity remains, as its gaze still seems to be directed to diversity that is "out there" instead of gazing at it from inside, as constitutive of it. Moreover, Vertovec's conception of both seems

to rely on pre-fixed categories, but in Article II, the category trauma does not traditionally belong to the scope of either concept. Instead, quoting Ahmed's book title, "differences that matter" (Ahmed 1998) become constructed situationally, in collaboration with structural conditions and individual/collective experience, as I argued in Article I.

6.2 Evaluation of the Research Process and Findings

In the introduction of this dissertation, I set a two-fold objective for this study:

1) to understand the forms and consequences of diversity as constructed by the professionals of these educational settings, and
2) to unpack the prevailing power relations in their accounts of diversity.

In this sub-section, I evaluate the whole of the research process, beginning with the research material and methodology.

6.2.1 Merits and Limitations of the (Prompt) Interview Material

I find the number of interviews sufficient for the purpose of this study, since most of them were detailed and extensive. A certain saturation was achieved with the material, as many themes started to repeat along the way, especially in the focus groups. In order to produce more versatile answers, it would have required larger adjustments in the offset of the interviews. Notwithstanding, a few more could have been useful to achieve more nuanced material. Another limitation of recruiting participants online, instead of getting to know them in the field, is that this method reaches mainly those who are already invested and active in their professional communities, whereas the less active, if reached at all, do not engage. Thus, the perspectives of the more reluctant educators are not represented in research, which may also distort the results (Engward et al. 2022, 3).

Especially the prompt interviews with individual educators were rich, both in quantity and quality; the sixteen two-hour interviews managed to cover a range of themes and atmospheres, shifting according to the charge of the current question. Answers to questions regarding the educator's educational and professional background flowed easily, but the discussion on religion, racism, and the relative strain of their work was very different.

Sociolinguist Dorte Lønsmann calls for educators to be studied from the perspective of "local emic identity categories and temporary interactional roles in addition to traditional macro-sociological identity categories such as gender and age"

(Lønsmann 2023, 482). In this study, the macro-sociological differences covered by intersectionality were admittedly central, but instead of the educators' personal identifications, I was interested in how they would surface in the specific interactional context, and as part of their administrative role. That is why they were allowed to arise by the interviewee's choice.

The methodological choices, particularly the prompt method, had a vast impact on the material and its emphases. As previously noted, differences that arose from the material were nevertheless repetitive and stereotypical. As products of Finnish authorities, the core curricula represent the national values, and the quotations used as prompts might have inspired such stereotypical categorizations in the interviews. Perhaps due to methodological nationalism (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2003) that was subconsciously present in my personal thinking, and thus transmitted, to both the prompt selection and the body of interview questions. In my arrangement of the interview themes, equality, gender, and family were placed together, which may have partly steered the focus towards migrant women as mothers. However, as a rule, the interviewees highlighted equality and gender relations in the family context as one of the main features of Finnish society, or examples of cultural differences, without specifically asking about them.

Primarily, I find the prompt method successful, as the prompts formed a surface on which the educators were able to reflect on their understanding and experiences. They brought both me and the interviewees "into the field," although their message was not necessarily received positively. All in all, the prompts worked as catalysts for thought, and between them, the more traditional thematic interview allowed for elaboration and more structured accounts; the grassroots workers tend to recognize the cracks between the ideals and everyday realities: often, the quotes would elicit criticism – either disagreement with the basic message, or examples of situations where their goals could not be met. For example, one educator commented on quote 2. about labor market participation: "Oh. Well, that's a terrible sentence" (TKU/A/26/13).

It was also typical for the educators to broaden the quotations with practical experiences or elaborate on their personal interpretations. The first quote concerning the educator as a supporter or guide, who sees the student's life experience and tacit knowledge as a resource, resulted in accounts, such as "Of course, the practice [--] might be different, but this is kind of the ideal." (TKU/A/26/12), or "Yes, that's probably how it is at its best." (TKU/A/26/14). The quote also led to verbalizing a hierarchy that was present in education:

> There are much life experience and quiet knowledge, but like, [how about] the opportunities to make use of it. So, you sort of end up in a role where you need

> to value our society in a certain way, perhaps higher, because you must push the student towards that, so that they can build a meaningful life here. (TKU/A/26/3)

These accounts arise from the educators' lived experiences, which constructed a specific kind of positional knowledge about the education for adult migrants' integration. In the next sub-section, I reflect on the nature of this kind of knowledge that this research managed to produce.

6.2.2 Positional Knowledge: Personal and Structure-bound

Focusing the study on educators as civil servants of migrant integration was integral to the research gap for this dissertation. Scrutinizing the findings of the study keeps bringing me back to the claim for all social positions to be considered intersectional; while I recognized this from the beginning, I still set out to examine how the educators *encountered* diversity that existed, if not outside, to a degree, regardless of them. Despite my clear focus on the educators' perspective, at some point, I realized that my scientific contribution would not be just *what* the educators see, meaning the intersectional categories constituting diversity, such as gender, race, trauma, or religion. I could bring more to the table by trying to answer *how*, *why*, and most specifically, *where they see it from*. Hence, a kind of experience-based approach is required to understand what it means to hold this position.

Focusing on the educators has its limitations. However, as Laura Nader has suggested in a paper originally published in 1972, different positions of power should be recognized in (anthropological) research, and by "studying up," ethnography can consider more privileged positions (Nader 2022). I sincerely believe that the educators' position deserves attention in research if we wish to understand the everyday effects of policies and structures of the Finnish migrant integration system, and even further, to improve them.

Having educators' perspective at the center of this study resulted in acknowledging the emotional engagement their work entailed. Regretfully, the affect perspective did not reach its full potential; in hindsight, I believe that affects could have been a key to further our understanding about diversity and educators' position in it. Accessing this kind of information would have required more traditional, in-place ethnography to observe the affects in the classroom and in-person interviews. In the COVID-determined material acquisition, a more affect-driven focus could have been achieved in the material, had this perspective been incorporated into the interviews prior to conducting them; by doing so, the interview questions would have included the affective aspect, and within the limits of mediated interaction, the bodily responses could have been set as the focus in the interview situation (cf., Kähäri and Edelman 2024).

The theoretical concepts had their specific roles in the analysis: whereas superdiversity rooted the analysis of diversity into the specific context of migrant integration, intersectionality highlighted diversity from the educators' experience-based accounts. Moreover, the parallel analysis with the concepts displayed the kind of diversity – and the differences constructing it – that was relevant for the educators in the classroom: micro-level differences, captured by intersectionality.

Intersectionality demands that researchers question their basis for authority and their use of terminologies and methodologies (Davis 2020, 124). My racialized position as a white, Finnish-born, and middle-class woman makes my interpretations subject to restrictions: I do not have any experience of international migration like the students of my interlocutors, nor working as their educator. My understanding of the daily life of migrant education is inadequate at best, especially with the ethnographic participation missing.

As a contribution to the study of religion, this dissertation raises an institutional context where religion as a social difference is not very central to everyday practices. This, however, does not entail that religion is irrelevant in the context. The study of religion should examine these seemingly secular spaces, where religions, their manifold expression, non-religion, and minority/majority dynamics are at play. This study highlights how on the surface, religion may not have much of an institutional bearing, but as its significance in students' lives is apparent, religion needs to be considered. This study also displays the need for addressing religion in relation to societal structures – in this case, those of labor market-directed integration. One educator verbalized the tension caused by the insistence of labor market logic and some students' experience of discrimination:

> Islam as a religion often causes that the students feel discriminated against, because they are not allowed to take prayer breaks. But we have also discussed that in Finland, the employer is allowed to determine the working time. And, well, you can pray at home in the afternoon when you're off work. (TKU/A/26/10)

The analysis of the educators' accounts on Islam highlights the intricacy of the educators' position, since there might be a mismatch between their personal opinions and the authoritative obligations. They appeal to their professional obligation to advance their labor market-compatible religious expression, while acknowledging discomfort in doing so. From the educators' position, an open discussion about some themes that are material in their students' lives becomes challenging. For example, in their reflection, sufficient acknowledgement of racism in the Finnish society was tricky, as the message in the classroom was "Here, everybody works with

everybody" (TKU/A/26/7). This statement may not answer the students' experiences either in working life, or as presented in several previous studies, society in general.

The policies of integration do not occur separately from the people implementing them, and as this dissertation displays, these people do so not only professionally, but also as culturally and emotionally engaged actors. Thus, authorities in different administrative branches need to be brought into the focus of the humanities, especially the study of culture. Civil servants' conceptions religion, as well as the repercussions of these conceptions, have now started to emerge in the study of religion (Halonen 2024; Blumgrund 2023). This focus, which I share with Halonen and Blumgrund, reorients the methodology of the discipline and extends its framings of questions to the less traditional fields of study.

7 Concluding Discussion

I have raised critical concerns regarding my research field, the Finnish education for adult migrants. Above all, the critical gaze is directed at the structures and policies underlying this education, instead of the individual professionals. As Halonen (2024, 202) aptly concludes, authorities cannot perform their work irrespective of legislation, guidelines, and directives. Other processes affect this work as well. In the Finnish education system, pedagogical autonomy has declined since the early 2000s, which may be due to economic recessions, as well as a more obliging and detailed national core curricula (Välijärvi 2017). Additionally, adult migrants' educators are more closely connected to, for example, labor authorities than schoolteachers.

It is worth noting that overall, the educators' sense of appreciation for their work outside their "own bubble" was not too high; however, this was not the case with their students or those who are familiar with the realities of the field. The working conditions and the assessment based on the students' language proficiency, participation in further training, or the labor market, were another story. Knowing their students' life situations, the educators criticized the use of such indicators as criteria for successful integration. Considering the everyday interactions, the educators found their work meaningful, though.

The organization of adult migrants' education makes these settings susceptible to change. Currently, the government has proposed that all education aimed at migrant integration would belong to FMEE, which would cut funding from liberal adult education.[26] The Trade Union of Education objects to the reform, arguing that it will decrease migrants' options for accessible and high-quality education, especially considering literacy training.[27] The government's goal is to shift the system's focus from the rights of the newcomer to emphasizing their responsibilities and personal accountability (Työ- ja elinkeinoministeriö 2024).

[26] Government proposition for the reform of migrant integration services (Työ- ja elinkeinoministeriö, https://tem.fi/hanke?tunnus=TEM099:00/2024)

[27] Cost cuts threaten the quality of integration education (Trade Union of Education, https://www.oaj.fi/ajankohtaista/uutiset-ja-tiedotteet/2025/rahoitusleikkaukset-uhkaavat-kotoutumiskoulutuksen-laatua/)

Such political changes affect the preconditions of the educators' everyday work; the reforms in the name of cost cuts may, among other things, result in a reduction of the educators' salaries and narrow students' rights and opportunities.

The field in which the educators operate is in constant flux, which underlines the vulnerable aspects of their position, while the right-wing government plans for even further cost cuts on integration services. Simultaneously, the educators interact in situations that are both personally and professionally challenging; many of the interviewees found their competence in trauma management lacking, while support from the employer was often missing.

As immigration to Finland is not likely to decrease in the future, the need for the contribution of professionals, such as educators, persists. They have an essential role in their students' lives in uncertain circumstances, possibly just one year or even a term at a time. After dedicating themselves to their students' learning, settlement and inclusion, there is much that the educators cannot influence; neither the social atmosphere and labor market outcomes, nor the students' personal circumstances are in their hands.

Education providers need to acknowledge the complex position their employees hold and provide necessary support for the issues they come across, whether they are trauma, religion, or infrastructure-related, ensuring that educators are not left alone. Reinforcing the migrant students' inclusion is also a crucial measure in these processes. Furthermore, the institutions that maintain the substantial structures of migrant integration, like EDUFI and ELY Centres, need to follow research and listen to the activists stressing the importance of making critical approaches, such as anti-racism and trauma-informative practices, crosscutting at all levels of administration, including obliging documents, such as the core curricula.

As a researcher, I have the final say in what and how things have been written, and for that, I take full responsibility. Although I have placed an emphasis on clarifying the viewpoint of this study, as well as writing about my interlocutors with respect and sensitivity, I stand corrected about any misinterpretations or otherwise flawed statements, or what I might have overlooked. Eventually, I cannot write myself, nor my interlocutors, out of the privilege we have. My contribution to both students and educators is allyship: I offer my dissertation, drawing on the experiences of the educators as street-level actors, to be used in the development of these educational contexts to become more inclusive and meaningful for the people involved.

I end this dissertation with an educator's characterization about the delicate position they hold. As harsh attitudes towards migrants and other groups positioned as "the other" prosper in times of uncertainty, let this quotation be a message to those in the deciding position: continue to secure the quality and stability of these

environments, so that these encounters between students and educators will continue in the future.

> In the end, our role is always kind of a minor one. […] And then, of course, acknowledging that sometimes our support has a huge effect. I mean, sometimes, when that support hits the mark, at the right time and in the right place, it can have a transformative effect. (TKU/A/26/14)

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The interviews are deposited in the Archives of the School of History, Culture and Arts Studies, SHCAS Archives at the University of Turku.
https://www.utu.fi/en/university/faculty-of-humanities/shcas-archives.

Individual interviews
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TKU/A/26/2, educator, integration training
TKU/A/26/3, educator, basic education for adults
TKU/A/26/4, educator, integration training
TKU/A/26/5, educator, basic education for adults
TKU/A/26/6, educator, basic education for adults
TKU/A/26/7, educator, liberal adult education
TKU/A/26/8, educator, basic education for adults
TKU/A/26/9, educator, basic education for adults
TKU/A/26/10, educator, other institution
TKU/A/26/11, educator, integration training
TKU/A/26/12, educator, integration training
TKU/A/26/13, educator, liberal adult education
TKU/A/26/14, educator, integration training
TKU/A/26/15, educator, integration training
TKU/A/26/16, educator, integration training

Focus group interviews
TKU/A/26/17, three participants, basic education for adults (2 persons) & integration training (1 person)
TKU/A/26/18, two participants, integration training (2 persons)

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Invitation to an individual interview

Dear educator of integration training!
I invite you to participate in my doctoral research at the Department of History, Culture and Arts Studies at the University of Turku. My aim is to participate in the teaching of integration training and/or equivalent education and interview the educators. In the study, I examine the ways educators understand and encounter diversity among migrant students. I focus on the educators working with migrants rather than the migrants themselves, and how cultural, religious, and other social differences are reflected in the everyday practices of education and the interactions that take place in the classroom.

The research interviews are in the form of individual and focus group interviews. If required by the COVID-19 situation, the interviews will be conducted remotely via Zoom. The interviewees are recommended to keep the camera on during the interview. The interviews will be recorded using the Zoom recording function and a backup recorder. Afterwards, I will transcribe the material into text files, remove names and similar identifying information, and destroy the recordings. After the completion of the study, the transcribed data will be stored without identifiers in the Archives of the School of History, Culture and Arts Studies.
You can participate in the interview without giving consent for the archiving of the material, in which case the researcher will take care of its security and storage. The contract for achieving the material will be concluded at the time of the interview.
The individual interview is a one-to-one conversation between the researcher and the respondent. To stimulate the conversation, I use prompts (e.g., text quotes), which allow the interviewee to freely share their thoughts.
Three to five (3-5) people participate in **the group interview** at a time. Participants will discuss themes, the main points of which will be sent by email before the interview.

During the discussion, I ask supplementary questions based on the main themes of the research questions. Please reserve two hours for the interview. It is possible to participate in either the individual or group interview, or both.
Please express your interest in participating in the study by contacting the researcher by email. I am also happy to answer any questions about the interviews.

Appendix 2. Invitation to focus group interview

Dear educator!
I would like to ask you to participate in my doctoral research at the Department of History, Culture and Arts at the University of Turku. In my research, I interview teachers of integration education and/or equivalent education. In the study, I examine the ways educators understand and encounter diversity among migrant students. I focus on the educators working with migrants rather than the migrants themselves, and how cultural, religious and other social differences are reflected in the everyday practices of education and the interactions that take place in the classroom.

The research interviews are in the form of individual and focus group interviews. If required by the COVID-19 situation, the interviews will be conducted remotely via Zoom. The interviewees are recommended to keep the camera on during the interview. The interviews will be recorded using the Zoom recording function and a backup recorder. Afterwards, I will transcribe the material into text files, remove names and similar identifying information, and destroy the recordings. After the completion of the study, the transcribed data will be stored without identifiers in the Archives of the School of History, Culture and Arts Studies.
You can participate in the interview without consenting to the archiving of the material, in which case the researcher will take care of its security and storage. A contract for archiving the material will be concluded at the beginning of the interview.
Two to five (2-5) people will participate in a **focus group interview** at a time. Participants will discuss the themes, the main points of which will be sent by email before the interview.

I ask supplementary questions during the interview, based on the main themes of the research questions. Please reserve two hours for the interview. It is possible to participate in either the individual or group interview, or both.
I am happy to answer any questions prior to the interview.

Appendix 3. Privacy notice

1. Name of the register	Interviews with educators of migrants' integration training courses on encountering diversity among students
2. Data Controller	Turun yliopisto/University of Turku
3. Contact Details	20014, Turun yliopisto
4. Data Controller	Data Protection Officer (DPO) of the University of Turku dpo@utu.fi +358 29 450 3009
5. Purpose of processing and grounds for processing personal data	The study includes interviews with educators' experiences and perceptions of encountering migrants from diverse backgrounds. Names and email addresses will be used to send out interview invitations and document their consent for participation and archiving. In the interviews, there are questions about the educators' experiences and perceptions of everyday interactions and discussions in the classroom, how they take differences between students into account, and about the role of religion and culture in the integration of migrants. Lawfulness of processing personal data based on Article 6 of GDPR: ☒ serves the public interest by promoting scientific research.
6. Processed personal data categories	The following data will be recorded: name, email, gender, age group, country of origin (Finland/other), education, years of teaching experience.
7. Receivers of data	The data will not be transferred or disclosed outside the research team. Data is available to the doctoral researcher and supervisors during the research process.
8. Transfer of data to third countries	The University of Turku will not transfer personal data outside the EU or EEA.

9. Retention period	Text files are written from the interview recordings, and the recordings are destroyed once the research has been completed. Simultaneously, the research material is pseudonymized, and direct identifiers are removed. The transcribed interview data will be stored in the University of Turku's School of History, Culture and Arts Research Archive, where it is available in accordance with the terms and conditions for the purposes of research, teaching, museum activities, and on a case-by-case basis and according to discretion, for other purposes. The research material is permanently stored in the SHCAS archive.
10. Rights of the data subject	The research does not restrict the rights of the data subject based on Section 31 of the Data Protection Act. The data subject has the right to access their personal data retained by the data controller, the right to the rectification or erasure of data, and the right to restrict and object to the processing of data. The right to the erasure of data does not usually apply to personal data in scientific or historical research when the right of erasure is likely to prevent or greatly complicate the processing. The exercise of the right to erasure will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. The data subject has the right to lodge a complaint with the supervisory authority responsible for the handling of personal data processing.
11. Source of personal data	For contacting purposes, email addresses or the forwarding of the interview invitation are requested from the education providers. Other data will be collected directly from the interview participants.
12. Information about automatic decision-making, inc. profiling	The data will not be used for automated decision-making or profiling.

Appendix 4. Sign-up survey for interviews

1. **I have read and accept the privacy notice of the study.**

Yes
No

2. **I teach adult migrants in**

Labor market-based integration training
Basic education for adult migrants
Liberal adult education
Other institution

3. **I am interested in participating in**

Individual interview
Focus group interview
Both

4. **Contact details**

First name
Last Name
E-mail

5. **If you already know suitable dates for the interview, you can suggest them below.**

Appendix 5. Zoom meeting invitation

Welcome to the interview for my dissertation! The interview will be conducted via Zoom. This message contains information about the interview process, instructions for using Zoom, and a link to the Zoom event.

The course of the interview

Please read the attached privacy notice in advance. At the beginning of the interview, we will go through the procedures, the privacy notice, and the consent to participate in the study, the recording of the interview, and the storage of the transcribed material in the University of Turku's School of History, Culture and Arts Research Archive. After this, we will proceed with the actual interview topics.

The interview may be interrupted at any stage, and if desired, sensitive passages may also be requested to be removed from the transcribed text. The interviewee has the right to comment on and question the interview topics and questions during the interview. In addition, the interviewee may supplement their answers later, for example, by email.

Instructions for Zoom meeting participants

Zoom will automatically install/open on your computer when you click on the event participation link. If the installation fails or you do not want to install the program, you can also participate in the event via the Google Chrome web browser at:
http://zoom.us/ -> Join a Meeting -> enter the ID number -> Join from your browser.

When participating on a mobile device, you will need the Zoom app, which you can download from the Apple App Store or Google Play. More detailed instructions are available on the university website:
https://www.utu.fi/fi/etayhteydet

Appendix 6. Questions for the individual interviews

1) Warm-up
Work as an educator
Tell me about yourself:
- Education
- How long have you been in these/similar jobs
- How did you get here?
- form of employment (temporary, steady, etc.)

Students
- Describe what you do for a living
- Who are your students?
- What do you know about them beforehand?
- How are the following reflected in your work:
    - country of origin & cause for immigration
    - age & education
    - family background & home circumstances
    - religion & culture
- Do students bring these up? In what kinds of situations? How do you take students' backgrounds into account when teaching? (planning, classroom)
- previous education (including religious)
→ How are these issues reflected in the classroom?

2) Personal role(s)
"The educator is a supporter and guide who sees students' life experience and tacit knowledge as a resource." (EDUFI 2017a, 19)

- What is your educator's identity like? → Is there something you don't share about yourself?
→ How do you acknowledge your role in the classroom?
- The goal of your work?
- The meaning of your work → for yourself, value in society

3) Labor market position
"Students are helped to obtain a realistic, up-to-date picture of working life and their own opportunities in it. It is important for students to understand the importance of work in their own lives and their responsibilities as members of their community and society." (EDUFI 2017b, 24)

- What do you think this objective highlights?
- What do you think it focuses on? Is there anything else you think is important?
- key aspects of education and training? → Why them?
- Is there anything that the system is missing? What should be developed?
- Most important thing to learn about Finnish society, what is not so important?
- Is there something important that is being overlooked?
- How do you think the Finnish integration system works? → What works/what doesn't? For whom does it work/not work?
- What is the role of integration training in the overall system? What about your own role?
- What do you think integration aims to achieve? → employment, inclusion, language skills?

4) In/exclusion

"to support the student to act constructively as a member of a culturally diverse community and fight racism against all ethnic groups." (EDUFI 2017b, 68)

- What thoughts does the quote bring about? What does it mean in practice?
- Are there language or gender barriers in the classroom? How do you deal with them (group divisions, etc.)?
- Which situations in the classroom are the most challenging?
- What topics generate discussion/controversy?
- Is there anything you can't/won't talk about?
- anti-racism in the OPS → what ideas? How to implement?
- In what ways does racism come up in the classroom? → Who brings it up?
- Is enough attention paid to it? Your own role in fighting racism?

5) Cultural diversity

"Instruction should aim to identify and deal with such invisible cultural differences that may cause discord or conflicts when encountered." (FNBE 2012, 38)

- Are there cultural differences that cause discord? What are they like? What might they be?
- Are there recurring themes related to culture that students ask questions about / take a stand on?
- In the same context, the curriculum (2012) also states: "setting boundaries for cultural traits that are not acceptable in Finland" → what could these be? Have you dealt with them? What does it mean to set a limit?
- Are prayer or holidays visible? → Are there facilities for prayer and washing?
- What about Finnish/Christian holidays → how are they discussed?
- Do you talk about religion in class? Why/why not?
- Do students talk about it? → What kind of situations, examples?
- Do students discuss religion with each other?
- How is Finnish religiosity reflected in the classroom? → Are there any questions?

Equality, gender, and family

- Promoting gender equality is an important objective of integration
- What does it mean in migrants' education? How does equality come up in the classroom?
- high profile media cases (sexual offenses in Oulu, stabbing in Turku, youth crime in Helsinki) → have they been discussed in class/affected students' lives?

Appendix 7. Questions for the focus groups

1) Introductory round: teacher background

1a) Who are you? Where are you from?

1b) What kind of education do you teach in/what kind of group?

2) Culture of the school/region

2a) How is diversity among students taken into account in your school? Curriculum, events, meals, facilities, actors, regional policies & guidelines

2b) How is cultural diversity discussed in the classroom or between teachers?

3) Promoting equality and equity

3a) How do schools promote equality and equity?

3b) What kinds of inequalities do you witness? How are they addressed?

4) The pandemic

4a) Who has been particularly affected? What is highlighted in the discussions? Teachers' and students' motivation?

4b) Health education, disinformation, new distinctions?

5) Development and current issues

5a) How would you develop migrant education?

5b) What is the most recent/current social issue you have addressed with your group?

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