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Article

Was Linnaeus a racist? Should his monuments be razed? Confronting controversial issues in Swedish history classrooms

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Highlights:
- Explores a historical and civic controversy surrounding Linnaeus's place in the history of scientific racism through a large-scale classroom intervention in upper secondary history education.
- Students show an improved capacity for historical contextualisation.
- Students show a better understanding of the ways in which controversial historiographies implicate present and future.
- Outcomes suggest that this intervention can help foster a multiperspectival understanding concerning legacies of scientific racism among students.

Purpose: Prompted by the public debate during the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020, which challenged Linnaeus's legacy, this paper examines how Swedish students make sense of Carl Linnaeus's classification of humans and his alleged role in the history of scientific racism. The purpose is to explore how educational interventions can foster historical understanding and multiperspectival engagement with contested historical figures and controversial issues.

Design/methodology/approach: The study is organised around a classroom intervention across 11 classrooms. Using qualitative pre- and post-tests, we analysed how students' knowledge and attitudes developed through activities designed to cultivate a historiographic gaze on Linnaeus's work and legacy.

Findings: The intervention enhanced students' knowledge of natural classification and scientific racism, as well as their capacity for historical contextualization. More students came to view Linnaeus as a racist, though this shift did not increase support for removing his monuments.

Practical implications: Findings demonstrate that classroom activities addressing contested historical legacies can foster critical historical thinking without polarising student attitudes, offering perspectives on how we may address sensitive or controversial issues in history education.

Keywords: History education, controversial issues, multiperspectivity, Carl Linnaeus (1707–1778), scientific racism

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Linnaeus monuments: A contemporary controversy

The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement began in Sweden as a demonstration of solidarity with the American protests, convened on June 2, 2020, in front of the US embassy in Stockholm. Yet less than a week later, the Swedish BLM activists had begun to find their own, distinctly Swedish voice, taking aim at the renowned naturalist Carl Linnaeus (1707–1778, known as Carl von Linné after ennoblement), the celebrated inventor of the binomial system of nomenclature.

On June 8, 2020, activists published an online petition calling for the removal of an unspecified "Linnaeus statue," which most commentators interpreted as referring to the large monument near the Royal Library in Stockholm, inaugurated in 1885. Denouncing Linnaeus for his contributions to "race science" and the Swedish education system for whitewashing his legacy, the petition called upon schools to tell "everything" about him while framing an acknowledgement of his role in the historical rise and development of scientific racism as key to the resolution of contemporary injustices. Linnaeus's race science, the petition went on to say, "permeates the society we live in" and underpins "the racism and oppression everyone with a non-Swedish ancestry has been and is being exposed to" (Swedish television, 2020).

The petition attracted some 1,800 signatories and sparked intense debate in Sweden, where Linnaeus has long been revered as a national hero and "Flower King," and where there is a large number of Linnaeus monuments, in addition to streets, parks, districts, and even a state university named after him. Hübinette et al. (2022) observed that while activists denounced the naturalist through social media and other available channels, traditional media instead turned to established commentators who quickly came to his defence. Meanwhile, far-right militants gathered around the Linnaeus monuments in Stockholm and Växjö as rumours circulated about an imminent attack. The attack never materialised, though a smaller Linnaeus statue at Lund University was sprayed with the letters "BLM" (Philipson, 2020), all while students at Linnaeus University appealed to the university management for a name change (Swedish Radio, 2020). Across the Atlantic, in St Peter, Minnesota, students similarly petitioned the directors of Gustavus Adolphus College to rename the Linnaeus Arboretum (Broberg, 2020).

Scholars have described the heated debate over the Linnaeus monuments as a "memory war" (Hübinette et al., 2022). In a pattern reminiscent of the debates over Thomas Jefferson and his place in American historiography (Gordon-Reed, 2020), conflicts in the present soon became conflicts over the past. One camp denounced Linnaeus as a racist "ideologue" and blamed him for the rise of modern racism, including twentieth-century race biology. The other camp persisted in its reverence for the "Flower King," portraying Linnaeus as an exemplar of disinterested science and a pride of the nation. Both sides claimed the historical record to prove their case, accusing their opponents of misunderstanding and misrepresenting the past. These events not only revealed deep tensions in Sweden's collective memory but also raised questions about how historical figures like Linnaeus are taught and understood in contemporary social studies and history education. This study explores these questions by examining how secondary school students may engage with Linnaeus's legacy and its connections to the history of scientific racism.

1.2 Linnaeus's classification of humans: A historical and civic problem

In Sweden, which prides itself as a leader in science and innovation, Linnaeus has long been hailed as one of, if not *the* greatest, Swedish scientist of all time. Comparable in many respects to the Darwin cult in the UK (Hellström, 2011; Secord, 2009), the Swedish cult of Linnaeus is a distinctly modern phenomenon, intimately associated with the rise of Sweden as a secular, democratic nation and with the need to replace or at least complement the Warrior Kings and Vikings mythologised in the pre-democratic era with a new set of national heroes. Soon after Sweden introduced universal suffrage, the old botanical garden in Uppsala was restored in 1923 as the "Linnaeus Garden". The adjacent building, which once served as Linnaeus's professorial villa, reopened its doors as the "Linnaeus Museum" in 1937, while Linnaeus's country home in Hammarby outside Uppsala was heritage-listed in 1935 and made into another museum. The list of monuments and other public memorials to Linnaeus is too long to be reiterated here.

Since the late twentieth century, however, Linnaeus's work and legacy have increasingly been the subject of critical, historical studies concerned with his place in the history of scientific racism. At the root of the problem is Linnaeus's purportedly natural classification of humans, which not only placed humans into the animal kingdom – a revolution in itself – but also subdivided humanity into four groups or "varieties." In his vastly influential classification primer, known as the *Systema Naturæ* ("Natural System") and first published in 1735, Linnaeus thus placed Man (*Homo*) into the order of "human-shaped" animals (*Antropomorpha*), which in turn belonged to the class of four-footed animals (*Quadrupedia*). In noting that "Man varies" (*Homo variat*), Linnaeus went on to list four "varieties" of the human genus defined by a combination of geographical distribution and physical appearance as "whitish European" (*Europæus albesc[ens].*), "reddish American" (*Americanus rubesc[ens].*), "dark Asian" (*Asiaticus fuscus*, cf. the English term "dusk"), and "blackish African" (*Africanus nigr[iculus].*). Linnaeus reworked and elaborated this taxonomy of human "varieties" throughout his career: Europeans were not always on top, as (Native) Americans occasionally assumed that position, but (Black) Africans were always at the bottom, occupying the place between Asians and human "monstrosities" in the later and more complex editions of his *System*. For the most complete edition of *Systema Naturæ*, from 1758, Linnaeus not only coined the scientific term we still use for the human species, "Homo sapiens," but he also provided short characteristics of each human "variety." Describing Europeans as "sanguine," "muscular," "talkative," "inventive," and governed by rules (*ritibus*), he characterised Africans as "phlegmatic," "weak," "lazy," "negligent," and governed by caprice (*arbitrio*; Linnaeus, 1735, 1758; Müller-Wille, 2014, 2015).

The nature and legacy of Linnaeus's classification of humans have been a matter of historical debate for decades. Since Broberg (1975) first opened the discussion, Linnaeus has become something of an inescapable figure in any historical account of scientific racism, even as scholars differ on the role they attribute to him. Hannaford (1996) and Fredrickson (2002) stressed Linnaeus's role in dismantling the Christian understanding of humanity as God's children and in laying the foundations for a secularised view of human taxonomy, which allowed for multiple races and multiple origins. Eze (1997) instead emphasised how Linnaeus's supposedly natural hierarchy of human kinds helped justify and naturalise existing social hierarchies. Thus, whereas scholars agree that Linnaeus played an important role in the emergence of modern notions of human biological difference, the nature of that role is disputed. The discussions are further complicated by

the projection of current categories onto the past and the imprecise use of key terms, notably the recurrent (but incorrect) claim that Linnaeus divided humankind into four “races” (a term he is not known to have ever used).

While historians of race and racism disagree, a wider gap has emerged between the scholarly community and society at large, where Linnaeus is still generally celebrated as a scientific hero and “Flower King.” Thus, even as Linnaeus figures in most comprehensive accounts of the rise of scientific racism, Linnaeus University could still open its doors under that name in 2010. This disjuncture is comparable, perhaps, to the disjunctures between celebratory and critical historical accounts concerned with the legacies of David Hume (Asher, 2022a, 2022b), Immanuel Kant (Lu-Adler, 2023), and Voltaire (Giovannetti-Singh, 2022).

In 2020, perhaps for the first time, critical scholarship on the history of scientific racism was brought into direct conversation with celebratory, public, and popular historical narratives about Linnaeus. In the heated and polarised debate that ensued – amplified through social media and digital platforms – it became evident that participants were divided not only by their present concerns but also by the pasts they chose to inhabit. This situation presents historians and educators with a pedagogical challenge. How can we respond to the activists’ call for schools to reveal “everything” about Linnaeus, without shying away from the difficult aspects of the story and without becoming partisans for one side or the other in the present debate?

The reported study is situated at the intersection of history education and civic education, as the challenge described above is central to current debates about history and citizenship education. The controversy over Linnaeus was, as stated, not only a dispute about what happened in the past, but also a contemporary civic conflict over public memory, racism, national identity, and the credibility of competing claims circulating in digital media. Such controversies increasingly unfold online, where historical claims are compressed into slogans, petitions, social media posts, and news items, and where citizens are expected to make judgments about complex matters without always having access to disciplinary expertise. In this sense, the Linnaeus controversy exemplifies a broader educational challenge: students need to learn not only about history, but also how to evaluate historically charged claims as they encounter them in contemporary information environments. Wineburg (2018) argues that the abundance of information available online does not reduce the need for historical education; rather, it makes historical thinking more important, since students must learn how to ask who is making a claim, what evidence is being used, what context is missing, and how different accounts of the past serve different purposes in the present. Similarly, Caulfield and Wineburg (2023) emphasise that navigating the contemporary web requires verification practices that differ from traditional close reading: readers must learn to move across sources, check claims laterally, and make informed judgements about credibility before investing trust in online information. These arguments are particularly relevant when public controversies draw on historical evidence, as in the debate over Linnaeus, scientific racism, and monuments.

Against this backdrop, the present article contributes to the broader field of social science and citizenship education by examining how history classrooms can become spaces in which students learn to engage with controversial historical and public issues in an informed, evidence-sensitive, and multiperspectival manner. The study addresses a difficult set of questions that has received limited empirical attention in classroom-based research: how students make sense of contested historical figures implicated in histories of racism; how they distinguish between understanding

the past and judging it from the present; and how teaching can support students in moving beyond polarised online framings without requiring them to adopt a predetermined political position.

The educational problem is therefore not only whether students come to regard Linnaeus as racist or whether they support removing monuments, but rather whether they develop more informed, critical and constructive ways of reasoning about contested legacies. In contrast to previous history education studies approaching memorials as "sites of memory" (see, e.g., Potapenko, 2010; Reich, 2020) or attending to "history wars" in divided societies and settler-colonial contexts (see, e.g., Harcourt, 2020; McCully et al, 2021; Miles, 2021), this particular historical and contemporary controversy is not embedded in a history of civil war, colonialism, or settler colonialism. In other words, it lacks the clear beneficiary–victim tensions that characterise post-conflict societies and colonial national contexts marked by deep internal divisions or recent histories of war and oppression. Although the case of Linnaeus could be analysed through the lens of historical justice – which may encompass questions of transitional justice, reconciliation and restitutions, narrativity and identity –, this study therefore approaches the controversy as a potentially controversial "history war", i.e. a struggle over historical narratives and the legacies of scientific racism (cf. Hübinette, 2022).

1.3 Aims and scope of the study

In this design study, we examined secondary school students' knowledge and perceptions about Carl Linnaeus's classification system and his role in the history of scientific racism *before and after a classroom intervention* designed to help cultivate a critical, multi-perspectival, historiographic gaze upon Linnaeus's work and legacy. Against this backdrop, we posed the following research questions:

1) What knowledge and perceptions do secondary school students hold about Carl Linnaeus's classification of humans and his role in the history of scientific racism?
2) How does a classroom intervention designed to foster digital critical thinking and a historiographic gaze affect students' understandings of Linnaeus and his legacy?

The aim of the intervention was not to resolve the political and/or historical problems at stake in the heated online debate but rather to develop an educational strategy that can help teachers move beyond the controversy to stimulate learning about the contentious histories and legacies of scientific racism. Any lessons learnt in the Swedish classrooms can then, in turn, be made to inform an international discussion on how teachers can address polarising histories in general and the legacy of racism in particular.

2 THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Scholars of history education have long argued that multiperspectivity can help students achieve a more nuanced understanding of controversial historical issues (see, e.g., Ahonen, 2012; Gross & Terra, 2019; Nolgård, 2023; Nygren et al., 2017; Parkes, 2011; Stradling, 2003; von Borries, 2001). Multiperspectivity has been described as a cognitive tool that enables us to identify, reconstruct, and coordinate different perspectives relevant to understanding a complex topic or problem. Essentially, multiperspectivity is about developing a more reflective stance; it involves an effort to understand different points of view rather than dismissing or distorting interpretations and opinions, even when one feels they are incorrect (see, e.g., Bermudez, 2015). Multiperspectivity is not only about understanding different perspectives but also about being able to critically assess

different views and interpretations against the available evidence (Low-Beer, 1997). In the increasingly connected world in which young people live a large portion of their lives, and where strong, uncompromising beliefs are often pitted directly against each other, multiperspectivity can potentially support a critical yet constructive approach to other people's beliefs and experiences. In light of this potential, some researchers have claimed that multiperspectivity in education can help us confront and mitigate the negative impact of nationalism, militarism, misogyny, stereotypes, and conflicts (Abbey & Wansink, 2022; Stradling, 2003). Multiperspectivity also has an important civic dimension. Controversial historical issues are rarely confined to the history classroom; they become part of public debate, collective memory, identity formation, and democratic disagreement. When students encounter such issues, they are asked to do more than recall historical facts. They must weigh evidence, recognise the situatedness of interpretations, understand why different groups attach different meanings to the past, and consider the implications of historical claims for contemporary civic life. This makes multiperspectivity relevant not only as a disciplinary aim in history education, but also as a civic practice: a way of preparing students to participate in public discussions where moral, political, and historical claims intersect.

This civic dimension becomes especially significant in digital environments. Online, historically charged claims often circulate without clear contextualisation. A petition, a social media post, a news item, or a short video may present a strong interpretation of the past while obscuring the evidential base on which that interpretation rests. Caulfield and Wineburg (2023) argue that contemporary readers must learn to verify before they trust: rather than treating a web page or post as a self-contained source, they need to investigate who is behind the claim, what other sources say, and whether the claim is supported by credible evidence. This approach is closely related to research on civic online reasoning and especially lateral reading, where expert fact-checkers often leave the original source in order to evaluate it through other sources before drawing conclusions (Wineburg & McGrew, 2019).

For history education, this insight has two implications. First, students need disciplinary tools for working with historical evidence, including sourcing, contextualisation, and corroboration. Second, they need digital verification strategies for assessing how historical claims are framed, circulated, and used in contemporary public debate. Wineburg (2018) argues that the point of learning history in the age of the smartphone is not to memorise what can be searched online, but to develop the habits of mind needed to judge information, recognise context, and resist misleading certainty. Recent research in civics education similarly shows that multiperspectivity in classroom discussions cannot be taken for granted, but needs to be supported through careful instructional design. Efimova and Nygren (2026) found that preparatory reading and structured discussion of a controversial issue helped students develop more academic arguments and reduced affective polarisation. The present study links to this by examining how students engage with a controversial historical issue that is simultaneously a matter of historical interpretation, public memory, civic judgement, and online information literacy.

Acknowledging how previous research has underscored disciplinary concepts such as historical perspective-taking, contextualization, and critical thinking as key features of multiperspectivity, we argue that a multiperspectival approach must also consider what Parkes (2011) and Nygren et al. (2017) have described as the "historiographic gaze." A historiographic gaze includes an understanding that history is a reconstruction of the past that relies on interpretations informed by specific concerns, contexts, and epistemologies. From this point of view, the objective of

multiperspectivity is to further student awareness of the historically-specific character of narratives about the past, i.e. to become aware of the subjectivity and selectivity in the narratives of the past: that history is not transparent truth but rather representations or (re)constructions of the past shaped by cultural, political and disciplinary forces. This includes the awareness of how we, using the past, make meaning of ourselves and others within a specific social or cultural context and could thus also be phrased as becoming aware of *history culture,* i.e., how different groups can choose to embrace certain narratives and thrust aside others and how this implicates us (cf. Rüsen, 2007; Thorp, 2016). Acquiring a historiographic gaze on the legacy of Linnaeus thus means that students become aware of how they and others are implicated by this specific past, the collective memories and the national history culture, as well as the academic controversy surrounding Linnaeus and his legacy (cf. Assmann, 2010; Seixas, 2000). Key here is to, as Peter Seixas elaborated in adjacent works on collective memory, to move from uncritical commemoration of Linnaeus and to encourage plural and multiple perspectives in the classroom (cf. Seixas, 2000). As one of us has argued elsewhere, a crucial aspect of cultivating such a spatial and temporal dimension of multiperspectivity is to use our concerns and questions as a point of departure in lesson design (Nolgård, 2023). In light of Miles and Gibson's (2022) imperative to acknowledge presentism as a resource in confronting the legacies of racism, we submit that cultivating a historiographic gaze on the legacies of racism will help students develop not only a more sophisticated and historical thinking about the past but also a greater awareness of how and in what ways our histories about the past implicate the present (cf. e.g. Miles, 2024; Nolgård, 2023; Rothberg, 2019).

3 STUDY DESIGN

This explorative, design-based study was directed at Swedish upper secondary school students and conducted with the explicit goal of cultivating a digital, critical, historiographic gaze on the work and legacy of Carl Linnaeus. A common denominator of design-based approaches is their reliance on the benefits of drawing upon teacher experience and involving teachers in lesson design (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011; Anderson & Shattuck, 2012; Edelson, 2002). This was also the case in the study at hand, where lesson units and learning activities were designed in close collaboration with highly skilled and experienced upper secondary history teachers. Two teachers, authors three and four, each with more than twenty years of teaching experience, were involved in an iterative process that included a small-scale pilot study in their own classrooms and revision work prior to the more substantial intervention reported in this paper. The two teachers also informed other participating teachers on how to implement the lesson units in their respective classrooms. The final intervention was conducted by eleven upper secondary school teachers across eleven student groups from five publicly run upper secondary schools, comprising a total of 250 students. The students were all between 16 and 18 years old at the time of data collection; they came from diverse family backgrounds and studied history as part of their preparatory or vocational programmes, meaning that some studied history at a more advanced level than others. While all students participated in the learning activities as part of their history classes, participation in the research project was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all participants included in the study. Out of the 250 students who participated in the teaching, 198 gave their informed consent to participate in the research project. In line with the ethical guidelines of the Swedish Research Council (*Vetenskapsrådet*), we did not collect any data that could be used to identify respondents. Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Swedish Ethical Review Authority.

Our study aligns with the mainstream design-based research tradition in that: a) the study was developed through cooperation between teachers and researchers; b) design principles were derived from previously conducted studies; c) new approaches to teaching and learning were developed and tried with the explicit aim of educational improvement; and d) theoretical discussions were evaluated and informed by experience and insights gained through classroom interventions (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011; Anderson & Shattuck, 2012; Cobb et al., 2003; Kelly, 2004). Additionally, we agreed on three underpinning design principles drawing from the field of history education:

1) to provide participating students with subject-specific disciplinary knowledge about the historical problem at hand (Barton & Ho, 2022; Miles, 2021; Nolgård, 2023);
2) to train participating students in disciplinary strategies, including corroboration (Wineburg, 1991, 1998; Wineburg & McGrew, 2019);
3) to make space for critical inquiry and multiple perspectives on the work and legacy of Carl Linnaeus (Abbey & Wansink, 2022; Nygren et al., 2017; Paricio, 2021; Parkes, 2011; Seixas, 2000; Stradling, 2003; Wansink et al., 2023).

The intervention consisted of three one-hour classes (3 x 60 minutes) and included the activities listed in Table 1[1].

Table 1. Lesson activities

Lesson activity	
1	Pre-test
2	The contemporary debate about Linnaeus and historical monuments in public history publications, news and social media.
3	Introducing students to lateral reading strategies.
4	Scrutinising posts about Linnaeus and historical monuments on Twitter/X.
5	Lateral reading activities to corroborate and consider the trustworthiness of other sources claiming Linnaeus to be racist. This search was then followed by a teacher-led class discussion.
6	Reading excerpts from two original works of Linnaeus, *Systema Naturae* (1735, 1758) and *Critica Botanica* (1737), in order to consider Linnaeus's views on humans and human nature. The students then deliberated arguments for and against the claim that Linnaeus was racist (in groups and in class).
7	Post-test

The three lessons were structured as a movement from contemporary controversy, through online verification, to historical contextualisation and deliberation. In the first phase, students were introduced to the public controversy over Linnaeus and his monuments. The teacher presented the debate as a case of contested public memory rather than as a question with an immediately given answer. Students encountered contemporary claims about Linnaeus in public history publications, news reporting, and social media, including claims that Linnaeus should be understood as a key figure in the history of scientific racism and claims that such interpretations distort his historical significance.

[1] For more details about the different activities, please see additional data for teaching materials such as a teacher's guide and source exercises.

In the second phase, students worked with digital verification strategies. They were introduced to lateral reading as a strategy for evaluating online claims: instead of remaining within a single post or web page, they were encouraged to leave the source, search for other accounts, identify who stood behind different claims, and compare how Linnaeus was represented across different genres and institutions. The purpose was not to train generic source criticism in isolation, but to help students see how historical claims are made credible, contested, amplified, or simplified in digital environments. Students then discussed how social media posts and online texts framed Linnaeus, racism, and monuments, and what kinds of evidence were used or omitted.

In the third phase, students turned to historical sources and scholarly contextualisation. They read translated excerpts from Linnaeus's *Systema Naturae* and *Critica Botanica*, focusing on how Linnaeus classified humans, what terms he used, and how his descriptions combined geography, physical appearance, temperament, and value-laden characterisations. Students were asked to deliberate arguments for and against describing Linnaeus as racist, while distinguishing between Linnaeus's eighteenth-century intellectual context, later histories of scientific racism and race biology, and present-day definitions of racism. Finally, students discussed the monument question as a problem of public memory: whether monuments honour, teach, preserve, conceal, or legitimise particular interpretations of the past.

The design thus combined three forms of reasoning: digital verification of contemporary claims, historical contextualisation of primary sources, and civic deliberation about public memory. This combination was intended to support students in moving beyond binary positions - such as defending Linnaeus as a national hero or denouncing him as a singular origin of modern racism - and toward more evidence-sensitive judgements about a difficult historical legacy.

Rather than focusing on the intricacies of these lessons and discussing all aspects of the learning outcomes of this intervention, in the following, we will focus our discussions through the lens of two questions posed in both the pre- and post-test, namely, *Was Linnaeus a racist?* and *Should monuments of individuals who held racist views be removed?* In so doing, we hope to contribute to the discussion on how to navigate polarised, controversial issues in history education more generally and cultivate a historiographical gaze on the legacies of racism in particular.

The analysis of the collected data, comprising 198 pre- and post-tests, was conducted in an abductive manner in three steps, as outlined in Table 2.

Table 2. Data analysis, step-by-step

Step	Aim and strategies
1)	Identifying initial themes in students' views on the legacy of Linnaeus and historical monuments. The codes were developed in an iterative and inductive process drawing from the notion of *initial coding* (Charmaz, 2014), where close attention was paid to the students' answers in order to capture the richness of perspectives regarding the students' views on Linnaeus and historical monuments.
2)	Collating codes into themes and developing a coding scheme[2]. At this stage, we reviewed the initial themes and developed a coding scheme which allowed us to better capture the differences and similarities in the student answers.
3)	Coding the student answers deductively in order to enable quantification and highlight tendencies. To strengthen validity and reliability, the first and second authors conducted an intercoder reliability test on a small random sample. The agreement on the level of coding was about 90%.

[2] See Appendix A for coding scheme.

Step	Aim and strategies
	During the following discussions, it became evident that we needed to separate relativisations from other kinds of reservations in regard to Q2 in the pre- and post-test, hence adding a new code and revisiting the data.
4)	Analysing each student's answer hermeneutically. At this stage, every student's text was analysed hermeneutically in order to understand and interpret each student's views on the legacy of Linnaeus and historical monuments. The readings were inspired by Ricœur's (1981/2016) notion of a hermeneutical arc between explanation and understanding: a critical or alethic understanding of hermeneutics (cf. Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018).

3.1 Limitations

Admittedly, our study – like all studies – has its limitations. Most apparently, the analysis is limited to students' written responses in the pre- and post-tests. Although we have some understanding of what occurred in the various classrooms during the intervention, we cannot directly link written responses to the comments made in class. In addition, this design study is limited to student cohorts from eleven public upper secondary schools in Sweden. While that sample, in many ways, represents a cross-section of upper secondary school students, the contextually coloured conclusions drawn in this study may not be generalizable. This means that deeper statistical analyses with effect sizes would not be suitable. We understand the study as an exploratory design-based study rather than as a controlled evaluation of a fully stabilised intervention. The teaching unit was developed through collaboration between researchers and experienced history teachers. It drew on previous work on multiperspectivity, historical contextualisation, digital source criticism, and lateral reading, and it was revised after a small-scale pilot implementation. The larger implementation reported here should therefore be understood as a subsequent design iteration, intended both to examine student responses and to generate knowledge for further refinement of the teaching materials.

Because the intervention was implemented by eleven teachers in authentic classroom settings, full standardisation was neither possible nor desirable. The participating teachers were introduced to the common lesson structure, materials, and design principles, but classroom discussions inevitably varied. We therefore do not claim to isolate the effect of a single instructional component. Rather, we analyse how students' written responses changed after participating in a teaching sequence that combined shared materials, common questions, and teacher-led discussion around a controversial historical issue. This is a limitation, but also part of the ecological validity of the study: the intervention was examined under ordinary conditions of history teaching.

We will illustrate our findings through quantifications of qualitative analyses across the following pages, highlighting either the number of respondents or the number of codes pertaining to a certain category, or demonstrating progression or growth through teaching and learning. Lastly, another possible limitation may be related to the very construction of our pre- and post-test and the two questions posed. This sub-study and the findings reported here were part of a larger project examining digital critical thinking across various school subjects, with a particular focus on the implementation of strategies such as lateral reading. As the case of Linnaeus was used in the history intervention, a few questions in the pre- and post-test focused on this content. In hindsight, a potential question such as "what should we do with Linnaeus's monuments?" could have spurred even more open-ended answers rather than our current question: *Should monuments of individuals who held racist views be removed?*. That said, we maintain that our investigation offers valuable

insights into the challenges and possibilities of addressing digitally fueled, polarised, and controversial histories in history education, while supporting students in developing a historiographic gaze on the legacies of racism.

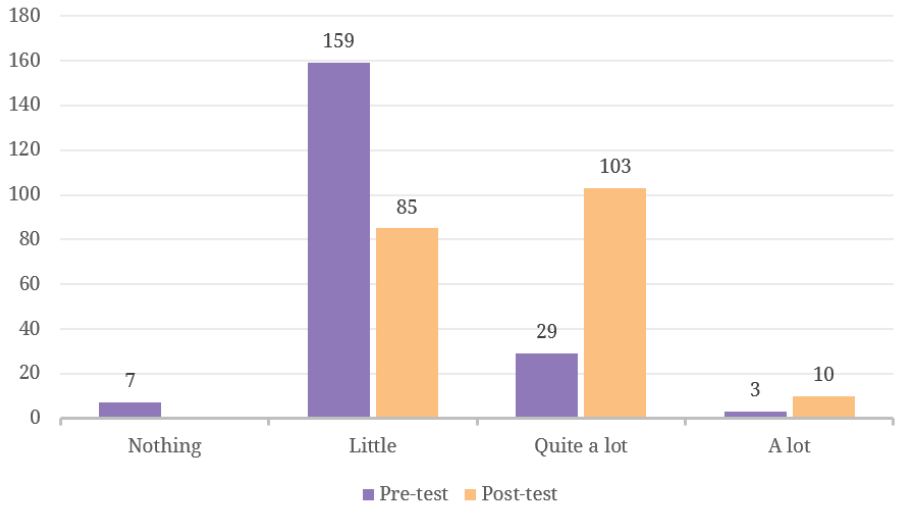
4 FINDINGS

The evolution of responses from the pre-tests to the post-tests shows three distinct trends. First, a significant increase in the number of students who considered themselves to be knowledgeable about Linnaeus. Second, a significant increase in the number of students who considered Linnaeus to have been a racist. Third, a small decrease in the number of students who deemed it justified to remove monuments erected to individuals embracing racist views. The findings will now be discussed in more detail.

4.1 More students reported they were knowledgeable about Linnaeus

As visible in Graph 1, the number of students who considered themselves knowledgeable about Linnaeus increased significantly between the pre- and post-test.

Graph 1. Students' perceived knowledge about Linnaeus in pre- and post-tests

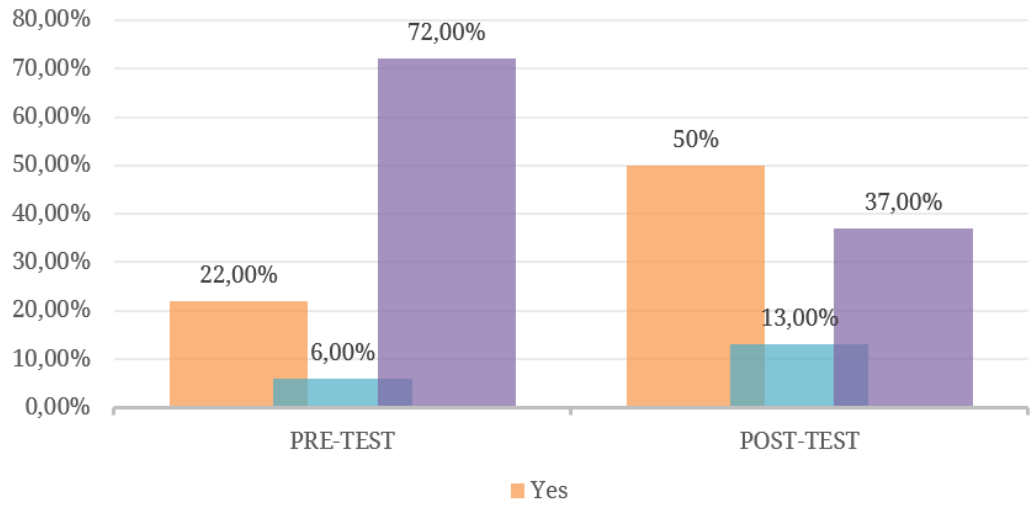


In the pre-test, seven (3,5%) of the 198 respondents claimed to know "nothing" (*inget*) about Linnaeus, 159 (80.3%) answered they knew "a little" (*lite*) about him, while 29 (14.7%) claimed to know "quite a lot" (*ganska mycket*). Only three respondents (1.5%) claimed to know "a lot" (*mycket*) about Linnaeus. In the post-test, by contrast, the number of students who claimed to know nothing had dropped to zero, while the number of students who replied they only knew a little had dropped from 159 to 85 (42.9%). At the other end of the spectrum, the number of respondents who felt they knew quite a lot had increased from 29 to 103 (52%), while those who felt they knew a lot about him had increased from three to ten (5.1%). This means that the number of students who responded that they knew a lot or quite a lot increased from 32 to 113 between the two tests, representing a 253% increase. It is clear, then, that a large number of students felt they had become more knowledgeable about Linnaeus as a result of the intervention, and the other results must be read against this backdrop.

4.2 More students considered Linnaeus to have been a racist

As can be seen in Graph 2, there was a significant increase in the number of students who considered Linnaeus to have been a racist in the post-test, as compared to the pre-test. The number of students who responded positively to the question more than doubled after the intervention, from 43 (21.7%) to 99 (50%). The number of students who responded negatively also doubled, from 13 (6.6%) to 26 (13.1%) respondents. The number of students who claimed they did not know whether Linnaeus was a racist decreased almost in half, from 142 (71.7%) to 73 (36.9%).

Graph 2. Student answers to the question "Was Linnaeus racist?"



Several more specific trends can be discerned from the free-text replies. For one, the number of students who associated Linnaeus with race biology dropped from ten in the pre-test to zero in the post-test. Though race biology is commonly used as a denominator for racialised studies of heredity as they were practised during the first half of the twentieth century, one student nevertheless claimed, in the pre-test, that Linnaeus "was a race biologist, which is pretty racist, so he would have been considered a racist today," while another affirmed that he "participated in race-biological research." A third student claimed that "he was active in race-biological research, which is pretty weird."

Whereas no respondents associated Linnaeus with race biology in the post-test, the number of students who associated him with taxonomic divisions of the human species increased from 22 students in the pre-test to 55 in the post-test. Interestingly, free-text replies associating Linnaeus with such divisions were submitted both by respondents who considered Linnaeus to have been a racist (14 respondents before, 32 after), by those who claimed not to know whether he was a racist or not (six before, 21 after), and even by those who claimed he was not (two both before and after). In the pre-test, one student claimed, for example, that Linnaeus was a racist because "he categorised people into 'races,' which is racism according to me." A large group of students, who reported in the pre-test that they did not know whether Linnaeus was a racist or not, responded in the post-test that he was indeed a racist. They justified their new position by referring to his division of humankind into "varieties." One student who had claimed in the pre-test, for example, that they did not know whether Linnaeus was a racist or not, but claimed to know that "his ideas about how

to categorise plants into genera led to race-biological research", changed their position to affirm that Linnaeus was a racist, claiming that

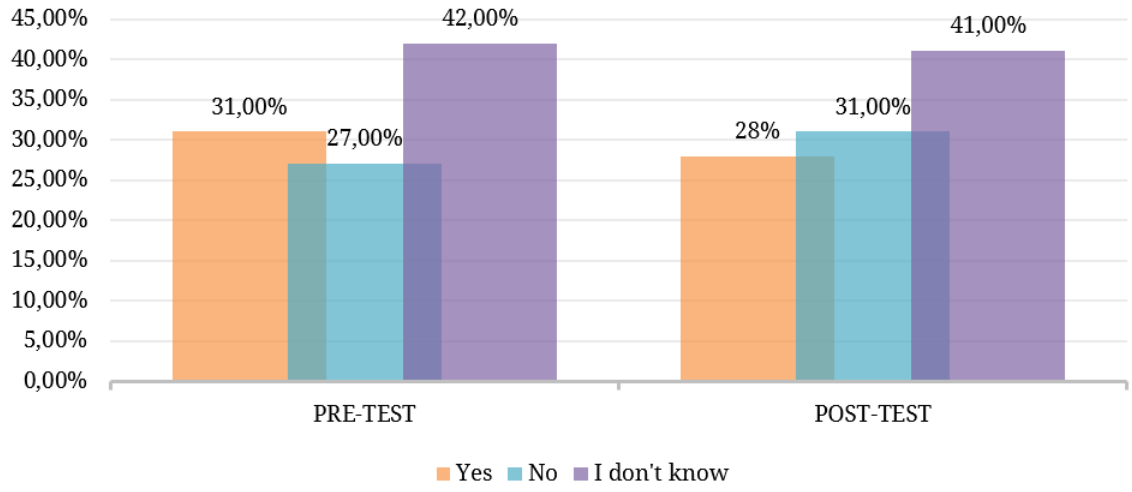
> Linnaeus did not invent 'races' as a concept, and whether it [his classification] led to things such as slave trade has got nothing to do with whether he was a racist [or not]. Linnaeus was a racist because he believed there were 'races.'

In the students' open-ended responses, we can discern a trend in that more students in the post-test emphasised the need to separate the past from the present when considering the legacy of Linnaeus and his alleged racism, with respondents claiming that Linnaeus's allegedly racist opinions were common and/or accepted at the time (21 before, 35 after). Another, even more prominent trend on the aggregated level is that 34 students in the post-test (but only two students in the pre-test) acknowledged that there may be arguments for considering him to have been a racist and not, depending on the historical evidence one leans on. Such replies should not be dismissed as relativistic but could also be interpreted as signalling an increased awareness of the complex relationship between the past and our understanding of it.

4.3 Fewer students supported the removal of monuments to racist individuals

In relation to the debate over the Linnaeus monuments and their future, there was a small decrease in the number of students who deemed it justified to remove monuments to individuals holding racist views, with support falling from 62 in the pre-test to 56 in the post-test and a corresponding, small increase in the number of students opposing such removals, from 53 before to 61 after. As shown in Graph 3, the number of students who remained undecided on the issue remained relatively stable, decreasing slightly from 83 respondents before the intervention to 81 after it.

Graph 3. Student answers to the question "Should we remove monuments or statues of people who held racist views?"



While these numbers do not suggest any significant changes, an analysis of the free-text replies sheds light on the changing ideas of the students. In the pre-test, 37 of the 198 respondents argued in support of removing monuments to individuals embracing racist views by stressing that such monuments glorify and/or perpetuate values and actions fundamentally at odds with contemporary democratic principles. One student responded that "society has evolved and

everyone is equally valuable, why should artwork with such [racist] perspectives be removed?" In a similar vein, another student affirmed that "people who hold racist views do not deserve monuments or statues." Similarly, a third student stated that

> [i]n the past, it was 'okay' to hold racist views, but that has changed over time, and now it is despised to have racist views. The monuments should be removed because the times have changed and opinions have changed.

All 37 students in this group insisted that keeping monuments celebrating individuals with known racist views can be seen as explicitly or implicitly endorsing the legacy of racism. A handful of the students in this group also noted, both in the pre- and post-test, that monuments to racist individuals can cause offence and/or discomfort to individuals and communities in the present. One student, who took a firm stance on the issue in the pre-test, stated that

> racism is something we should always strive to completely eliminate, therefore no racist historical figure should remain to remind us of their racist history, especially if that person is portrayed as a good person.

The same student adopted a somewhat different stance in the post-test, however, claiming that

> Since one should strive to eliminate racism, it's foolish to keep statues or monuments of racist individuals. A person who has a statue or monument erected in their honour is often seen as a good person. I think memories of bad and racist individuals should be preserved so that their actions are not forgotten.

While generalised, anti-racist statements such as "fuck all racists, dude!" still occur in the post-test (26 students), there was a significant increase in the number of students asserting that the legacies of historical figures such as Linnaeus are complex, with both positive and negative aspects to them. In the pre-test, 34 students stated that the positive contributions of a racist individual to society and science were more important than their racist views. The number of students who expressed such sentiments increased from 34 in the pre-test to 54 in the post-test. One student expressed a sentiment shared by many of the respondents in this group, stating that whether or not a monument should be removed

> depends on why there is a statue of the person. If the person is known for having invented something, and that's why the statue is there, I don't think it should be torn down. But if the person is known for having racist views, I don't think there should be a statue of that person.

Even the students who responded negatively to the question expressed reservations along these lines. In doing so, several students connected the issue of removing monuments with the legacy of Linnaeus. One student stated:

> I would say it's right to remove statues of people who did something bad towards other groups. But someone like Linnaeus, I don't know if it's right. Because he was mostly focused on science.

In a related manner, another student claimed:

> I believe that the statues should be removed if the person is known for their racist actions and views. In the case of Linnaeus, who is best known for his research on flowers and animals but who also carried out research that can be considered racist, I don't think it is necessary to remove the statue.

Similarly, a third student relativised his answer by contrasting Linnaeus's legacy with international historical figures who more actively contributed to slavery and genocide:

> I think [the monuments to] those who are known for being racists, like [Christopher] Columbus, who harmed and killed many indigenous people, should be removed. But I don't think it's right to remove the Linnaeus statues when he did so much for science.

Answers of this kind can, in light of the Linnaeus "memory war", be read as expressions of cultural solidarity and reverence for the "Flower King." Given the intervention's focus on multiperspectivity on Linnaeus and his legacy, statements such as these bear testament to the complexities and challenges of changing national historical culture.

Another prominent tendency in the post-test is that of the above-mentioned relativisation, or racism as a matter of scale. Answers of this kind were advanced by 17 students in the pre-test and 33 students in the post-test. One student claimed, for example, that "there is quite a big difference between having a statue to honour a slave owner and having a statue of Carl Linnaeus." A significant portion of the respondents accept that Linnaeus embraced racist views but relativises them by reference to Nazi Germany and Adolf Hitler, as when one student writes:

> I don't think it's necessary to remove statues, but it also depends. For example, if it's Linnaeus's statue, I think it can stay, but if it were Hitler's statue, it would be good to remove it.

Another student who mentions Hitler argues that monuments to controversial historical figures can aid collective memory and help us learn from the past:

> They [the racists] are a part of our history, and the reason we are where we are today. If they had not done what they did, we would not be where we are. But, of course, I don't think there should be a statue of Adolf Hitler. However, statues can also help us remember and can help ensure that history does not repeat itself.

Respondents acknowledged the difficulties in deciding which monuments to keep or remove, as many historical figures embraced views or engaged in actions that, in hindsight, would be considered unacceptable. One respondent made this point by way of a more general discussion:

> It depends on who it is and what it's about. Sometimes it may be necessary, if everything they did was based on racism, but sometimes you can distinguish between things and use it as a kind of learning for the future. It also depends on how severe it was, whether it was just racist thoughts or if it was actively practised. Looking back at history, almost no one who now has a statue was entirely faultless, so you have to decide where the line is and remove some.

The above-mentioned students' accounts may be viewed as representative of a stable trend through the pre- and post-test, namely that of historical remembrance and collective memory.

4.4 Collective memory and remembrance

In both the pre- and post-tests, respondents who argued against the removal of monuments to individuals known to have espoused racist views did so by reference to collective memory and the practice of remembrance (43 and 46 students, respectively, in the pre- and post-tests). Many of the responses are multifaceted, especially in the post-test, and hinge on historical, educational, and cultural considerations. One group of respondents expressed their opinions in more general terms,

advancing programmatic statements such as “the past is the past and sometimes it is vital to keep important monuments,” or

> [removing monuments] is good if one wants to distance oneself from such [racist] ideas and show that everyone is welcome [today], but [keeping] statues [of racists] is also a way to show how things once were, and they [the statues] can remain even if no one any longer agrees with them [the racists].

Other responses are more complex, emphasising the historical context and contrasting the social norms of the present with those of the past. The following answer is typical of this tendency:

> Since we have evolved as a society, we don’t need to remove what was said or done in the past. What was done in the past wasn’t wrong at the time; it was something everyone did, but over time, we have come to realise it is wrong.

Many students considered it wrong to shy away from the darker chapters of the past. This was occasionally done by way of general statements such as “one should not conceal the past,” but more often it was done through a cognitive act of taking a historical perspective:

> I think it’s important to preserve history, whether it’s good or bad. Should Auschwitz be removed because it is a horrible place where the Nazis ruled? I don’t think so. It’s important to preserve and remind ourselves of the past, whether it’s good or bad.

While many respondents put the past into perspective with reference to the present, some even gazed into the future to try to put the present into historical perspective. In considering the legacies of racism and the place of historical monuments, one student thus attempts to historicize the present:

> [We might feel that] some people [who] lived hundreds of years ago had a skewed perspective. But that doesn’t mean we shouldn’t remember them, because they’re a part of our past whether we like it or not. It’s as if, in the future, a successful person like Elon Musk would be considered a racist, [and] everything that ever existed about him would be erased just because society has changed in the future.

Several respondents underscore the importance of educational efforts and the educational potential of remembrance. One student extrapolates on this by stating:

> If today one values a society completely without racism, I think it would be best to remove the monuments, but the starting point should be teaching students the truth [about the past].

Another student notes that it is important

> that children and young people learn about historical actors, both the negative and positive aspects of what that person has done, because everyone has the right to know and to understand what’s wrong so that they don’t [make the same choices and] repeat history, which may have once ruined a society.

A third student dryly remarks that “sometimes removing a monument is good, sometimes teaching about the past is better.” A fourth student notes that

> [i]n extreme cases, it might be good [to remove statues], but usually statues exist to recall a person’s contributions to society and not their opinions. It’s better to educate than to tear down statues.

A fifth student turns the sentiment into an imperative:

> One can also see it [the monument] as an opportunity to highlight a person's history, for example Linnaeus's, by writing about what Linnaeus did and explaining the consequences [of his actions] from different perspectives. In other words, educating instead of erasing/forgetting/concealing!

In a similar vein, two students in the post-test advocated for new plaques that would provide historical context and acknowledge the negative aspects of revered historical actors. Only one of the 198 respondents argued that the monuments should be removed from the public space.

5 CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

Our analysis illustrates both the delicate nature of handling politicised historical and contemporary debates in the classroom and the role that multiperspectivity can play. The findings suggest that teaching controversial historical issues can support more informed and qualified student reasoning without necessarily producing polarisation or a uniform political response. After the intervention, more students described Linnaeus as racist, but this did not translate into increased support for removing monuments. This distinction is important. It indicates that students were not simply moving toward a more activist or condemnatory position. Rather, many students appeared to separate historical judgment from civic judgment: they could recognise racist elements in Linnaeus's classification of humans while still expressing reservations about what should follow for monuments, commemoration, and public memory.

This is a central contribution of the study. Much public debate about controversial historical figures is structured around binary positions: either a figure is defended as a hero or condemned as a villain. Our findings show that students can be supported in occupying a more complex space between these alternatives. They can acknowledge evidence of racist classification, consider the eighteenth-century context, distinguish Linnaeus from later race biology, and deliberate whether monuments function as celebration, memory, warning, or historical record. Such reasoning is historically disciplinary, but it is also civic: it concerns how citizens should engage with public symbols, moral disagreement, and contested uses of the past.

In this concluding discussion, the students' responses are discussed in terms of their respective positions on two principal questions posed in this study: *Was Linnaeus a racist? Should the monuments be razed?*. This is followed by a discussion of changes in student perceptions recorded after the classroom intervention. Lastly, we will elaborate on how our distinctly Swedish case can inform an international discussion on addressing the history and legacy of racism in classrooms.

5.1 Linnaeus's alleged racism

Regarding the question of whether Linnaeus was a racist, our analysis of the students' open-ended responses reveals four principal ways in which they justify their answers. One group of students argued that Linnaeus was a racist because of his taxonomic classification of humans. This perspective aligns with Eze (1997), who argued that Linnaeus's work contributed to legitimising and naturalising existing social hierarchies, which helped lay the foundation for scientific racism. This stance, which emphasises historical development rather than individual ethics and aligns with a mainstream position in the history of science, can be described as an affirmative or confirmatory position. A second group of students argued that Linnaeus cannot be considered a racist because his opinions were not more racist than those of other people at the time. This position, which can

be described as a negating position, is also reflected in student attempts to separate Linnaeus's scientific contributions from moral judgments; it emphasises historical context in assessing past actions, is embraced by researchers who advocate the teaching of contextualization and perspective taking as central objectives in history education (see, e.g., Parkes, 2011). A third, much smaller group of students expressed uncertainty and hesitation, citing a lack of knowledge as the reason for their reluctance to pass judgment on whether Linnaeus was a racist or not. This awareness of historical knowledge gaps can, based on student formulations, be interpreted as an expression of historical thinking (see, e.g., Wineburg, 1991, 1998). Finally, a large group of students presented arguments both for and against describing Linnaeus as a racist, depending on the historical materials considered. This perspective can be described as nuanced and/or perspective-dependent. Drawing primarily on presentist perspectives (cf. Miles & Gibson, 2022), these students can be said to demonstrate what Bermudez (2015) identifies as particularly valuable within multiperspectivity – namely, the ability to understand and critically assess different viewpoints.

5.2 Monuments and collective memory

Regarding the second key question in this empirical study – the future of the monuments – we also identified four distinct positions, varying in prominence between the pre- and post-tests. In the pre-test, there was a small group of students expressing indifference toward the question of whether it would be right or wrong to remove statues honouring racist individuals. This finding aligns with previous research in the field (e.g., Wineburg, 1991, 1998), which highlights that a lack of engagement with historiographical issues presents a challenge in history education. The post-test results show a decline in such indifferent responses; however, with only a few students maintaining neutrality or disinterest. This suggests that the design used to address this particular case of a difficult history may also be applicable in other national contexts facing similar challenges.

Furthermore, in the pre-test, some students, adopting a presentist perspective (cf. Miles & Gibson, 2022), advocated for the removal of statues and monuments, arguing that these monuments celebrate values incompatible with contemporary society and identity. In contrast, a significantly larger group of students opposed the removal of historical monuments, citing the importance of remembrance and the need to preserve historical artefacts as a means of learning from the past. Accompanying this group are students who advocate for a conditional removal approach, suggesting that monuments and statues may remain as long as they are supplemented with information campaigns or relocated to other spaces. Notably, the group opposing the removal of historical monuments grows substantially following the instructional intervention.

5.3 Linnaeus's work and legacy

Some general trends in student perspectives are evidently a result of the intervention. First, student responses indicate an improved knowledge of Linnaeus's work and legacy, suggesting that the design principles employed in the study were effective (cf. Akkerman & Bakker, 2011; Anderson & Shattuck, 2012). Furthermore, as noted above, there is a shift toward affirmation and nuance in student responses to the question of whether Linnaeus was a racist or not. This shift is reflected not only in students moving from uncertainty to affirmative answers but, more importantly, in the development of more balanced and well-reasoned perspectives.

Perhaps the most notable shift observed in student responses is an increased emphasis on understanding Linnaeus's work within its historical context. This shift seems to be closely linked to a decrease in support of the removal of monuments depicting individuals with racist views, with many students stressing the importance of historical contextualization. This suggests that the intervention's focus on multiple perspectives may have fostered a more critical understanding of this history (cf. Bermudez, 2015) while also sharpening students' historiographical awareness (cf. Nygren et al., 2017; Parkes, 2011).

Finally, students demonstrate a breadth of historical, cultural, and educational dimensions in their reasoning as to why monuments should remain or not. Through these responses, students exhibit both critical historical thinking about the past and show an awareness of how and in what ways this specific historical context implicates not only the present but also the future (cf. Miles & Gibson, 2022; Nolgård, 2023; Parkes, 2011). It would be presumptuous to claim that a teaching approach addressing the legacies of racism, based on our design principles, can universally empower students with this type of perspective awareness across all national contexts. However, given that our design principles are derived from international research beyond the national context reported in this study, we hope they can be applied to other historical actors whose roles in national historiographies remain subjects of contemporary debate.

5.4 Conclusion

The classroom intervention developed and implemented in this study enhanced students' capacity to consider multiple historical perspectives within a heated, polarised contemporary debate, largely driven by online discussions about scientific racism and its legacy. While there are no guarantees that the participating students will put the transformative ideas they expressed into action, the outcome of the intervention nevertheless demonstrates that carefully crafted interventions can help students see themselves as implicated subjects, or as individuals with a sense of historical responsibility, who recognize that they have a role to play in positive societal change (cf. Ahonen, 2012; Miles, 2024, Nolgård, 2023). As Miles (2024) notes, this implication is inherently complex. We therefore call for additional naturalistic and design-based research in the field of history education. Such work should attend to the realities of teaching and learning in ordinary, often messy classrooms influenced by social media. It can help schools cultivate in students a historiographic gaze and a sense of moral and temporal responsibility, qualities essential for navigating controversial histories in the digital age.

The study also points to an underexplored area in history and civic education research. There is extensive theoretical discussion of multiperspectivity, controversial issues, and historical thinking, but fewer classroom-based studies examine how students actually reason when a nationally celebrated historical figure is implicated in histories of racism and when the controversy is simultaneously historical, civic, and digital. The Linnaeus case is especially demanding because it cannot be reduced to a simple opposition between truth and falsehood. Linnaeus did classify humans in ways that contributed to later racial thinking, but he did so in an eighteenth-century scientific context that differs from nineteenth- and twentieth-century race biology and from contemporary racism. Likewise, monuments to Linnaeus do not simply preserve the eighteenth century; many belong to later periods of nation-building and public commemoration.

These layered temporalities make the case valuable for education but also difficult. Students must consider Linnaeus's own writings, later scholarly interpretations, nationalist commemoration,

contemporary anti-racist critique, and the dynamics of online debate. Few studies have examined how teaching can help students navigate this kind of layered historical controversy. Our study, therefore, contributes not by settling the question of Linnaeus's legacy, but by showing how classroom design can make such difficulty educationally productive.

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Olle Nolgård: conceptualisation, formal analysis, original draft preparation, writing, reviewing and editing.
Petter Hellström: conceptualisation, formal analysis, writing, reviewing and editing.
Calle Håkansson: investigation, formal analysis.
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Thomas Nygren: conceptualisation, funding acquisition, investigation, writing, reviewing and editing.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

DECLARATION OF USE OF GENERATIVE AI

During the preparation of this work, we used DeepL to translate lesson materials which are provided as supplementary material. After using this AI system, the first author reviewed and edited the content as needed.

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APPENDIX A – CODING SCHEME

Codes for Q1: "Was Linnaeus a racist?"	Codes for Q2: "Should we remove monuments and statues of people who had racist views?"
(I know or have heard that) Linnaeus had racist views	Racism is unacceptable today Statements that unequivocally condemn racism ("Monuments like these does not belong in modern society as they manifest values that we do not share"; "Monuments are tributes and we should not pay tribute to people with who were racist"; "Racists are not good role models and should therefore not be paid tribute through monuments"; "Monuments of racists may offend people and cause discomfort").
(I know or have heard that) Linnaeus did not have racist views	Freedom of speech triumphs racism
Linnaeus is linked to the emergence and history of racial biology	Scientific achievements and contribution to society triumph racist views
Linnaeus made racist categorisations of people on the basis of origin, appearance, ethnicity, culture or religion	Historical contextualization Statements that stress the need to separate past and present in considering the work and legacy of Linnaeus, including statements acknowledging that his opinions and/or actions would be considered racist by modern standards ("Linnaeus was a child of his time").
Linnaeus scientific achievements and legacy triumph his racist views	Historical memory and remembrance Statements that stress the need to remember the past, including past injustices (monuments are there to remind us about the past; physical objects (artefacts) help us remember the past; we should not silence the past even though what happened was wrong and/or terrible; it is better to expose the past rather than to hide it; if we silence the past we will repeat the same mistakes; racism is part of our history).
Historical contextualization Statements that stress the need to separate past and present in considering the work and legacy of Linnaeus, including statements acknowledging that his opinions and/or actions would be considered racist by modern standards ("Linnaeus was a child of his time").	Relativizations Statements that relativize and/or qualify racism ("Racism is a matter of scale – to express racist views is one thing and to actively contribute to slavery or genocide is another"; "Monuments may remain as long as they pay tribute to scientific achievements and not racist ideology"; "We should move the monuments to museums rather than removing them"; "Instead of tearing down a monument, one could add a plaque to inform visitors about Linnaeus's legacy in a nuanced way").
Reservations Statements that express reservations ("We can see this from multiple perspectives/there are arguments for both sides"; "I do not have enough knowledge to assess this statement"; "I have no opinion in this matter"; "We cannot say anything about Linnaeus's intentions today").	Reservations Statements that express reservations ("I do not have enough knowledge to assess this statement"; "I do not have an opinion"; "It depends on the circumstances"; "It is just a statue/piece of art – I do not care"; "It depends on the historical evidence").