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## The Boundaries of Community

### Stigma Management and Pluralistic Education in Swedish Upper Secondary Education

Bernmalm, Emil

2022

*Document Version:*

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication](#)

*Citation for published version (APA):*

Bernmalm, E. (2022). *The Boundaries of Community: Stigma Management and Pluralistic Education in Swedish Upper Secondary Education*. Abstract from CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION IN DIVIDED TIMES: BUILDING CONNECTIONS THROUGH VALUES, Prag, Czech Republic.

*Total number of authors:*

1

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LUND UNIVERSITY

PO Box 117  
221 00 Lund  
+46 46-222 00 00

## **The Boundaries of Community: Stigma Management and Pluralistic Education in Swedish Upper Secondary Education**

My PhD project aims to problematize value education and governed integration (Simons and Masschelein 2015) from the standpoint of experiences made by students with severe physical disabilities. The aim is to contribute to the understanding of value education empirically, by examining how students with physical disabilities experience the process of integration into the everyday life of regular education.

The participants of the study were students at the four national boarding schools, exclusive (but integrated) to students with severe physical disabilities, in Sweden during 2019. Using mixed methods, 74 students participated in a survey and 20 of them were chosen for in-depth biographical interviews. Methodologically, the survey was used to map the normative landscape of the regular education as it is experienced by the students, looking mainly at the occurrence and prevalence of different cultural ideals, taboos, and feelings of belonging. The interview technique aims to investigate how institutional frameworks as well as social norms and expectations affect individuals' ways of organizing and creating meaning about lived experience (Lamont and Swidler 2014).

Following an interactionist perspective on, values, norms and identity as cultural objects imbedded in delimited symbolic universes, constructed intersubjectively by collective processes of framing (Fine 2021; Schütz 1972); I analyze interview data to: i) explore and describe the everyday life in school as it crystalizes in the experiences of the students, ii) scrutinize the institutional claim of integration and inclusion of students with severe physical disabilities and finally iii) ask the question of how value education should be organized to recognize and harbor the experiences of the students.

The main findings revolve around the variations of the students' framing of differentiated and integrated education. These different frames of understanding reveal regular education as an educational setting structured by strong social and symbolic borders. Governed integration thus requires the integrated student to perform the boundary work spurred from passing these borders. This process of handling the everyday life of regular education shows patterns of stigmatization, social exclusion, and problematic normalization of student minorities. In this sense, hard questions of our understanding of plurality, difference, separatism, belonging and democracy, reside in the experience of the students.

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