Excluded in the Classroom

Examining Otherness in Terms of Ethnic Exclusion, Gender Stereotypes and the Neglect of Non-Heteronormative Groups in Educational Materials in Swedish Upper Secondary Schools

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Abstract
The purpose of this degree project is to examine to what extent certain groups in society are represented in the teaching material in upper secondary schools in Sweden. Through the scrutinizing of a selected number of English textbooks, the intention is to analyse texts and images to see whether representation of individuals on the basis of ethnicity, gender, gender identity and sexual orientation occur in the material. Another aspect of the essay is to identify possible stereotypes regarding the mentioned categories. The analyses draw on a number of theories: postcolonial, feminist and gender, as well as queer theories, in order to relate possible non-representation in the teaching material to the key concept of otherness. Furthermore, the concepts of hegemony and heteronormativity serve an important role in the analyses of the material as they expose dominant structures in society which tend to give certain groups authority over others.

Keywords
Feminist theories, gender theories, hegemony, heteronormativity, other, postcolonial theories, queer theories, teaching material, textbooks, tuition, upper secondary school
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1 Introduction

The following study has been inspired by my long-term interest in issues that concern the marginalization and non-representation of certain groups in society. Due to dominating and normative structures, these groups are subjected to discrimination on the grounds of, for instance, ethnic affiliation, gender, gender identity and sexual orientation. Hence, deviating from the social, cultural and historical norms they are perceived as other by those who are “traditionally favored, normalized or privileged in society” (Kumashiro 32). In postcolonial research focusing on marginalization and exclusion, minority groups are at times referred to as others, positioned in opposition to those who conform to the norm in society. In relation to ethnic groups, the notion of otherness was first and foremost emphasized by Edward W. Said in his book Orientalism (1978, 2003) in which he demonstrates how a hegemonic and Western perspective “invented” and constructed the Orient by perceiving and describing the people of Eastern cultures as others (1–7). However, the idea of otherness has been discussed in a variety of contexts. Connected to gender the term was introduced by Simone de Beauvoir in her work The Second Sex (1949, 1989), to illustrate how woman through history has been othered in a patriarchal society (139). Likewise, Judith Butler has discussed the concept of otherness within a context of gender identities and sexual orientations (Gender Trouble 68). Thus, by investigating the construction of otherness it is possible to expose traditional norms and thereby challenge the ways in which norms are perceived and communicated in society.

It may also be possible to investigate the construction of otherness in relation to existing norms within an educational context. For example, what ideas about peripheral groups, or others, are being conveyed through the teaching material in our schools? This question came to mind during my student teacher placements as I encountered educational materials which, according to democratic values, appeared questionable in terms of ethnic and gender correctness. There were tendencies, both in texts and images, to portray people in stereotypical ways or at times to exclude certain groups and hence not represent them at all. This is clearly in conflict with the fundamental values of the Swedish school law and the curriculum based on the Education Act (2010:800) which stipulate that “education should impart and establish respect for human rights and the fundamental democratic values on which Swedish society is based” (Skolverket, Curriculum 4). In other words, the democratic values which should acknowledge the right of representation to all groups may thus be disregarded. Furthermore, the curriculum emphasizes that the education
should represent values such as individual freedom and integrity, equality between women and men, and solidarity between people:

The school should promote understanding of other people and the ability to empathise. No one in school should be subjected to discrimination on the grounds of gender, ethnic affiliation, religion or other belief system, transgender identity or its expression, sexual orientation, age or functional impairment, or to other forms of degrading treatment. (4)

Accordingly, the school system is responsible for equal treatment of all its participants and that no discrimination on any grounds should take place. But is this the reality in the case of minority groups or people who for different reasons deviate from the norm upheld by the majority? In her research, Janne Bromseth has discovered that school and education is one essential arena for the (re)creation of norms in general and a heteronormative arrangement specifically (“Förändringsstrategier” 29). Since school is where we educate our children to become democratic citizens, it is, in my view, essential that democratic values should be taught in an open-minded and inclusive manner. However, developed within hegemonic and heteronormative structures, the tuition in our schools might instead produce bias against, and even exclude, certain groups.

My aim with this essay is to investigate to what extent the categories of ethnicity, gender, gender identity and sexual orientation are represented, or perhaps not represented, in English teaching materials used in an upper secondary school in Sweden. One of the three selected textbooks addresses students of English 5 whereas the other two, although intended for compulsory school, in this case were used for newly arrived students in this particular upper secondary school. The intention is also to examine what ideas are being conveyed about the three categories mentioned above in the selected textbooks. I will therefore study texts and images from a theoretical perspective through which the construction of otherness will be investigated in order to visualize marginalized and excluded groups in society. Also, an important aspect to reflect on is whether there is an awareness of existing normative structures among authors of textbooks, or if there is instead a risk that stereotypical ideas will be further established.

In the following section (2. Background) there is a brief introduction to the different categories of others examined in the current study. There will also be a presentation of questions to be answered as well as an outline of the material utilized for
the analysis. Then follows a summary of previous research, an account of the theoretical framework, and lastly a presentation of the methods. The theoretical framework needs some further introduction here since the present study relies upon it. The key concept, *otherness*, will be discussed in terms of marginalization and representation within the theoretical perspectives employed, which include postcolonial, feminist and gender, as well as queer theories. Questioning hegemonic and heteronormative structures the theories demonstrate the peripheral positioning of certain groups in Swedish society. Within the educational field, scholars have in recent times begun to challenge heteronormative structures by utilizing a norm-critical perspective in order to include marginalized groups in teaching procedures (Bromseth, “Förändringsstrategier” 29–30). Although foremost a feminist and queer perspective, norm-criticism could in fact be utilized also within an ethnic context and therefore useful when deconstructing norms regarding representation of any of the categories of *others*. In the present essay norm-criticism will be used as a complement to the theories mentioned above.

The next section (3. Result) contains the core of the current study in which the results from the examination of the textbooks will be presented. The section also includes brief discussions of the examined teaching material with regard to the categories ethnicity, gender, as well as gender identity and sexual orientation. In the next section (4. Analysis) the result will be somewhat further discussed and also some tangible solutions will be proposed in an attempt to answer the research questions. Finally, in the last section (5. Conclusion) the deductions drawn from the results will be presented together with some concluding comments.

2 Background

The categories of *others* chosen for this examination are as mentioned above ethnicity, gender, gender identity and sexual orientation. As far as ethnic1 representation is concerned, this category can be studied both within a Western context, as some minority groups belong to Western societies, for instance, black and Hispanic people in the US, and outside a Westernized context when looking at minorities from Eastern2

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1 In general ethnic identity is ascribed a group of people with a common origin as to geography, culture, language, as well as religion and values. Ethnicity, however, can be perceived as both positive and negative where the negative effects include degrading treatment, discrimination and stereotyping. (www.fn.se)

2 For a definition of the terms “Western” and “Eastern”, see 2.4.1 Definitions.
cultures. When it comes to the gender category, one intention is to examine whether there is a difference in the representation of girls and women in textbooks as opposed to that of boys and men. Another thought is whether stereotyped ideas about femininity and masculinity occur in the textbooks. The third category constitutes people of different gender identities and sexual orientations\(^3\) other than a heterosexual identity. The intention is to examine whether this category finds representation in the textbooks since research demonstrate the presence of heteronormative structures in teaching material (Skolverket, *I enlighet* 37–40). Apart from these three categories there are of course additional groups being ignored and excluded by social and cultural structures, for instance, within the categories of functional impairment, age, as well as religion and other belief systems. However, these groups will not be examined in the present study. Another possibility would be to study the selected categories in combination with one another from a more defined perspective to see whether any connections between, for instance, gender and ethnicity could be detected. However, the inherent restrictions of this degree project will not allow an examination of all these categories and perspectives. Thus emphasis will be placed on ethnicity and gender, as well as gender identity and sexual orientation, as three separate categories.

### 2.1 Research Questions

There are several questions to be asked which concern the above issues regarding stereotyped assumptions and the marginalization and exclusion of certain groups in the teaching materials utilized in schools. However, this essay will focus on the following:

- What ideas regarding ethnicity, gender, and gender identity and sexual orientation are presented to students by the means of teaching materials in the English classroom, and how do these ideas correspond to the curriculum and the syllabus of the English subject?

- What are the reasons that these materials are used in the English classroom?

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\(^3\) The concept of *gender identity* is understood as an individual’s identification as either a woman or a man, or another gender, which may or may not relate to the sex assigned at birth. *Sexual orientation* is the term used when referring to a person who is attracted to the same or opposite gender, or both (www.hrc.org). Although gender identity and sexual orientation are two separate categories, they will be analyzed as one category in the current essay as both categories are identified in relation to heteronormativity.
• How can teachers problematize norms regarding ethnicity, gender and sexuality in the classroom in order to make students more aware of stereotyped presentations?

In addition, it would be interesting to observe whether students are influenced by biased educational material, and if they are, how it affects their ways of constructing and perceiving society? However, this aspect will not be scrutinized in the current essay.

2.2 Material

The materials utilized for the analysis are three textbooks which were used at the school for my last student teacher placement. The reason for selecting the textbooks is because of the occurrence of stereotypes I detected in them, and because certain groups did not seem to be represented. *Progress Gold A* is intended for the English 5 course and contains nine main chapters of which each has four to seven texts of various length and type. The chapters cover approximately one third of the book and is the part examined here. The remaining part contains resource chapters with grammar and vocabulary exercises as well as word lists. This textbook seemed rather promising as to its varied and not too stereotyped content. However, I also encountered another set of textbooks which were seemingly of a more traditional and biased design. These textbooks, initially intended for compulsory school, were used for newly arrived students attending introductory programs at upper secondary school. *New Champion 6* is intended for year 6 and consists of thirty chapters of which some of the chapters are divided in *Part A* and *Part B*, which means that the story begun in part A continues in part B. The level of this textbook is rather basic and not too advanced with a rather straightforward language and simple grammatical sentence structures. *BASE* is a teaching material aimed for students who need to rehearse the English course from compulsory school as a preparatory step before starting upper secondary school. This textbook therefore contains more advanced texts than *New Champion*. Thus, the texts are longer with a more extensive content which get even more advanced towards the end of the book. The textbook consists of five thematic head chapters of which each includes five to eight subchapters. The five themes are: “Colours”, “Rocks”, “Faces”, “Sharks” and “Thrills”.

In addition to textbooks there are several types of educational materials which are possible to analyze, for instance, grammar exercises, articles and video clips. This type of material is chosen by teachers primarily out of their own choices and therefore difficult
to examine without interviewing teachers. Also, my intention with this study is merely to observe what the chosen textbooks might convey to the students and not how the books might be used by the teachers in the tutorial situation. Of course, teachers might choose not to use textbooks in their tutoring, but nevertheless they do exist as something that is intended for the students and hence possible to analyze. In fact, according to research on educational material teachers of English tend to utilize textbooks to a larger extent than teachers of other subjects (Parekh Nordberg 6).

2.3 Previous Research

In a research initiated by Skolverket (I enlighet 2006), a selection of educational books were examined in an attempt to analyze aspects of ethnic affiliation, gender, religion, and sexual orientation⁴ in the subjects of History, Biology, Religion and Swedish. However, the same approach could possibly be applied to other school subjects including English. Three of the examined categories are interesting in relation to my own thesis in the present study, namely ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation (and gender identity). Regarding ethnicity, Skolverket’s research demonstrates that European and Western cultures dominate in the textbooks of history and civics, thus neglecting the fact that Sweden nowadays experiences increasing cultural diversity (19–20). Therefore the ethnocentric perspective in textbooks serves as an instrument of alienation and “othering” of student immigrants (21). What instead concerns the gender category, it is found that many of the biology books stereotypically position man as the norm from which woman deviates and hence is considered “the other” (29). In addition, a majority of the history books are characterized by an invisibilization and underrepresentation of women and there is furthermore a tendency that various characterizations, for instance, farmers, merchants, slaves and prisoners of war, although gender neutral terms, still connote masculinity due to textual contexts. Also, men are repeatedly connected with excessive violence in texts about our history (29).

The category of sexual orientation in subjects such as religion and civics was in Skolverket’s research analyzed from a queer and heteronormative perspective. The result of the examined textbooks demonstrates that there are no occurrences of obvious discrimination towards groups of different sexual orientation (I enlighet 40). However,

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⁴ The term sexual orientation (sexuell läggning) in Skolverket’s research refers to all non-heteronormative groups.
there are additional facts that might lead to a sense of being discriminated against, for instance, the practice of often invisibilizing non-heterosexual groups and the problematizing of sexual orientations other than the heterosexual. Furthermore, the focus on heteronormative nuclear families constitutes an example of how non-heteronormative groups are excluded in educational books (38–40).

The above research by Skolverket did not include the English subject. However, a similar approach examining gender aspects in English textbooks has been performed in an essay by Sofie Elmrud and Anton Åström where the two authors examine what ideas about femininity and masculinity are legitimized by the Swedish school system (1–3). Elmrud and Åström employ feminist and gender theories for their analyses of the textual material. In reference to Yvonne Hirdman’s gender contract5, Elmrud and Åström’s results demonstrate how the texts convey stereotyped assumptions about women and men, and how constructed ideas of femininity and masculinity ascribe higher status to the male gender than to the female. Elmrud and Åström claim that biased material normalizes and cements heteronormative structures which can lead to students’ sensation of exclusion and degradation, thus in clear opposition to the ethics of the school curricula (29–30).

The perspective of Hirdman’s theory has also been used in a study by Noopur Parekh Nordberg. Applied on images instead of texts, her analysis establishes that even though a moderate deconstruction of traditional gender roles are noticeable in the images, gender constructions regarding the equality between the sexes still exist to a certain extent. For instance, images represent male characters more often than female characters, and they also stereotypically illustrate women and men doing different things (24). Furthermore, the images demonstrate a hierarchical power structure regarding professions and activities where attributes connected to men’s practices are ranked higher than those connected to women’s activities. According to Parekh Nordberg, such arrangements can be referred to Hirdman’s theory of the imbalanced power relationship between the sexes (24). Parekh Nordberg further argues that educational materials have a norm-creating effect on students and therefore should be critically scrutinized (4). She finds this especially crucial in terms of the English subject in which by tradition the use of teaching books is rather high. In the event that the material should create and reproduce stereotyped gender ideas, there is therefore a risk that such ideas would influence the students (6–8).

5 For more information on Hirdman’s theory, see 2.4.2.2 Feminist and Gender Theories
The construction and conservation of stereotypes in teaching material has further been examined by Katarina Hudin. Her social constructivist approach is in line with postcolonial ideas as she examines cultural aspects and Western bias in textbooks. According to Hudin there is a discrepancy between the curricular demand of an international and global perspective and what is actually being taught in the classroom; the textbooks mainly focus on English speaking countries in the Western part of the world (5–6). She further discusses stereotypical ideas with regard to power relations between the Western society and other cultures by referring to cultural theorist Stuart Hall’s views on stereotypes, binary oppositions and the relation of power. In agreement with Hall, Hudin argues that the practice of stereotyping creates and maintains a continuous border between the self and the other where the power balance between “us” and “them” always points to the disadvantage of the latter (8–9). For that reason, she stresses the significance for teachers to be conscious of the hegemonic position of the English language: “As a teacher of English it is necessary to be aware of the history behind the worldwide spread of English; when giving lessons as well as planning them – which by definition includes an analysis of one’s teaching material” (11). Besides discussing ethnical aspects, Hudin has correspondingly employed a social constructivist approach to address heteronormative structures in teaching materials. The results show that there are no occurrences of non-heterosexual contexts, thus implicitly excluding individuals of other sexual orientations. In fact, the texts stereotypically present a heteronormative society and therefore convey values which are not in accordance with the curricula (30–31).

Finally, I would like to include two studies which discuss the teaching of English by emphasizing an intercultural aspect and therefore related to postcolonial theories. The first work by Ulla Lundgren demonstrates the significance of cultural aspects in language studies in order to broaden the students’ insights concerning intercultural communication. She claims the importance of “intercultural competence” in the English classroom since it closely connects with the fundamental values of the school, and at the same time serves to increase students’ self-knowledge as well as their understanding of people who have differing viewpoints (34–35). The second work by Eva Gagnestam also examines intercultural aspects when teaching languages. She speaks of the heterogeneity of the classroom and the importance for teachers to embrace the complexity of the task and to acknowledge cultural diversity as an access and a possibility (132). These two studies do

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6 My translation
not repose on the analyses of representation, exclusion or the notion of *otherness* as do the research examples presented before in this section. However, since they deliberate democratic values to increase students’ awareness of non-western cultures, they not only align with the fundamental values expressed in the curriculum but also with the ideas of postcolonialism. The fact that Sweden is becoming increasingly multicultural makes the teaching of intercultural competence significant, in my view. In reference to these two studies, Anna Greek should also be mentioned as her dissertation similarly emphasizes the intercultural aspect in the teaching of English (2008). Greek suggests that the study of literary texts about cultural encounters will enable an intercultural pedagogy in the English classroom as aspects of culture, identity and difference then could be discussed (1–2). In reference to Kerstin von Brömssen⁷, Greek insists that intercultural pedagogy critically investigates the teaching norms of the educational system in relation to multiplicity (28).

2.4 Theories and Methods

The core concept in the present essay is the notion of *otherness*. My belief is that by investigating the construction of *otherness*, it may be possible to elucidate how the marginalization and exclusion of certain groups in society is mirrored in the educational material in our schools. The concept of *otherness* is also the connection between the theories from which this study draws – postcolonial, feminist and gender, as well as queer theories – as these theories discuss *otherness* in terms of alienation and deviation from social and cultural norms. The theme of “representing difference” can thus be discerned which, according to Hall, not only is discussed within a postcolonial discourse concerning racial and ethnic difference, but “could equally be applied in many instances to other dimensions of difference, such as gender, sexuality, class and disability” (“The Spectacle” 225). The theoretical framework will be discussed more closely below but first a definition of concepts utilized within these theories will be presented. Lastly the methods applied in the essay will be introduced.

2.4.1 Definitions

When discussing ethnicity the terms “Western world”, “Western culture” or “the West” will be used with the intention to point to what is generally considered to include parts of the world such as Europe and North America as opposed to Asia and the Middle East, although the term is a historical rather than geographical construct (Hall, “The West” 276–77). According to Said, the term originally derives from a division of the world into an oriental and an occidental part and is today generally considered as dividing the world in East and West with focus on the difference in social and cultural values. Also, the division entails an imbalance of power: “the relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony” (Said 4–5).

The concept of “hegemony” thus refers to a situation in which, according to Said, “certain cultural forms predominate over others, just as certain ideas are more influential than others; the form of this cultural leadership is [...] identified as hegemony, an indispensable concept for any understanding of cultural life in the industrial West” (7). In the present study the concept is used within postcolonial contexts to illustrate how ethnically and culturally marginalized groups are denied representation in Western societies. Another context in which the concept of hegemony operates is within a gender context. Angerd Eilard states that the Western perception of knowledge still is characterized by the traditional gender roles from the European colonial era where man is the norm (Modern 45–47). Notions such as reason, intellect, rationality and culture have by tradition been related to masculinity, as opposed to femininity which has been connected with body, nature, the natural and the emotional. The colonized parts of the world were thus understood as feminine and subservient to the hegemonic, and male, colonial powers (47).

The idea of “heteronormativity” refers to structures in society which sustain heterosexuality as something that is natural and universal. Fanny Ambjörnsson defines the heteronorm as “that which accentuates a certain type of heterosexual life as the most desirable and natural way of living” (52). Thus, heteronormativity excludes people of various sexual orientations in the society since the concept postulates that individuals fit into two rigid categories of sex, women and men, with expectations to act and behave according to certain rules while constituting each other’s opposites (Hudin 12–13).

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8 My translation
Consequently, there are additional practices and values that do not conform to the inflexibility of the heteronormative way of living. Examples to demonstrate this are, for instance, singles, heterosexual couples without children, and immigrated families (Bromseth, “Förändringsstrategier” 30–31).

It is therefore my belief that, in order to examine the ways in which ethnic (minority) groups are perceived in society a hegemonic perspective could be useful whereas a heteronormative perspective is beneficial when deconstructing and visibilizing gender structures. Additionally, in the process of analyzing teaching materials it could also be necessary, as Hudin points out, to investigate the way in which stereotypes are being created (8). One reason is that stereotypes seem to emerge in ethnic as well as in gender contexts. They also tend to work on both explicit and implicit levels which reveals how ideas about others often are conveyed and perceived subconsciously (14).

2.4.2 Theoretical Framework

The theories employed in the present study are the following: postcolonial, feminist and gender (discussed together in the same section), and queer theories. Apart from their inherent and primary discourses these theories also discuss the concept of otherness. Hence, these perspectives examine the ways in which certain categories of people are marginalized and excluded in society as a result of the prevailing structures. By utilizing the mentioned theories, my intention is to examine the representation of marginalized individuals in English textbooks with regards to ethnicity, gender, and gender identity and sexual orientation. As part of the analysis, an understanding of the formation of stereotypes will be valuable as will the ideas of representation and otherness.

2.4.2.1 Postcolonial Theories

Marginality, representation and otherness are significant concepts in postcolonial theory employed to visibilize and represent peripheral groups in society. As mentioned earlier, Hall states that postcolonial criticism not only questions cultural or racial difference but is equally applicable to many dimensions of difference including gender, sexuality, class and disability (“The Spectacle” 225). In order to understand otherness and the process of representing, it is necessary to comprehend the practice of stereotyping and its relation to power balance. According to Hall, stereotyping categorizes a range of phenomena into binary oppositions and it is the difference between these opposites which
carry meaning as one pole has the superior role over the *other*. This can be observed in the opposing categories white/black, men/women, upper class/lower class, and so forth (234–35). As Hall claims, the concepts visibilize the inherent power balance between the opposites, as recognized in the white supremacy over black people, men’s control over women, and the upper class ruling the lower class. Thus, one aspect of this power is the ethnocentrism as one culture intends to apply its own norms to other cultures (257–59). Hall therefore argues (along with Foucault) that stereotyping is “a ‘power/knowledge’ sort of game. It classifies people according to a norm and constructs the excluded as ‘other’” (259).

Power in relation to marginality and *otherness*, has also been discussed by Anne McClintock. In her work, however, a variety of differences are being merged with one another, as she discusses imperial power in relation to race, gender and sexuality. McClintock argues that imperialist thoughts about the Western identity were perceived as dominant not only among the colonized people but also among the colonizers themselves as they embraced the idea of the Western identity as being superior to others (5). Similar thoughts have been expressed by Frantz Fanon, who was among the pioneers to discuss the subject of colonialism and how the colonized were continuously situated as *other* (and as object) with no ability to achieve the subjective role as self (17). Discussing the matter from the colonized people’s viewpoint Fanon claimed: “The feeling of inferiority of the colonized is the correlative to the European’s feeling of superiority” (93). Therefore, in my view, the importance lies not only in the visibilizing of peripheral ethnic groups in Western societies, but also in elucidating the fact that the sovereignty of the West was (and perhaps still is) indeed self-imposed. To become conscious of the situation of the *other* is thus not only about admitting representation to excluded groups but also for the dominant groups themselves to understand the ways in which they maintain their hegemonic position over *others*.

2.4.2.2 Feminist and Gender Theories

The concept of *otherness* has correspondingly been discussed within feminist and gender studies, and was early on used by Simone de Beauvoir to explain inequalities between the sexes in a patriarchal society. Her famous statement “one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman” (267) hence refers to the construction of woman as *other* in a society where man is the norm. De Beauvoir further claims that the power has at all times been in the hands of men: “since the earliest days of patriarchy they have thought best
to keep woman in a state of dependence […] and thus she has been definitely established as the Other” (139). This has furthermore been discussed by Hélène Cixous and Julia Kristeva, although their analyses more relate to themes of patriarchal binary oppositions and marginality. Cixous’ idea, for instance, of patriarchal binary thought as observed in the opposing categories activity/passivity, intelligible/sensitive and logos/pathos, exhibits the feminine side as negative and powerless as it corresponds to the underlying opposition man/woman (Moi 104). The idea of binary oppositions can of course be related to the parallel discussion within postcolonial theories, as can the discourse on otherness, representation and the practice of stereotyping. The formation of stereotypes produced through binary oppositions assign women and men different sets of characteristics and behaviors (104). Whether these are natural or constructed have given rise to questions regarding the biological sex and the constructed gender; a crucial issue within feminist and gender criticism, as well as within queer theories (Butler, Gender Trouble 9–11).

The issue of gender and sex has been discussed by Hirdman in reference to her own theory about a “gender contract”, defined as a relational contract between women and men which defines them through a set of characters and behaviors constructed by social norms (“Genussystemet” 54). The dichotomy between the two sexes hence allows the formation of stereotypes. According to Hirdman, the gender contract also validates the power structure between the sexes which sanctions men a dominant position as opposed to women’s submissive role in the society (54). Stereotypes and gender assumptions have additionally been addressed by Emma Watson, who perhaps represents a new and more modern voice of feminism demonstrated in her speech at the U.N. as she launched a campaign called “HeForShe” (www.heforshe.org). A spokesperson for this organization Watson delivered a version of feminism in which both women and men are seen as victims in a patriarchal society and she proclaimed the significance of men and boys to fight for gender equalities as well. In her speech Watson also stressed the fact that traditional gender assumptions about femininity and masculinity cause both women and men unnecessary problems by not allowing them to be their true selves (UN Women).

2.4.2.3 Queer Theories

Queer theory involves a number of theoretical perspectives which emerged in the US in the 90s within poststructuralist feminism and in gender and gay/lesbian studies (Bromseth and Wildow 14; Larsson and Rosén 6). The queer perspective essentially visibilizes how the connection between gender and heterosexuality is re-created as a
natural condition, referred to as the heteronormativity. Thus, queer critique challenges the fact that the heteronormative society questions and discriminates against identities and ways of living which deviate from the norm (Bromseth and Wildow 14). Heteronormative gender structures in society have extensively been discussed by Judith Butler in both articles and books. She claims among many things that the situation for the “otherwise gendered and for sexual minorities of all kinds” is a constant position of being beside oneself and “resituated irreversibly in a field of others in which one is not the presumptive center” (Undoing Gender 25). Additionally, she discusses marriage and same-sex domestic partnerships as well as the judicial regulations on second parent adoption, arguing the necessity to expand our notions of kinships beyond the heterosexual frame (26). Butler further questions norms in relation to normalization and normativity, and she points to the fact that norms create unity “only through a strategy of exclusion” (206). One of her critiques correspondingly deliberates the debatable dichotomy between the biological sex and the socially constructed gender (Gender Trouble 9–11).

Related to school and education, a queer perspective would hence visibilize and thereby challenge possible heteronormative bias present in teaching materials. For that reason, Renita Söreensdotter’s ambition is to include a queer theoretical way of thinking in the process of teaching. Queer theory, according to her, is a starting point when questioning, challenging and changing continuous norms of gender and sexuality (Söreensdotter 135). She also believes that a queer perspective is useful when examining and analyzing categories such as, for instance, class and ethnicity in order to deconstruct and thereby expand their meanings (135). The possibilities when utilizing queer theory in research have also been discussed by Håkan Larsson and Maria Rosén. However, their approach is somewhat different. According to them the main point in queer theory is not to avert intolerance toward LGBT9-persons or to become aware of prejudice towards homosexuality, but for heterosexual women and men to deliberate on how they distinguish heterosexuality, and furthermore how their experience of heterosexuality as something obvious and natural, in fact leads to discourses and actions which discriminate against those who are not heterosexual (7). What they intend to say is that it is the heteronormativity that produces complications and not homo-, bi- or transsexuality. Heteronormativity is in their words “the presumption that everyone is heterosexual and that the natural way of living is the heterosexual life. This presumption is created in a

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9 LGBT is the acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transsexuals.
historical, cultural and social context” (7). Thus, queer theory does not reject or question heterosexual actions but rather the heteronormativity.

2.4.3 Methods

As mentioned earlier the purpose has been to observe the processes operating on explicit and/or implicit levels in the teaching material and is in fact connected to the method utilized in the present study. In order to see what is conveyed to students both explicitly and implicitly through the educational material, focus is placed on the analyses of both texts as well as photographs and drawings in a selected number of textbooks. According to Parekh Nordberg images may be significant since values are conveyed through the emotional impact that they have on people (14). The English textbooks are the primary sources in this study and as such, according to Judith Bell, categorized as “unintended sources” which implies that the purpose is thus to utilize the textbooks as objects of analysis which obviously was not the authors’ initial intention (126). Moreover, since the intention is to examine also what is communicated implicitly, that is, values and messages perhaps unintended by the authors, the textbooks are also perceived as “non-deliberate sources” (127). In this sense the method is also a content analysis which, according to Bell, may be utilized when, for instance, studying distortion of facts in news reports, or, as in the current study, “sexist and racist bias in educational aids of various types” (129).

The method is also qualitative and as such product oriented which emphasizes the content of the texts in teaching materials and analyzes what fundamental values the texts convey. Through an examination of lingual relations it is possible to analyze underlying codes that, for instance, can expose different types of power relations and thereby make visible marginalized groups of people in a material (Carlson and von Brömssen 22; Skolverket, I enlighet 19–20). The possibility to examine both explicit and implicit values in the textbooks could thus expose unbalanced power relations. The choice of a qualitative method is in accordance with Elmrud and Åström who discuss the problem with employing a quantitative method, which may cement the traditional categories of women and men and make them too distinct and thus limiting a more nuanced examination of gender categories. Another important fact argued by Elmrud and Åström, is that texts do not only convey what is literally said but rather what is conveyed beneath the surface.

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10 My translation
This is at times difficult to detect in a quantitative analysis and would not explain how gender is constructed in different contexts. Rather, since gender is constructed through invisible norms and assumptions it is therefore important to see beyond the text (7–8).

Also, by discussing the outcome in text, rather than presenting facts and numbers in tables, the line of reasoning behind the arguments will hopefully appear more comprehensible and tangible. The aspects of stereotypes and representation will therefore be studied within the separate categories of ethnicity, gender, and gender identity and sexual orientation. Parts will be selected from the books that explicitly or implicitly illustrate how stereotyped ideas and marginalization of people are conveyed. Naturally, the intention is not to reject the examined books altogether, but rather to identify, question and problematize their inherent weaknesses. One important aspect is of course in what ways teachers utilize the teaching materials, for instance, the textbooks. However, the intention has not been to examine this, although it could have been done by interviewing teachers. Rather, focus has been on examining actual educational materials since the former Läromedelsinspektionen, a central organization for analyzing and evaluating teaching materials, ceased to exist in 1991. This situation has therefore made teachers themselves responsible for analyzing the materials they choose to utilize which requires both skills and tools (Ammert 17; Carlson and von Brömssen 20; Elmrud and Åström 7). Although, publishers of teaching materials for some subjects consult experts from universities it is, according to Skolverket, uncertain whether these observe the fundamental values of the school curricula, which, if they did, naturally would decrease the prevalence of stereotypical representations (I enlighet 52).

3 Result

In the present study I have examined three English textbooks in upper secondary school; one which was intended for students of English 5 and two which were used for newly arrived students attending the preparatory program. As mentioned above (2.2 Material) the textbooks are Progress Gold A intended for the English 5 course, and New Champion 6 and BASE used for the newly arrived students. My analysis has concerned the representation of marginalized groups in the textbooks and whether this representation is unbiased and non-stereotypical. The outcome of my examination will be presented below with the help of examples, both text and image, from the books. I will start with
the group of ethnic minorities, followed by the gender group and gender stereotypes, and lastly the non-heteronormative group.

3.1 Absence of Ethnic Representation

The representation of ethnic minorities or non-western cultures is in general scarce in the textbooks I have examined, and certain groups are almost entirely excluded. When representation at times occur it is often done in ways which display ethnic stereotypes. Referred to cultural and postcolonial theories these groups could thus be observed as others; excluded from positions and practices habitually intended for the predominant majority in the society (see section 2.4.2.1). For Progress Gold A, the number of pictures displaying non-westerners are ten whereas white people are seen in seventeen images\(^{11}\). In the two textbooks New Champion 6 and BASE the exclusion of ethnic minorities is more evident. In fact, in the thirty-one\(^{12}\) chapters in New Champion 6 there are around eleven individuals of ethnic minorities portrayed in photos and drawings (though most of them are part of the Western world), whereas individuals of the Western culture reach a number of more than ninety. Although there are not as many individuals depicted in the textbook BASE, the figures in percentage terms for the thirty-two chapters are more or less the same – four individuals of ethnic minorities and approximately forty Westerners.

3.1.1 The Excluded or Stereotyped Other (Ethnic)

Research has shown that when black or dark skinned people are represented in texts or in various types of media, it often occurs in association with bad manners and crime scenes (Hudin 22). An example of this is found in New Champion 6, chapter 2 (text A). There is a drawing of a situation which in the text is described as a group of boys teasing another boy by picking on him and calling him by names. One of the boys has dark skin whereas the others are white. Although the representation of the black boy is positive, the way he is stereotypically portrayed in a situation related to bad manners is unfortunate. In this case it is also a matter of gender since the traditional individual associated with bad manners and crime portrayed in textbooks most often is a boy or a

\(^{11}\) For Progress Gold A the number of images instead of individuals were counted as some photographs displayed uncountable number of individuals.

\(^{12}\) The textbook contains thirteen double chapters with a text A and a text B and five single chapters, all in all thirty-one chapters.
man (Skolverket, *I enlighet* 28–29; Hedlin 23). According to Eilard, a common way to include children of ethnic minorities in textbooks is either through stereotypical representation or to “assimilate” them in image without them being mentioned in text (“Pojkar och pappor” 77), which is the case here as the black boy is only represented in image. A similar situation can be seen in Chapter 3 (text B) as it demonstrates an example of how black people are perceived as criminals. The text describes the two American cities, New York and Los Angeles, of which the latter is referred to as having two big problems; “the smog and the gangs”. A photograph of five black men (members of the Crips gang) illustrates the gang problems of Los Angeles. Although this depicts the reality for many black people living in this area, in my opinion, this type of representation further consolidates existing prejudices when instead this group would benefit from being represented in more positive circumstances.

In fact, a somewhat more positive representation is found in chapter 8 (text A), which is a text about Australia. One of the photographs shows an elderly man representing the indigenous people of the continent, the aboriginal Australians. They constitute an ethnic minority of the Australian society, although more or less westernized today. In the text there is some information about this minority, for example, that they inhabited the continent long before the white population and that most of them today are poor and unemployed. Thus, although the photograph in a sense is not stereotypical as it portrays the man in western clothes, as opposed to the more clichéd tribal image, the text conveys a more typical, or perhaps stereotypical, representation of the Aboriginals. The choice of introducing Australia and its ethnic minority is perhaps not unexpected as it was once a British colony. The same is true for India and therefore it does not seem too farfetched to represent the Indian girl and boy in chapter 10 (text B). Here a collage of texts and photographs of young people are presented. However, the images are predominantly of white teenagers (at least ten) with the exception of one black girl, and the already mentioned Indian girl and boy. It is evident that the representation of teenagers from minorities are less than that of white teenagers which naturally can be questioned.

There is one final representation of a person of a minority group in chapter 13 (text A). The text is about a white boy who calls a zoo to apply for a job. In the chapter there is a drawing of a black woman who could either represent what in the dialogue is referred to as “Switchboard” (the person at the zoo who answers the phone) or the personnel manager by the name Janet Black. I am inclined to believe the black woman represents the person at the switchboard since the picture displays her at a keyboard. If so, the chapter
is possibly an example of stereotypes where black people are connected with low-class work (as opposed to the personnel manager). If on the other hand the black woman in fact represents the personnel manager, an observation about the choice of name can be made. Her last name being Black could point to the fact that names in textbooks sometimes serve as markers for class as well as for ethnicity (Eilard, “Pojkar och pappor” 77). As I said, it is here unclear to whom the name refers but either way stereotypes are in use.

The representation of ethnic minorities and cultures in the textbook BASE is, as mentioned above, as scarce as in New Champion 6. In the second section “Rocks” and chapter 3 there is a picture of the singer Beyoncé. Although westernized as being an American she belongs to the African American minority by descent. There is no reference between the text and the picture apart from the fact that the text is about diamonds and Beyoncé is wearing a glittering (diamond-like) dress. Likewise, there is no comment on who is in the photograph, only the slogan “diamonds are a girl’s best friend”. It makes you wonder why the picture was chosen to represent the text. There is a clue to this in the earlier edition where the photograph instead portrays Marilyn Monroe. Possibly the reason for the change of pictures is to make the textbook more up to date and relatable to today’s teenagers, and not due to ethnic minority issues. In any case it is one of few examples in the textbook of representation of ethnic minorities.

The next ethnic reference is not until the last section called “Thrills” where in chapter two a black person is seen performing the art of parkour in the streets, and in chapter six a black (or Hispanic) man is on the verge of base-jumping off a high building. The representation of black and Hispanic minorities is positive. However, the reason for the black person to be represented here might be because of a stereotyped idea about black people as performers of street cultures such as, for instance, the hip hop culture and its elements of dance, music and graffiti acted out in a typical street environment. Thus, there is a tendency, as mentioned earlier, that black people as well as other ethnic minority groups in Western societies are being represented in restricted circumstances which per se have become stereotypical. Hudin argues in a similar way, referring to the textbooks she has examined, that whenever black people are being represented it is within an African context as though they cannot exist on other places in the world (22). Although black people in fact are represented outside African settings in the textbooks examined in the present essay, the representation could still be perceived as stereotypical. In my view the street culture is, correspondingly to what Hudin argues, an area where (black) minority groups stereotypically find representation. I do not mean to say that this representation is
wrong, but it is at the expense of these individuals’ representation within other areas such as, for example, business or politics. Instead, as Hall suggests, representation could occur in the “reversing of stereotypes”. By “rethinking black representation” new images will be produced, as in the examples by Hall of black men taking care of children or black women performing politically in public (“The Spectacle” 272–73).

Another matter found in the textbook BASE is a chapter in which the origins of bungee-jumping is being told (section “Thrills” chapter 4). The reader learns that bungee-jumping is a land-diving ceremony on the island of Pentecost in Vanuatu. This non-western activity was according to the text brought to the Western civilization through a photographer who wrote an article on the subject in 1970. A picture shows a white girl bungee-jumping in an apparent Western setting. However, an older edition of BASE displays photographs of the indigenous people of the island of Pentecost ceremonially “bungee-jumping” from the trees. Why are these photographs substituted in the newer edition? It would have served an opportunity to include non-western cultures and, of more significance in this case, also inform the students about the authentic origin of an activity common in Western societies. This in fact seems like a step in the wrong direction.

The analyses above all concern the two textbooks intended for the newly arrived students at the upper secondary school mentioned earlier. The textbook Progress Gold A for students of English 5 seemed more promising regarding stereotyping and inclusion of minorities. In fact, already in the beginning of the book the reader meets text and photos of both black and Asian people, although Westerners as the portrayed are the famous persons Oprah Winfrey and Jackie Chan. What is more positive then is in the third chapter where the text is about two girls, one of whom is Muslim. There is also a drawing of the girl wearing a veil, though perhaps a photograph instead of the drawing would have stressed the representation of a non-western person as more obvious. In chapter 7 a story about a Nepalese girl living in England brings in an Asian viewpoint as it depicts the culture clash between western and a non-western societies. Chapter 9 contains a text about India and as discussed above the choice is not farfetched as it once was a British colony, but the story is told by the Egyptian writer Nawal El Saadawi who therefore gives it a non-western perspective. A contrast to this is a Newsweek article in chapter 8 in which Melinda Gates is interviewed about a journey to Africa. Although speaking about the many problems Africa faces (as well as India and Thailand), the perspective is still that of a Westerner’s. This is clearly demonstrated in a photograph of white people visiting Africa. The center of the photo shows a white man taking a picture of three black Africans
in ceremonial customs together with a white woman (we see them from behind), and to the right is a jeep from where a white woman standing up is looking down at the African persons. According to me, this picture evidently implies the Western superior perspective of a non-western culture.

3.1.2 Discussion

The analyses of the textbooks demonstrate a discrepancy as regards the representation of minority groups which at times also is stereotypical. The representation of ethnic minorities predominantly constitute people of black or Hispanic origin (with a few exceptions) who although they belong to minorities are part of the Western culture. However, newly arrived students who attend the introductory programs at upper secondary schools most often originate from non-western countries such as Syria, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia and Eritrea; parts of the world which are not represented at all in the examined textbooks (with the exception of the Muslim girl in Progress Gold A). This fact can be related to research by Kenneth Nordgren who has observed that the two major groups of immigrants in Swedish schools, people from the Middle East and the former Yugoslavia, have hardly no representation in the images of educational textbooks (141). Therefore, according to Hudin, it is crucial to oppose the idea of a domineering Western cultural and ethnic identity and she claims it essential that teachers continuously reflect on what ideas they transmit to the students and to carefully select the educational material (12). Consequently, there is a need that teaching materials are unbiased and inclusive of ethnic minorities, but also clarifying about how hegemonic structures conserves traditional ideas. In fact it is stated by Skolverket that the education should “contribute to students’ developing greater understanding of cultural diversity within Sweden” (Curriculum 6). The syllabus for the English subject further states that the teaching of English “can provide new perspectives on the surrounding world, enhanced opportunities to create contacts, and greater understanding of different ways of living” (Skolverket, Läroplan 53).

3.2 Gender Stereotypes

Although girls and women are not as excluded in the textbooks as are ethnic minorities, they are still less represented than boys and men. In the examined textbooks
this discrepancy is obvious in New Champion 6. In photos and drawings the representation of girls and women reaches a number of approximately forty, whereas for boys and men around seventy. In the textbook BASE, however, the figures are somewhat different. The representation of people in images reaches only around forty altogether, the representation of either sex being more or less equal. The same could be said of Progress Gold A in which the number of pictures of males and females are the same. However, my focus has more concerned the stereotyped ideas about femininity and masculinity conveyed in the textbooks, which involves not only girls and women but also boys and men. According to feminist and gender theories, the concepts of femininity and masculinity are traditionally constructed by cultural and social norms allowing the hierarchical positioning of masculine characteristics and activities above and before those being feminine (see section 2.4.2.2). Also, the process of stereotyping has its ground in the division of concepts, or binary oppositions, as discussed by Hall (“The Spectacle” 234–35).

3.2.1 Absent Girls and Women and Stereotyped Gender Concepts

The first chapter (text A) in New Champion 6, is about a Swedish rock band consisting of four boys being interviewed by a male journalist. In other words, a quite traditional presentation of the music industry. However, since girls and women are less represented in the textbook, it would have been more in accordance with the curricular demands of a gender equal tuition if the text instead was about a girl band and a female journalist. Since the music business as a concept is implicitly conveyed as male oriented in the chapter it reinforces stereotypes and traditional patterns regarding activities in which girls and boys engage. Ironically, though, the name of the boy band in the chapter is Jeniferever of which the first part is a girl’s name. This, however, is the only reference to girls in the text. Also in chapter 2 (text A) the girls are seemingly absent except for the teacher in the text who is a woman. However, the stereotype in this chapter is that boys are connected with bad manners, in fact, the text reads: “the other pupils, especially the boys, teased him”. Established gender norms allow us to expect one set of characteristics and behavior patterns from girls and another set from boys, where, for instance, a certain amount of violence is tolerable when it concerns boys (Hedlin 19).

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13 Also discussed in a passage in section 3.1.1.
Chapter 3 (text A) demonstrates yet an example where women are excluded. The chapter tells about the bike race known as *Race Across America* (RAAM). There are two pictures of bikers on their way; one in which the back of the biker is shown and one which is photographed from some distance with the biker facing the camera. Admittedly, one could thus argue that the two bikers might be women but there is a risk that patriarchal structures in our society might steer the reader towards the opposite. Nonetheless, there is nothing in the text that tells the reader that the race is open to both women and men. What I am aiming at is the subconscious ideas we have about women and men and what activities we connect with whom. The photographs of the bikers might be perceived as male bikers, thus (subconsciously) transmitting the idea that the race is a male activity. Another aspect in the chapter that reinforces this notion is the image text to one of the photographs which shows an open landscape with a biker on the road: “A lone rider on road US 163 [...]”. The idea of the lone rider, subconsciously or not, is a cliché concept of the solitary man, the loner. Clichés like these often have a tendency to reinforce stereotyped assumptions about women and men. Hedlin argues that we commonly use gender as a principal for categorizing in which ideas of femininity and masculinity are continuously recreated (20). Therefore, considering the fact that women actually are less represented in the textbook, this chapter would have served an opportunity to change this pattern and include women since they evidently participate in the bicycle race too.

The texts above are examples of when girls and women are excluded. However, when included in texts the representation has a tendency to become stereotypical. This can be observed in chapter 5 (text A and B). The theme is the tradition of celebrating Halloween, and there is a photograph of a woman with three children dressed up in clothes and hair-styles for the occasion. This is one of two photographs in the textbook in which an adult is seen together with children; the adult being a woman. The stereotypical representation of women in the company of children reflects the idea of the woman as the caring and nurturing sex. Hirdman refers to this idea as the “stereotypical gender contract”: a structural constraint forcing both women and men into specific but separate obligations, responsibilities and rights, positioning the woman in a biological and natural category (*Genus* 84–86). The categorizations repose on the traditionally constructed dichotomy of man and woman in which the two genders are ascribed opposing characteristics, for instance, power–weakness and violent–nurturing. According to Hirdman, woman has through history been regarded as “incomplete, but also different,
she had characteristics that men did not have [...] nor wanted” (35–36)\(^ 14\). Consequently, woman was *other*; excluded from that which was the norm. However, deconstructing the mother-child concept by installing a corresponding father-child concept would in this case revise the notion of woman as *other* and subsequently create a more equal and non-stereotyped representation of women and men. What I mean is that if the textbook instead was to present a photograph of a man together with children, it would possibly favor a deconstruction of stereotyped gender assumptions. In fact, this has been done in the textbook *BASE* where a picture of a man (father) and a child can be seen in the last section (“Thrills” chapter 5), thus demonstrating a more positive example and also in line with the curriculum.

A different (and in a sense opposite) stereotype of females is observed in *New Champion* 6 and chapter 8 (text A). The text tells the story about an Australian boy who gets a request on MSN from three Swedish girls who need information for their school project on Australia. In the introduction to the text the reader gets the following information: “Jonathan accepts their request (Who says no to three Swedish girls?), clicks OK and the conversation starts” (34). What is the purpose of the question in parentheses? From a contextual point of view it is redundant since omitting the phrase does not alter the essence of the sentence. Possibly, the question is a matter of demonstrating politeness from an Australian point of view as the girls are from a different country, but that could have been expressed by a simple “as he wants to be polite”. However, the question could also be insinuating sexist assumptions, whether these are conscious or subconscious, not only about girls in general but perhaps Swedish girls in particular. In that sense the question illustrates traditional and patriarchal structures positioning woman (in this case the three girls) as object in opposition to man (the boy) as subject, thereby defining woman as the objectified self, *the other*. Or in the words of de Beauvoir as she refers to Hegel: “the subject can be posed only in being opposed – he sets himself up as the essential, as opposed to the other, the inessential, the object” (xxiii). Hence, the text deals both with gender stereotypes and the *othering* of woman. This fact can also be observed in the setup of the text, as the boy informs the girls and not vice versa – an Australian girl informing three Swedish boys. The traditional view of men being more intelligent and therefore the presumptive educator of women goes back to the ancient Greeks. Hirdman refers to a number of philosophers who believed that man was intellectually superior to

\(^{14}\) My translation
woman (*Genus* 35–46). Lately, the concept of “mansplaining” has been discussed in media; a mannerism in which a man explains things to a woman in a condescending way. Thus, the idea that the intellectual man has to educate the less (or non-) intellectual woman is no less valid today, although possibly more contradicted and challenged.

Stereotypes are not only produced about girls and women but also regarding boys and men in the textbooks. Chapter 9 (text A) in *New Champion 6* tells the story of a man hijacking a plane. Correspondingly to the stereotyped image of women as mothers or sex objects discussed above, this text presents the stereotype of men as violent or performing criminal acts. One might argue that the textbooks merely reflect the society in which males dominate crime statistics. However, the reversed situation could be just as true; the way boys and men are represented in books may reinforce and thereby normalize male stereotypes. Hedlin claims that ideas regarding masculinity and femininity are continuously created and recreated through how we reflect and talk about ourselves and others, which in fact also implies that there is a potential for change if we rethink gender patterns (20). Nevertheless, according to Skolverket it has been observed that excessive violence are linked to men, for example, in history books (*I enlighet* 29). The persistence in portraying males as violent (and women not) might thus fortify a one-dimensional perspective of masculinity and femininity. Watson believes that stereotypical gender assumptions do not only affect women but also boys and men in a negative sense: “Men don’t have the benefits of equality, either. We don’t often talk about men being imprisoned by gender stereotypes” (UN Women). In fact, most men are not involved in crime and it is therefore essential to create a more realistic image of men and masculinity.

In *Progress Gold A* gender stereotypes are less frequent, although a number of stereotyped images do occur. However, some texts demonstrate instead the reversed stereotype which is shown in chapter 6. Contrary to the stereotypical idea of males perceived as criminals and behaving badly discussed above, there are in this chapter two stories in which females are performing criminal acts, for instance, girls who shoplift.

3.2.2 Discussion

The representation of girls and women in the examined textbooks shows that at least in *New Champion 6*, there is a less frequency than that of boys and men. However, what has been stressed more here regarding gender is the stereotyped ideas about women and men presented in the textbooks. The stereotypical renderings transmit one-
dimensional ideas about our society and the people living in it. Therefore, the textbook examples above demonstrate the necessity of employing a gender perspective in the production of educational material in order to prevent the influence of stereotyped ideas. Stereotypes not only influence young people on a subconscious level, but also maintains the dominating traditional structures of the society which hierarchically define the male sphere as the more important, thus positioning females as others (Elmrud and Åström 27). This is naturally not in accordance with the fundamental values stated within the educational area: “The school should actively and consciously further equal rights and opportunities for women and men. Students should be encouraged to develop their interests without prejudice to gender differences” (Skolverket, Curriculum 5).

3.3 Exclusion of Non-Heteronormative Groups

The most obvious exclusion in the examined textbooks is the category of gender identities and sexual orientations other than the heterosexual. One possible reason for this is that the textbooks are intended for the age group 10–12 (although in the present study used for newly arrived at the upper secondary school) and therefore believed not to be relevant. However, sexuality is not only about sexual needs and ought therefore to be perceived in a broader sense according to Bromseth and Wildow (33). They refer to research on children in preschool classes which demonstrate that the manner in which children play and talk is heterosexualized, for instance, in the identification process through fantasy games about the “heterosexual family”. Furthermore, it has been shown that preschool children are not introduced to any alternatives to the heterosexual nuclear family: “the princes always get their princesses in the fairytales and all families have a mother and a father” (33). However, there are various types of families in our society and children of, for instance, same-sex parenting might thus feel alienated and excluded if their own circumstances are not represented in textbooks. Nonetheless, in the examined textbooks the representation of non-heteronormative groups is scarce, if not non-existent, and none of the books demonstrates an observable intention of deconstructing heteronormative arrangements, for example, by representing families other than the nuclear family. Although a few texts in New Champion 6 might have a possible intention of displaying people of another gender identity or sexual orientation, this is still done implicitly or without comments and might therefore leave the students unaware of it.
3.3.1 The Excluded or Stereotyped Other (Gender Identity/Sexual Orientation)

In *New Champion 6* chapter 1 (text B) the group *Queen* is presented; a band of which one of its members, Freddie Mercury, was known to the public as being homosexual. This is not mentioned in the chapter except for a passage where the reader is informed that he died of AIDS which implicitly may expose his sexual orientation. However, unless the term AIDS is explained to the children they will most likely not understand such implications. The text could perhaps also be said to indirectly give hints about different gender identities when talking about the 1970s vogue for “[pretending] that you were half woman, half man”. However, gender identities and sexual orientations are not talked of explicitly in the text, which if it was could have served an opportunity to include a non-heteronormative aspect of the society in a rather uncomplicated way. In fact, the implicit way of talking about homosexuality by referring to the fact that Mercury died of AIDS instead alludes negatively to non-heterosexual orientations. The practice in which non-heteronormative groups are being victimized therefore needs to be challenged. In order to alter negative representations of LGBT people in school material, a different perspective such as a norm-critical pedagogy is required (Acher and Esbold 6; Bromseth, “Förändringsstrategier” 37).

Another implicit representation of non-heterosexual orientations might be seen in the somewhat ambiguous text in chapter 7 (text A). Seemingly a rather straightforward story about four boys at the beach, there is a possibly unintended “play” with aspects of masculinity and femininity beneath the surface. One of the boys is by the narrator perceived as a tough guy with “dyed hair and a ring in one ear” and “always up to something”. It is obvious that the narrator has a different character than that of the tough boy as he does not have the courage to say no when asked to come along to the beach: “I couldn’t say no really. If I did, Harvey would call me a sissy for weeks”. One of the connotations of the word “sissy” is that of something feminine which in this story contrasts the tough boy who in a traditional and masculine manner is the leader of the gang. As they reach the beach they dive into the water where they find a number of different objects at the bottom of the sea; an old lipstick, a black hairband with red dots on it, and a glittering bracelet – all traditionally feminine attributes. One of the boys puts on the hairband: “Who’s a pretty girl, then?”. The tough boy is suddenly missing only to be discovered after some time by the others, unconscious near a rock. The chapter ends as the narrator starts giving him “the kiss of life”. What I find interesting here is the possible symbolic interpretations of the story as the tough and masculine character goes
under the surface and somehow is made effeminate by the weaker character giving him the kiss of life, also symbolically accompanied by the many feminine objects reaching the surface of the water. As initially pointed out, the text is ambiguous as possible allusions towards other gender identities can be detected in its play with feminine and masculine attributes. According to Bromseth and Wildow, heteronormative structures transmit a dichotomous view on gender where women and men are polarised and assigned separate characteristics. Thus, gender transgressing, for instance, a man associated with femininity, will be perceived as something odd and strange: “something ‘other’ than expected” (15). However, although the above interpretation of the text is possible it is not certain that the students will deduce such messages. Therefore more explicit narratives are necessary in which variants of gender identities are represented.

The next instance where an implicit interpretation of another gender identity or sexual orientation is possible is in chapter 10 (text B). Here young people write to a teen magazine about their various problems, for instance, when being in love. In a traditional and heteronormative way the love issues are between girls and boys. However, there is one letter which is possible to interpret differently as the letter, in which the writer admits being in love with a boy, is signed Vic which could be short for both Victoria and Victor. Thus, there is a possibility here of expressed homosexual love from one boy to another. The problem is that we do not really know if this is the case and therefore, as stressed above, it is necessary to more overtly visibilize non-heterosexual people if the intention is to represent them in the teaching materials.

In the textbook BASE there are no occurrences of either texts or images that express aspects of non-heteronormativity. Besides, insinuations or ambiguities like the ones found in New Champion 6 are here completely absent. The same is true for Progress Gold A. Instead, all textbooks demonstrate occurrences of heteronormative structures such as the nuclear family which exclude those who do not conform to the heteronorm. In New Champion 6 chapters 6 (text B) and 16, tell stories of traditional nuclear families consisting of a mother, a father, and one or two children. In BASE, section 3 (chapter 3) a heteronormative presentation of love is shown in a photograph from the movie Avatar portraying the main protagonists; a man and a woman. Chapter 5 in the same section, narrates an Indian mythological tale about heterosexual love between a fisherman’s daughter, Satiyavati, and the wandering male story-teller Parasara. Referring again to the polarized view on gender suggested by Bromseth and Wildow, the two versions of human beings – woman and man – are each other’s opposite: “In order for the surrounding world
to understand who is what they need to act in a certain way socially and they have to desire each other sexually” (15). An example of this is found in Progress Gold A and chapter 7, where the text of a married couple, a man and a woman, is accompanied by a photograph of a newlywed husband and wife in a car. The heterosexual marriage as a construction is commented on by Butler who sees the reciprocally dependent relationship between gender and sexuality as the “heterosexual matrix” (Gender Trouble xxviii; 68).

3.3.2 Discussion

There are no occurrences in the textbooks that explicitly display gender aspects except for heteronormative ones, although a few allusions could possibly suggest the opposite. According to Bromseth, research regarding heteronormativity in relation to educational contexts have been conducted (internationally) since the 90s, the starting-point being feminist and queer-theoretical perspectives, in order to scrutinize the educational arena and its “re-creation of norms in general and a heteronormative setup in particular” (“Förändringsstrategier” 29). In the Nordic countries scholars began challenging the heteronorm in early 2000 through a norm-critical perspective (29), and possibly the time factor is one reason why there are still no obvious changes regarding the representation of non-heteronormative individuals in the textbooks. Acher and Esbold have in various research observed that: “many teachers currently working in the Swedish schools are at a loss when it comes to how one should actually work with issues regarding sexual awareness” (5). It is also common that many of the educational materials presuppose a perspective of “we and them” regarding sexual orientation, and that the individuals constituting the “we” are heterosexual. Students who identify as, for instance, homo- or bisexual might thus experience the teaching books as “humiliating, exclusionary and discriminating” (Skolverket, I enhighet 42–43). When heteronormative structures, in fact, are challenged in schools it is often in relation to sexual education in the Biology subject: “When the whole school is not working strategically in the same direction, the total domination of heteronormativity in subjects like history, English, physical education, etc. becomes something of a contradiction of what is explicitly stated as important equal opportunity goals” (Bromseth, “Learning” 173). It is also a claim by Skolverket that all who work in school should “be observant and take the necessary measures to counteract and prevent all forms of discrimination, harassment and degrading
treatment, and show respect for the individual student and apply a democratic approach” (Curriculum 10).

4 Analysis

In this section a few tentative answers to the questions posed in the beginning of this essay (2.1) will be presented. However, the first question has already been attended to in the previous section (3) but some final words will be given here.

4.1 Evaluation of the Research Questions

- What ideas regarding ethnicity, gender, and gender identity and sexual orientation are presented to students by the means of teaching materials in the English classroom, and how do these ideas correspond to the curriculum and the syllabus of the English subject?

When analyzing the selected texts it has been noticeable that there is a lack of representation for certain groups. Regarding the representation of ethnic minorities in the textbooks, it is not only scarce but also selective since ethnic groups from certain eastern cultures are hardly represented at all. Thus a Western perspective is maintained where ethnic groups run the risk of being perceived as others. According to the syllabus of the English subject, students should develop knowledge of different parts of the world where the English language is used (Skolverket, Läroplan 54). This applies not only to countries where English is the mother tongue but in fact where English is used, which is no longer restricted to Western societies. As regards the gender category, girls and women are othered as they at times find little representation in the educational material. However, what is more at stake here are the stereotypical ideas about women and men that are conveyed in texts and images. Although sometimes males are presented in negative ways, a hierarchy still exists in which girls and women are positioned as others by patriarchal and androcentric structures. Such a situation does not agree with the curriculum which advocates gender equality (Skolverket, Curriculum 4). The third category, concerning gender identity and sexual orientation, is the least represented in the examined textbooks. Heteronormative structures seem difficult to deconstruct and the idea conveyed in texts and images is that of a heterosexual way of living. Again, a situation which does not
correspond to the curriculum in which it is stated: “the education should be carried out in accordance with fundamental democratic values and human rights, covering the inviolability of people, the freedom and integrity of the individual, the equal value of all people, gender equality and solidarity between people” (10).

- **What are the reasons that these materials are used in the English classroom?**

There are several answers to this question. One is possibly an economical factor as schools cannot afford to frequently update their teaching materials, forcing teachers to use old textbooks which no longer meet the requirements stated in the present curricula. Also, because of financial reasons schools are becoming increasingly interested in sponsored teaching materials, leaving it up to teachers themselves to critically observe and decide in which ways to use these materials (Carlson and von Brömssen 18–19). However, to make visible different perspectives and make critical readings is an additional demanding task for teachers (19).

Thus, the time factor is yet another reason why textbooks of the kind examined here are being used; among all different tasks teachers do there is no time to also search for updated teaching material which at the same time correspond to the regulations of the curricula. But the demands to do this are still there and, for instance, Skolverket points out the need for teachers to develop a critical eye in order to identify subtle discrimination and degrading treatment when selecting teaching material (I enlighet 51). In fact, Carlson and von Brömssen suggest that teachers need to question each and every teaching material regarding its sender, perspective and message (20). This applies not only to textbooks but to other sources as well, for instance, media and the Internet (Skolverket, Läromedlens roll 11). Consequently, bearing in mind that teachers are supposed to reflect on aspects of ethnicity, gender and sexuality, among many more, when confronting heterogeneous groups of students and at the same time lead discussions towards the curricular goals and fundamental values, then possibly it is understandable that teachers do not take (or have) the time to also scrutinize and evaluate textbooks and their inherent values (Larsson and Rosén 5; Skolverket, I enlighet 51). Related to the lack of time is also the fact that teachers might not find the time to look for more updated textbooks, which in fact do exist. At least for newly arrived students I have come across a set of textbooks\(^\text{15}\) which address

\(^{15}\) The textbook series is Connect 1 and Connect 2 by Peter Watcyn-Jones for Studentlitteratur.
young adults with only basic knowledge of the English language. These textbooks seem more appropriate since the ones examined in the present essay (especially Champion 6 intended for year 6), in fact are intellectually degrading to these students of the age of around seventeen to nineteen.

Another possible reason for the books still in use is that teachers might feel it secure to follow already existing textbooks and teachers’ guides, especially teachers who are new to the profession or not yet authorized (Skolverket, Läromedlens roll 84). Also, teachers might find it difficult to apply different perspectives in their tuition, or in fact lack the critical competence for it. Bromseth and Wildow have found that when teachers question, for instance, gender norms they seldom relate these to alternative norms, and they also neglect to challenge the heteronormative structures (31). An additional factor is that teachers are convinced that textbooks ensure a tuition which is in accordance with the curriculum and the course syllabus. This is especially true for teachers of English, in fact a subject in which textbooks dominate the tuition (Skolverket, Läromedlens roll 132). However, it has been demonstrated that many textbooks are not fully in accordance with the fundamental values of the curriculum or the goals of the course syllabus. Therefore it is necessary to question the legitimizing function of the educational materials and whether they assure that the steering documents are being followed (133).

- How can teachers problematize norms regarding ethnicity, gender and sexuality in the classroom in order to make students more aware of stereotyped presentations?

Obviously it is first of all a matter of teachers becoming aware of their own role in the maintaining of traditional norms in different situations. However, when challenging norms in teaching processes it is not sufficient to merely accept and include the other since such a policy will not change the existing structures. Bromseth therefore suggests a perspective that critically scrutinizes norms in order to highlight the process in which these norms create and maintain hierarchical differences (“Förändringsstrategier” 49). According to Bromseth and Wildow, teachers are often conscious of gender norms whereas norms regarding ethnicity and sexuality seldom are scrutinized to the same extent (99). Consequently, they argue “for an implementation of a heteronorm-critical approach to equality, gender and sexuality in the tuition” (100).
Looking at the category of ethnicity, one important aspect to focus on is what Gagnestam and Lundgren respectively refer to as intercultural understanding in the classroom (Gagnestam 12; Lundgren 46–47). In fact, according to Skolverket, emphasis of intercultural competence is an aspect commonly used by many teachers of English when following the curriculum and its competence goals since many textbooks are set in different English speaking countries (Läromedlens roll 146). However, it is necessary to further expand this aspect to also include parts of the world which are not usually considered English speaking countries, namely the non-western areas, in order to represent people traditionally excluded from the norm and thereby work against prejudice and stereotypes. Likewise what concerns the gender category; not only should girls and women be given the same representation as boys and men, but stereotypical notions about femininity and masculinity should also be deconstructed in the tuition. Therefore, teachers need to select material where ideas of women and men are given new and unbiased themes. Regarding the category of sexuality, the representation of people of various gender identities and sexual orientations must be included in a more obvious and natural way in educational materials. Today when schools want to bring up, for instance, homosexuality as a subject, it is often thematized and most often only as part of the tuition of sex and human relationships instead of including it in other school subjects (Bromseth and Wildow 32–33).

Another thing to do in the classroom and which is called for by scholars, is to let the students read presentations about the authors of educational material in order to scrutinize the authors’ values and views of history and knowledge (Skolverket, I enlighet 46). This procedure would make students more critical of the content of textbooks and at the same time also aware of the various ways of reading a content which is not neutral or representing only one “truth” (46). Educating the students in critical awareness is hence an important tool to be used in the tuition.

5 Conclusion

In this essay I have examined a number of textbooks used in the Swedish upper secondary schools with the intention to observe whether exclusion of peripheral groups can be discerned and/or if stereotyping occurs. It should be noted that it is merely what the chosen textbooks might convey that has been analyzed and not how the books might
be used in the tutorial situation. The results have shown that certain groups in our society are either fully excluded or else stereotyped in many of the texts as well as in images. In my view, authors of textbooks always have a choice when selecting texts and images to be published in the books. However, the process requires conscious and critical awareness in terms of, for instance, ethnicity, gender, as well as gender identity and sexual orientation, which are the three categories examined in the present essay. The categories have been studied from postcolonial, feminist and gender, and queer perspectives, of which the concept of *otherness* is the common denominator. *Othering* is understood as the process in which people who deviate from the cultural and social norms are represented as different, *others*, and hence marginalized and at times also excluded in society.

However, my belief is that the process of *othering* works on two levels. The first level concerns marginalized groups who do not conform to the norms in society and hence feel that they lack representation in many situations. As a result they might experience alienation and identity crisis as they feel *othered*. In fact, Hudin argues that since textbooks represent only a defined selection of people it is not likely that all children will fit into the distinct identity templates which design people “to be white, act gender stereotypically and to be heterosexual” (31). The second level concerns people who *do* conform to the norm and thus are represented in society, and whether they regard minority groups in terms of “us and them” and if they in that process in fact *other* marginalized people. Hence, such processes might indeed produce prejudice, misunderstanding and xenophobia. According to Eilard, inherent in our culture are norms, values and ideals which are not overtly expressed and thus tend to appear in various situations, for instance, in educational materials where societal hierarchies and attitudes might be reproduced (“Pojkar och pappor” 90). It is therefore my belief that it is crucial to include a diversity of people and to ensure that peripheral groups in our society are represented in a number of situations, for instance, in media, as well as on different political, social and cultural levels, and as argued in this essay; in the teaching materials in schools. It is a matter of seeing as well as of being seen, and a matter of whose perspective in fact is accepted and valid or *othered* and excluded.
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