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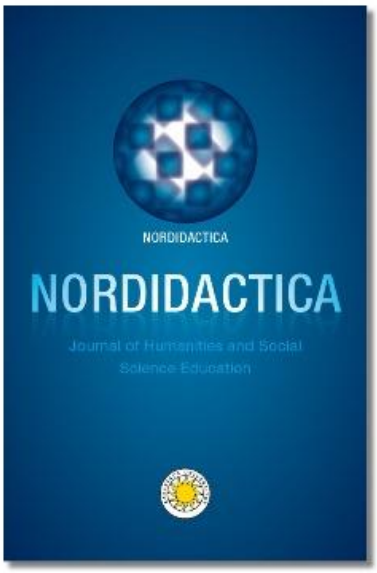

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The Social Studies Subjects and Intersectionality: Multi-Categorical Approaches in Upper Secondary Education

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Abstract: This article studies how the social studies subjects – civics, geography, history, and religious education – in Swedish upper secondary education describe and conceptualise the categories of gender, class, ethnicity, and sexuality. The background is that the syllabi stipulate that analytical perspectives based on these categories should be used to interpret subject-specific content. These categories connect implicitly and explicitly to intersectionality theory and to anti-discrimination policy making. Through a text analysis of syllabi and textbooks, the article revolves around the questions: What kind of multi-categorical approach is being constructed in the different social studies subjects? How does that relate to intersectionality theory? Is the purpose of a multi-categorical approach to fight against discrimination? The result shows that there are slightly different emphases being made depending on school subject. History and geography give priority to the category of gender, whereas civics and religious education present a more varied utilisation. All subjects employ a so-called additive intersectional model, where categories are treated separately. Civics and religious education include discussions of both identity constructions and structural factors. Geography and history focus mainly on a structural level. Religious education is the only subject that explicitly discusses intersectionality theory. To the extent that writings with an anti-discriminatory message occur, the message is often that it is important that the individual show respect and tolerance towards others.

KEYWORDS: UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION, SOCIAL STUDIES, INTERSECTIONALITY, GENDER MAINSTREAMING, ANTI-DISCRIMINATION, COMPARATIVE SUBJECT DIDACTICS

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Introduction

In recent years, it has become common to promote the value of a certain type of multi-categorical approach to the analysis of various social, cultural, and political phenomena (Yuval-Davis, 2005; Carbin & Edenheim, 2013; Nash, 2019). This approach often uses the categories of gender, class, ethnicity, and sexuality. The benefits of considering these categories in analytical work is underlined in a large number of contexts – from scientific studies to policy documents – and the steering documents for the Swedish upper secondary school are no exception (Skolverket [National Agency for Education], 2011a). The syllabi for the four social studies subjects in Sweden – civics, geography, history, and religious education – state that gender, class, ethnicity, and sexuality are central categories for the analysis of subject-specific content (Skolverket, 2011b–i). The trend of emphasising these categories is relatively new: The current national curriculum for the upper secondary school does so (Skolverket, 2011a), whereas the former version did not (Skolverket, 1994).

The emphasis on the categories of gender, class, ethnicity, and sexuality in the steering documents refers implicitly or explicitly to intersectionality theory, a theory developed within humanistic and social science research which aims to discuss and study how social, cultural, and political phenomena are structured multi-dimensionally. In intersectionality theory, it is argued that gender, class, ethnicity, and sexuality (along with other categories such as skin colour, dis/ability, religious affiliation, and age) are prominent structuring principles in today's society (Yuval-Davis, 2006; Nash, 2008; Lykke, 2011). The concept of intersectionality was coined in 1989 by legal theorist Kimberlé W. Crenshaw, but ideas of interacting structures draw from various intellectual and political formulations, notably those of black feminists during the 1970s and 1980s (Lutz et al., 2011; Gross et al., 2016; Nash, 2019).

In addition to referring to intersectionality theory, the categories of gender, class, ethnicity, and sexuality also appear in Swedish gender equality and anti-discrimination policy making. An example is the formulation of the fundamental values (värdegrunden) of the Swedish school system, which builds on the Swedish Discrimination Act 2008:567. These fundamental values are described as follows: "No one should be subjected to discrimination on the grounds of gender, ethnic affiliation, religion or other belief system, transgender identity or its expressions, sexual orientation, age or functional impairment, or other degrading treatment" (Skolverket, 2013a). This way of describing the fundamental values is also fairly new. In the national curriculum that applied previously, the equivalent passage stated that "[n]o one should be exposed to bullying" (Skolverket, 1994, p. 7).

The fact that intersectionality theory and anti-discrimination policy in Sweden revolve around the same categories raises questions about the functions and uses of the analytical approach presented in the steering documents for the social studies subjects: *What kind of multi-categorical approach is being constructed in the social studies subjects? How does that relate to intersectionality theory? Is the purpose of a multi-categorical approach to fight against discrimination?* With these questions in mind, the aim of this article is to study how the categories of gender, class, ethnicity, and sexuality

are presented and conceptualised within the four social studies subjects – civics, geography, history, and religious education – in upper secondary education in Sweden. The primary sources are syllabi and textbooks used in upper secondary education. The importance of applying a multi-categorical approach in the analysis of subject-specific content is emphasised in all syllabi for the social studies subjects. The categories that are to be included in the analysis are not static; in addition to the ones already mentioned, age/generation, nationality, and religious affiliation occasionally appear, and class is sometimes referred to as socio-economic background. However, it is the same basic idea that is expressed, namely, that a multi-categorical approach is key to interpreting and understanding different social, cultural, and political phenomena.

I have analysed descriptions and conceptualisations of gender, class, ethnicity, and sexuality from two theoretical perspectives. First, I have interpreted the source material based on recurring themes in discussions of intersectionality theory. These themes are 1) whether gender transcends other categories, 2) what categories are considered important to include in the analysis, and 3) how the societal structures to which the categories refer interact in practice. Second, I have applied critical perspectives on Swedish gender equality policymaking and gender mainstreaming. It is an interesting fact that gender, class, ethnicity, and sexuality appear both as analytical concepts and as grounds for discrimination in the steering documents for the Swedish school system. I want to focus on this connection.

Background

In teaching and research, discussions of the value of intersectionality theory are numerous. (Lykke, 2003; de los Reyes, 2003; Lykke, 2005; Yuval-Davis, 2006; Nash, 2008; Carbin & Edenheim, 2013; Nash, 2019). In a Swedish education context, these discussions have been closely linked to what is often referred to as norm-critical pedagogy (normkritisk pedagogik) (Björkman et al., 2021; Martinsson & Reimers, 2020; Alm & Laskar, 2017). Norm-critical pedagogy aims to make norms and processes of normalisation visible and to apply power critical perspectives to the analyses of social, cultural, and political phenomena. Teaching in a norm-critical tradition means that teachers and students are trained to identify norms and to critically scrutinise their effects. Genealogically, the emphasis of norm-critical pedagogy applies to sexuality and gender rather than ethnicity and skin colour (Alm & Laskar, 2017).

For issues of cultural diversity, it is more common to use the term intercultural pedagogy (Lorentz & Bergstedt, 2016; Skeie, 2018). Intercultural pedagogy seeks to find constructive approaches to the challenges of a multicultural society. It focuses on many different aspects of education, from the social situations in schools between students and teachers with different backgrounds (the heterogeneous classroom) to the subject content (questions of representation) (Lorentz, 2009; Holmqvist Lidh, 2016).

Norm-critical and intercultural pedagogy should be understood in relation to the state's gender equality and anti-discrimination work (Alm & Laskar, 2017). Although the concepts of norm-criticality and interculturality are not explicitly mentioned in the steering documents for upper secondary education, they share multiple similarities with

formulations on democratic fostering and the fundamental values in the Swedish school system, which emphasises the importance of inclusion and the understanding of diversity.

Studies of textbooks often home in on issues of inclusion and diversity, such as who is made visible and given a voice within the content, how "we" and "them" are constructed, and which cultural tradition is promoted (Kamali, 2006; Ohlander, 2010; Spjut, 2020). These studies draw attention to the fact that textbooks tend to insufficiently represent marginalised groups by giving them too little space or by describing them from the viewpoint of a majority group. Although, this article does not study the representation of marginalised groups, it contributes knowledge regarding the implementation of analytical categories that arguably aims to widen representation and facilitate inclusion.

Formulations regarding gender equality and cultural diversity in the steering documents largely follow the Swedish state's gender equality goals. Several studies have examined what is often described as "state feminism", meaning that a state has adopted a feminist stance and strives to achieve formal and actual equality between women and men (Bergqvist et al., 2007; Borchorst & Slim, 2008; Martinsson et al., 2016). States taking on this task has oscillated between being seen as one of the greatest victories of the women's movement and a depoliticization of the same movement (Alnebratt & Rönnblom, 2016; Liinason, 2018). One problem these studies highlight is that the measures implemented by the state are oftentimes inefficient and bureaucratic. As is further developed in the section on theoretical perspectives, these measures risk turning into an administrative chore that does not change societal inequalities in practice (Ahmed, 2012; Alnebratt & Rönnblom, 2016; Rönnblom, 2017).

Several scholars have pointed towards the need for comparative subject didactics, which is more directly linked to the Swedish educational context and to the social studies subjects examined in this article (Schüllerqvist, 2009; Sandahl, 2014; Larsson & Samuelsson, 2019). In a review of Nordidactica and Acta Didactica Norden (journals that welcome subject didactic research from all subject areas), education historians Anna Larsson and Johan Samuelsson (2019) have only found a few studies with an explicit comparative perspective. Education scholars Sigmund Ongstad (2012) and Frede V. Nielsen (2012) explain that the characteristics of comparative subject didactics depend on the level of the education system one focuses on (e.g., from a system level to a classroom level) and what is being compared (e.g., different school subjects or different national contexts). Education scholar Bengt Schüllerqvist has furthermore emphasised that comparative subject didactics has the potential to highlight specific and overlapping content of particular subjects (Schüllerqvist, 2009). The social studies subjects could be particularly suitable for comparative analyses because they are subjects that are frequently recognised for their overlapping content and similar functions within the education system (Skolinspektionen [Swedish Schools Inspectorate], 2012; Skolverket, 2013b).

Theoretical perspectives

Intersectionality theory

As mentioned at the outset, I apply some recurring themes in discussions of intersectionality theory to the analysis of the source material.

First, there is the status of the concept of gender: Does it override other categories such as class, ethnicity, skin colour, sexuality, dis/ability, and age? Or are the different categories of equal importance? Or does the influence of different concepts vary depending on context? Discussions of intersectionality theory lean towards the latter, that the influence of different concepts varies depending on context (Yuval-Davis, 2011). This means that a central task when conducting an intersectional analysis is to find out which structures are involved. In academic discussions of intersectionality, there have been some tensions over whether gender structures are to be regarded as more significant than other structures, empirically as well as conceptually (Lykke, 2003; de los Reyes et al., 2003; Lykke, 2005; Nash, 2008). This is due to the fact that intersectionality theory emerged within feminist theory, in which the concept of gender plays a central role. Although these tensions arguably have faded, one can still note that the concept of gender is rarely left out of the analysis, whereas other categories such as class, skin colour, ethnicity, religious affiliation, sexuality, and age very well might be.

Second, in syllabi for the social studies subjects, with few exceptions, the same categories are listed: gender, class, ethnicity, and sexuality. Even though the intention is perhaps not to say that these categories are more important than other categories, one can argue that such discursive practices run the risk of resulting in a ranking. To signal the existence of categories that are not listed but that are potentially significant, there is sometimes a hint that the list continues by adding "such as", "like", "for example", or similar. Philosopher Judith Butler criticises the problematic "etcetera" for its implicit claims that a total conceptualisation of determining structures is epistemologically possible (Butler, 1990, pp. 182–183). However, in more recent discussions, Butler's critique has been refuted, for example by sociologist Nira Yuval-Davis, who emphasises that the "etcetera" points towards the need for contextualisation rather than ideas of totality (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p. 160).

Third, discussions of intersectionality have focused on the ways in which structures interact concretely. As gender researcher Jennifer C. Nash points out, it is reasonable to suggest that they do so, but to specify how this plays out in practice and how this can be conceptualised theoretically is another matter (Nash, 2008). What has been at the centre of these debates is the metaphor of the intersection, which seems to suggest that different structures are ontologically autonomous and that they meet in different intersections where they temporarily interact with each other. However, this is at odds with the epistemological claim intersectionality theory tries to make, that is, that different structures are mutually constituted and intertwined. According to intersectionality theory, one must be careful not to treat categories such as gender, class, ethnicity, and sexuality additively. The additive approach might erroneously present the categories as independent entities rather than interdependent constructs.

Gender equality policymaking and gender mainstreaming

I would now like to turn to the second analytical perspective in this article. Swedish gender equality policy is based on some general formulations saying that women and men should have the same power in society and over their own lives, that women and men should have the same financial opportunities in terms of education and paid work, that women and men should take the same responsibility for unpaid work in the homes, and that men's violence against women must stop (Swedish Gender Equality Agency, n.d. [a]). To achieve these goals, the strategy of gender mainstreaming has been applied since 1994. This strategy aims at integrating gender equality work in "municipalities, county councils, regions, county administrative boards, academia and other public domains" (Swedish Gender Equality Agency, n.d. [b]).

Critical perspectives on Swedish gender equality policy question the effectiveness of these measures. Scholars Alnebratt and Rönnblom argue that Swedish gender equality policies fail at articulating the explicit problems in society that gender mainstreaming intends to solve (Rönnblom 2008; Alnebratt & Rönnblom, 2016; Rönnblom, 2017). Men's violence against women is mentioned, but otherwise the problems remain implicit in the goals. According to Alnebratt and Rönnblom, it is problematic if the gender equality goals do not explicitly describe the inequalities they aim to counteract. When the problems are not explicitly stated, a consequence is that existing inequalities in society are left unarticulated, it is argued. When the problems that gender mainstreaming grapples with are not explicitly stated, it is difficult to know what kind of change is required. The result has been that the implementation of the gender equality goals has to a large extent been to inform about the gender equality goals. Alnebratt and Rönnblom apply the political scientist Carol Bacchi's "What's the problem represented to be" approach to warn against the tautological logic of this strategy: Gender mainstreaming seeks to provide information about the need for gender mainstreaming (Alnebratt & Rönnblom, 2016, pp. 53–54).

On a similar note, culture theorist Sara Ahmed notes that policy documents on equality and diversity tend to make use of a moderate progressive language. They support gender equality and societal diversity without addressing or even recognising actual discriminatory practices (Ahmed, 2012, pp. 52–53). Ahmed argues that moderate progressive language runs the risk of downplaying rather than highlighting conflicts in society. On the surface, it seems as if organisations are actively working to fight inequality and discrimination, but they are, in fact, performing the opposite through a discourse that does not call for action. Ahmed suggests that the narrative of gender equality and diversity in policy documents produces feelings of "good enough". Here, she distinguishes between concepts that are "sticky" and those that are not (Ahmed, 2012, pp. 61–62). As she sees it, there are certain buzzwords in the narrative of gender equality that pass without causing too much controversy, like equality and diversity, and others that are stickier and, hence, not as frequently employed, like social justice and solidarity.

A similar argument is presented by political scientist Wendy Brown in a study of the concept of tolerance (Brown, 2006). She argues that the concept of tolerance often fills

the purpose of not having to address more complicated issues of inclusion and conflict of interests. The concept of tolerance is constructed around the logic of a centre and a margin, where the centre is the one performing tolerance towards the margin. The practice of tolerance is at first glance benevolent; it seeks to respect basic human rights and protection of minorities under the law. However, Brown argues that the act of tolerating something or someone is also a process of inclusion and exclusion. By tolerating a marginal position, this position is marked as not fully included in the centre. The centre can thus allow the existence of certain minority groups if they are easy to distinguish. By tolerating minority groups, it is possible to keep track of them; they become, as it were, part of society but marked as the other.

Similar to Ahmed, Brown examines the ways in which certain concepts are used as a means of depoliticising issues of inequality, marginalisation, and social conflict. This is accomplished, for example, by placing the need for tolerance at an individual rather than on a structural level. She writes:

> *When, for example, middle and high schoolers are urged to tolerate one another's race, ethnicity, culture, religion, or sexual orientation, there is no suggestion that the difference at issue, or the identities through which these differences are negotiated, have been socially and historically constituted and are themselves the effect of power and hegemonic norms, or even of certain discourses about race, ethnicity, sexuality, and culture. Rather, difference itself is what students learn they must tolerate. (Brown, 2006, p. 16)*

The reflections of Rönnblom and Alnebratt, Ahmed, and Brown seem to be applicable to the Swedish context, in which all political parties represented in the parliament support the Swedish gender equality goals (Alnebratt & Rönnblom, 2016, p. 9). What I want to discuss in relation to the social studies subjects is the extent to which the promotion of gender, class, ethnicity, and sexuality perspectives seeks to question unequal power relations in society or whether it hints towards inequalities without discussing how they might be resisted or changed. It is also relevant, in accordance with Brown, to discuss on which level the analysis is placed, on an individual or structural level.

Source material and method

The source materials in this study are syllabi for the social studies subjects and textbooks used in upper secondary teaching. These sources have different functions within the Swedish education system. Syllabi are steering documents that direct the aim, core content, and knowledge requirements of specific school subjects. This means that textbooks are reflections and interpretations of what is presented in syllabi; textbooks develop and expand the relatively short formulations presented in syllabi. In line with pedagogue Lina Spjut, I view textbooks as an arena where the writings in the steering documents are transformed (Spjut, 2021).

This article focuses on civics, geography, history, and religious education at the upper secondary level. One reason to pay attention to these school subjects is, as previously mentioned, that they are particularly associated with the transmission of

fundamental values and democratic fostering (Skolinspektionen, 2012, p. 76). As these categories appear both as analytical perspectives and in relation to fundamental values and democratic fostering, I find it useful to focus on these subjects. The focus on the social studies subjects is further motivated by the fact that they are grouped together in a subject block called *samhällsorienterande ämnen* (social studies subjects) in the Swedish elementary school. The four social studies subjects have much in common, but there are also noticeable asymmetries. In upper secondary education, the core courses in civics and history are twice the size (100 credits/hours) of religious education (50 credits/hours). Geography is not a mandatory school subject in all preparatory programmes. However, the core course Geography 1 (100 credits/hours) is mandatory in the biggest national programme, the Social Science Programme.

Despite differences, I have tried to assemble source material that is representative of the individual school subjects but at the same time reasonably symmetrical in quality and quantity. This means that I selected the same number of sources within each school subject, regardless of the total number of publications. The selection of sources is based on a qualitative assessment of available textbooks. Since the publishing houses do not publish sales figures, I used other criteria for selecting sources. Regarding textbooks, I looked at the number of reissues and reprints and selected the titles that stand out as the most established. A final criterion in the selection of sources is that they were written or updated according to the latest version of the steering documents for upper secondary school (Skolverket, 2011a). I studied the following textbooks: Civics: *Libers samhällskunskap* (West, 2017) and *Kompass till samhällskunskap* (Eliasson & Nolervik, 2019); Geography: *Geografi 1* (Wiklund, 2012) and *Geografi 1: Människan, Resurserna, Miljön, Hållbarutveckling* (Östman, 2010); History: *Epos 1b* (Sandberg et al., 2012) and *Perspektiv på historien* (Nyström et al., 2011); Religious education: *En människa, tusen världar* (Tuveson, 2015) and *Religion och andra livsåskådningar* (Ring, 2015).

As previous discussions of comparative subject didactics have stressed, it is important to clarify which aspects are being compared, whether it is the school subjects' function and status within the educational system, the institutional framework of a given school subject, or similarities and differences in content, theories, and methods (Nielsen, 2012; Larsson & Samuelsson, 2019). My focus in this article is on the third aspect, that is, similarities and differences between content, theories, and methods. It should be stressed that this is a textual analysis of sources connected to the social studies subjects and not a study of how teaching is played out in practice. Nevertheless, my hope is that such a textual analysis can contribute to awareness of potential didactical effects of different forms of conceptual use. Like many other studies in this area, the ambition is to work for a more research-informed teaching profession (cf. Nuthall, 2004).

Methodologically speaking, the article employs a confirmatory approach rather than an exploratory one, which means that the categories for which I searched in the source material and the analytical framework I applied were determined in advance (Guest et al., 2012; Kuchartz, 2014). In concrete terms, I started off by noting down passages in the textbooks that corresponded to the categories mentioned in the syllabi. The

textbooks include a mixture of conceptual discussions and empirical cases. It was therefore also relevant to read empirical passages where the categories are implicitly elaborated on. For example:

Concept	Empirical cases
Gender	The situation of women, the franchise, women's movements
Class	Living conditions, distribution of wealth, labour movements
Ethnicity	Ethnic groups, conflicts between ethnic groups, immigration
Sexuality	The situation of homosexuals, contemporary and historical examples of persecution

When presenting the results, I follow one school subject at a time and present how the categories are described and elaborated on in syllabi and textbooks. It is noted whether the categories are activated in relation to each other or held separately. It is also noted at what levels the categories are connected: individual or structural levels. In the discussion section, the findings are interpreted through perspectives on intersectionality and gender mainstreaming.

All translations of Swedish sources are made by me unless the Swedish source is published in English.

Descriptions of categories

In this section, I explore how the categories of gender, class, ethnicity, and sexuality are described in the source material. I focus on one school subject at a time, taking the syllabus as a point of departure. When I discuss the following isolated passages that treat the above-mentioned categories, one should keep in mind that these reflect only one of many analytical perspectives that are outlined in the steering documents, and that the focus of my study lies in a comparison of the social studies subjects and their description and conceptualisation of this particular form of multi-categorical approach.

Civics

It is under the heading "Identity, social relations, and social conditions of groups and individuals" that the civics syllabus stipulates that these subject areas should be studied on the basis of "categories that create both inclusion and exclusion" (Skolverket, 2011i). The attached commentary specifies which categories are alluded to: "Categories can be classifications such as gender, sexuality, class, ethnicity, nationality, religious affiliation and cultural affiliation" (Skolverket, 2011e). The commentary explains that these categories should be approached both as such, as examples of inclusion and exclusion, and as "processes of categorisation".

The textbooks largely follow the syllabus by including chapters focused on identity and group processes. In *Kompass 100*, this chapter is called "Social issues" (Eliasson & Nolervik, 2019), and, in *Libers samhällskunskap*, it is called "Individuals and society" (West, 2017). The former book uses the subheadings "Sex and gender", "Sexuality",

"Class", and "Ethnicity", and the latter uses the subheadings "Groups, affiliation, and social control", "Social stratification and status", and "Gender equality and the gender power order". The above-mentioned chapters in *Kompass 100* combine discussions of identity with statistics on gender differences, ethnicity, and class, whereas in *Libers samhällskunskap*, the ways in which statistics are presented varies; sometimes they are interwoven in the text, and sometimes they are placed in separate fact boxes. Both textbooks lean towards the view that identity is mainly the effect of socialisation: "Where do gender roles come from? The answer is that it is something we learn. It is differences in upbringing and the surrounding society that make us different" (Eliasson & Nolervik, 2019, p. 212); "What differentiates us are often factors that are difficult for the individual person to affect" (West, 2017, p. 64).

The category of gender is presented both as a theoretical concept and as an empirical focus on gender equality. Both textbooks differentiate between sex and gender and state that gender aims to describe processes of socialisation and societal structures that are based not on biological differences but on social, cultural, and political constructions. These constructions are presented as changing over time and depending on the historical context. One can find slight differences in the presentation of the problem of gender equality. Eliasson and Nolervik state that men as a group dominate women as a group in today's Sweden, whereas West moderates the statement by adding "some argue" that men have more power than women (Eliasson & Nolervik, 2019, p. 212; West, 2017, p. 68). In sections on gender equality, both textbooks illustrate existing gender differences by presenting statistics on parental leave, wages, career, and education.

Both textbooks discuss the class society, in what way society is socially and economically stratified and what consequences this has for peoples' life situations. They take issue with the notion that class is not relevant in today's society. Despite the emergence of the welfare state, it is emphasised that socio-economic background affects people's lives immensely: "Although everyone who lives in Sweden should have the same opportunities to live and grow up in a good way, this is not really the case. One factor that affects our everyday lives is our financial situation" (Eliasson & Nolervik, 2019, p. 196); "Yet, we still live in many ways in a class society where the individual's economic situation and opportunities play a very important role" (West, 2017, p. 67). This is followed up by statistics on health, work, and education. Class is a concept that to a lesser extent is tied to questions of identity; even though the concept of social and cultural capital is mentioned, it is not really elaborated on. However, in West, one can find a passage that is interesting in this regard:

> *Luxury goods are a consequence of wealth being unevenly distributed. An important reason why such goods are considered luxury is that only a few can afford them. That is also why these goods are attractive. They give the owner a higher social status, or the feeling of belonging to a privileged group (West, 2017, p. 383).*

In the first textbook, ethnicity is linked to questions of how immigration and demographic change affect what is perceived as Swedish ethnicity, and there is a substantial section with statistics on the labour market, living conditions, health, and the economic situation of different ethnic groups in Sweden (Eliasson & Nolervik, 2019,

pp. 219–226). In the second, the concept of ethnicity is included in a larger section on groups as a social and cultural phenomenon. The first textbook notes that ethnicity can be defined as social relations between people who feel that they have something in common in terms of language and culture. In connection with this, the concept of stereotypes is introduced, and the problems associated with the constructions of a "we" and a "them". The dangers of constructing a "we" and a "them" are also discussed in the second textbook, with a special emphasis on what happens when the majority group is radicalised (West, 2017, pp. 59–64).

Passages in which sexuality are discussed focus mainly on non-heterosexuality and issues of identity, sexual orientation, and discrimination against LGBTQ people. (Eliasson & Nolervik, 2019, p. 216; West, 2017, p. 62)

Geography

When addressing the categories of gender, class, ethnicity, and sexuality, the geography syllabus has a different emphasis than that of civics. Rather than focusing on questions of identity and social structures, these categories are applied in relation to natural resource use, resource conflicts, and questions of social justice and solidarity:

> *In connection to questions of sustainable development, the students shall be given the opportunity to analyse, for example, the consequences of a climate changing world, access to water resources and arable land, environmental risks and threats, natural resource use and resource conflicts as well as social justice and solidarity from different perspectives such as gender, sexuality, class, and ethnicity. (Skolverket, 2011f)*

This wording in the syllabus is ambitious and points towards an investigation of subject content from power critical perspectives. So how are these perspectives treated in the textbooks? Both textbooks include sections called "Gender geography". The discussion in these sections is similar to how gender is discussed in civics textbooks, with the difference that the global context is further emphasised. For example, it is stated that women hold a vulnerable position in large parts of the world. In Wiklund (2012, p. 50), it is moreover stated that there is a risk that "issues of sexuality, race, and class are marginalised" if women are referred to as a homogeneous group. And Östman (2010, p. 57) includes a formulation that reads: "Democracy must also be exercised with respect to the whole population, regardless of gender, ethnicity, and income". These are formulations that explicitly tie several of the categories together.

In order to introduce the concept of ethnicity, one of the textbooks includes a section called "Typical Swedish" (Wiklund, 2012, pp. 15–17). The pedagogical idea is to make Swedish ethnicity visible through a discussion of what is perceived as "normal" in a Swedish setting and the ways in which it is normal to live and behave in other parts of the world. Such an explicit discussion of ethnicity is not present in the other textbook. However, there is a section called "The population of our land", where there are some brief notes on Swedish traditions, minority groups in Sweden, and on recent immigration and its demographical and cultural effects (Östman 2010, pp. 81–86).

In addition to the parts on gender geography and Swedish ethnicity, one can find several sections in both textbooks in which ethnicity- and class-related issues are brought up. These sections relate to the wording in the syllabus on the issue of social justice and solidarity. In sections on sustainable development, it is repeatedly stated that the rich parts of the world must change their ways of living to achieve a sustainable and fair distribution of food, water, and natural resources. The textbook by Wiklund (2012) is in this regard most explicit: eat less red meat (pp. 202–203); travel less (p. 205); use your car less (p. 205); and prioritise: if you want a dog, you cannot keep the car (p. 205). These remarks focus mainly on the responsibility of individuals.

Sexuality, as in non-heterosexuality, is not explicitly elaborated on in any of the textbooks.

History

In the history syllabus, it is under the heading that states that history shall deal with material that "reflects political conflicts, cultural change, and women's and men's attempt to change their own life situation or that of others" that one finds a sentence that specifies that this is preferably executed through the use of different perspectives "such as social background, ethnicity, generation, gender, and sexuality" (Skolverket, 2011g). An interesting detail that can be noted is that the history syllabus is the only one that explicitly mentions women and men; the syllabi for civics, geography, and religious education use the category of gender.

History is a school subject that has repeatedly been criticised for marginalising women (Ohlander, 2010; Holgersson, 2012). Even though this is not the place to dispute such standpoints, the result of reading the two textbooks in history is that gender relations and the situation of women is the most visible analytical perspective of the ones mentioned in the syllabus. Both textbooks include sections on women's history and the particularities of this strand of history writing. Nyström et al. (2011, pp. 100–101) discuss, for example, the challenges of presenting a more balanced account of the past due to male-centred source materials. They mention that adding women to history poses different methodological challenges depending on whether one is studying great or ordinary women. In both textbooks, historical events and processes which affected or involved women are recurrent, especially when it comes to modern times, i.e., the nineteenth century and onwards. Examples of such are the franchise, the women's liberation movement, and gender equality reforms.

The historical events presented in the textbooks focus on a structural level. Confrontations between cultural and religious groups, the subordination of women, labour movements, and working conditions are all examples of that. Telling examples are the situation of women at the end of the nineteenth century: "In 1845, the right to heritage was levelled between daughters and sons, before she only inherited one half" (Nyström, 2011, p. 233); "The father ruled over the choice of spouse for daughters. From a social and economic perspective, it was important that family ties were established with the right people" (Sandberg et al., 2012, p. 124). And one example

related to class is this one: "To survive, one had to find an employment and there was no social security system if one got fired or sick" (Nyström et al. 2011, p. 251).

Arguably, most historical events and processes portrayed activate one or several of the categories mentioned in the syllabus, and questions of ethnic and/or religious groups, society classes and estates, and the situation of women and men are recurrent. Class is, in addition, presented in relation to political ideologies: liberalism, conservatism, and socialism. In both textbooks, sexuality is presented in relation to the women's movement and focuses on the liberation of heterosexual women. Gay men, lesbian women, and LGBTQ rights are scarcely mentioned.

Religious education

As with the other school subjects studied, the religious education syllabus stresses the importance of gender, class, ethnicity, and sexuality perspectives. It is put forward that religious education should give students the opportunity to "analyse and evaluate how religion can relate to, among other things, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and socio-economic background" (Skolverket, 2011h). The attached commentary includes a paragraph that explicitly discusses the concept of intersectionality. According to the commentary, intersectionality theory aims to analyse the ways in which people's identities are formed "on the basis of a variety of factors, such as ethnicity, gender, sexuality, socio-economic background, and religion" (Skolverket, 2011d). Intersectionality theory is considered to contribute to the understanding of peoples' identities "in a more investigative and nuanced way" (Skolverket, 2011d). It is argued that intersectionality theory can be employed to show the diversity that exists within one and the same religion, for example, how religion functions as a means of maintaining socio-economic differences.

In religious education, the categories of gender, class, ethnicity, and sexuality are predominantly connected to questions of identity. Both textbooks present a model where identity functions on different levels: In Ring (2015), the relationship between group identity and individual identity is elaborated on, and in Tuveson (2015), the interaction between the macro, meso, and micro levels are delineated. In comparison with civics, geography, and history, textbooks in religious education succeed in implementing the categories in all empirical chapters. Chapters that are not explicitly about identity and social relations, for example, discussions of world religions, include discussions of gender, class, ethnicity, and sexuality. In Ring (2015), this is accomplished through subheadings called "Ideas of men and women in [the religion being discussed]", "Identity and contradictions in the name of religion", and "[The religion being discussed] in the future of Sweden". In Tuveson (2015), there are sections labelled "Gender and sexuality" and "Ethnicity and socio-economic relations" found in all chapters dealing with world religions.

In the chapters on world religions, it is repeatedly emphasised that views on gender, ethnicity, class, and sexuality are not homogenous within different religious groups. For example, not all Muslims are Arabs, not all Arabs are Muslims, not all Indians are Hindus, and different religious groups find themselves in a majority position in certain

countries and in a minority position in others. In Tuveson, one can find formulations with a rather explicit reference to intersectionality theory, such as this one on the views on gender in Islam: "First of all, religion and gender intra-act with additional intersectional factors such as age, sexuality, ethnicity and socio-economic circumstances. This means that the status and situation of Muslim women and men varies greatly, both within and between countries" (Tuveson, 2015, p. 195). Both textbooks discuss patriarchal, misogynist, and homophobic views and practices within all world religions. It is noted that such views and practices still exist and are problematic. However, it is also put forward that, within all religions, there are examples of feminist and LGBTQ resistance.

When it comes to statements that connect the categories to questions of gender equality and gender mainstreaming, there are passages found in sources from all four school subjects. However, the wordings in religious education textbooks are the most explicit: "It can sometimes be difficult to understand different forms of gender expression and sexuality and to accept how others choose to live […] But at the end of the day it is important to show respect to how others choose to live their lives and that they should be respected for their life choices" (Ring, 2015, p. 45); "We tend to assume that our values and norms are the right ones and perhaps look suspiciously at others. […] It is important to be aware of such patterns and to avoid them" (Tuveson, 2015, p. 18). In these examples, there is a clear emphasis on tolerance and inclusion.

Discussion

The study of descriptions of different categories in syllabi and textbooks reveals that gender, class, ethnicity, and sexuality are given slightly different amounts of space and various functions within the social studies subjects. In syllabi, civics and religious education activate a selection of these categories in connection with questions of identity and social relations, whereas history and geography allude to a structural level through the formulation "the situation of" and the global perspective. Religious education is the only school subject that explicitly mentions intersectionality theory, and it is also the only subject that implements an intersectional approach. Having said that, I want to stress that it is not my aim to review which school subject is the most successful in implementing intersectionality theory. More to the point, I want to make visible how formulations in the syllabi are transformed in textbooks. In this section, I analyse these subject-specific transformations from the perspectives of intersectionality theory and critical perspectives on gender equality policymaking.

In discussions of intersectionality theory, one question has been whether the category of gender transcends other categories (Lykke 2003; de los Reyes et al., 2003; Lykke 2005; Yuval-Davis, 2005). The space devoted to gender identity and gender equality issues in the source material seems to confirm such a bias. In history, the situation of women and different episodes of the women's movements are discussed at length; in geography, sections on gender geography with a special focus on women's situation are included. Civics and religious education present a more balanced account

of the different categories. There is a tendency in all investigated source material to equate gender with women, by which I mean that the sections that address gender issues focus mainly on the situation of women. Sexuality is the category that is given the least space in textbooks in all subjects.

The syllabi contain wordings that signal that the list of categories mentioned is not complete, but that other categories of relevance might play a part. This is hinted at by small words such as "for example", "like", and "such as" (cf. Butler, 1990; Yuval-Davis, 2006). As already mentioned, it is usually gender, class, ethnicity, and sexuality that are listed in the syllabi. The list of categories is not, however, uniform between the four school subjects. Besides gender, class, ethnicity, and sexuality, civics lists nationality and religious and cultural affiliation as important categories, history lists generation, and religious education lists religion. However, the continuation of the list, that is to say, what additional categories "for example", "like", and "such as" point towards, is not expanded on. It seems as if the inclusion of certain categories results in the exclusion of others (for example, the category of dis/ability, that is not mentioned in the syllabi, nor is it covered in the textbooks); there is a process of inclusion/exclusion active in the promotion of analytical perspectives in the social studies subjects. It is interesting to note that, at the heart of analytical perspectives that aim to criticise power structures, one finds complications regarding the inclusion/exclusion complex.

How, then, do the categories interact? The most common interaction in the textbooks is what is usually understood as an additive approach (Nash, 2009). This means that the different categories are discussed more or less separately. A recurring objection in discussions of intersectionality theory to an additive approach is that it seemingly contradicts the intersection metaphor. If the aim of analyses informed by intersectionality theory are to enlighten *how* different structures intersect, the additive approach is unsatisfactory. Civics and religious education are the subjects that most clearly discuss identity at individual and group levels. Oftentimes it is emphasised that peoples' identities are influenced by a wide range of factors. Still, when one looks at the outline of the textbooks, one will find that discussions of these categories are organised into separate sections. If the purpose is to illustrate how different factors interact with each other, then this is an outline with significant shortcomings.

Having said that, the critique of additive intersectionality is only partly relevant when studying the social studies subjects in Swedish upper secondary education. At the end of the day, it is only the religious education syllabus that explicitly elaborates on intersectionality theory. What the syllabi for the other three subjects say is that parts of the subject content should preferably be analysed from different perspectives such as gender, class, ethnicity, and sexuality. As gender scholars Maria Carbin and Sara Edenheim (2013) pointed out, the categories do not, in themselves, suggest a particular theoretical stance. One can therefore conclude that there is nothing that says that the list of perspectives cannot be approached additively in the social studies subjects if one prefers to do so.

As mentioned in the beginning, the emergence of intersectionality theory coincides in time with the introduction of new formulations concerning bullying and discrimination in the steering documents. Since the categories elaborated on in

intersectionality theory and those listed as grounds of discrimination overlap, it is important to probe the question of the extent to which the two share the same goal, to inform about and work against discrimination in society. The collected data confirms that there are certain connections that can be observed. The most explicit examples are in one of the textbooks on geography, which suggests that people in the West must, among other things, eat less meat and travel less, and in textbooks on religious education, emphasising the importance of tolerating other people's life choices. Like Brown suggests (2006), when expressions of inequality are reduced to questions of tolerance, students are taught that inequality is best resisted on an individual level by changing one's attitudes. However, with Ahmed's (2012) concept in mind, one can also suggest that these examples point toward more "sticky" practices, that is, that they encourage the reader to act, to show solidarity and stand up for social justice.

If one contrasts these examples with the more objective accounts of injustices found elsewhere in the source material, the dangers mentioned by Alnebratt and Rönnblom become relevant (Alnebratt & Rönnblom, 2016; Rönnblom, 2008, 2017). The critical perspective on gender equality policy referred to in the introduction warns against tautological tendencies in the practice of gender mainstreaming. With reference to Bacchi's "what's the problem represented to be" approach, Alnebratt and Rönnblom discuss what unarticulated societal problems gender equality policymaking intends to solve. By extension, one might suggest that descriptions of injustices in syllabi and textbooks without any clear appeal for individual or societal change run similar risks of telling the readers to learn about injustices, not to do something about them.

Concluding remarks

In this article, I have examined how the social studies subjects – civics, geography, history, and religious education – describe and conceptualise the categories of gender, class, ethnicity, and sexuality. The background is that the syllabi state that analytical perspectives based on these categories should be used to interpret subject-specific content. I have therefore studied how the formulations of the syllabi are elaborated on in textbooks. These formulations were interpreted through recurring themes in discussions on intersectionality theory and critical perspectives on gender equality policymaking and gender mainstreaming.

In relation to intersectionality theory, I concluded that there is a tendency in history and geography to emphasise gender over other categories mentioned in the syllabi. Gender stands out as the most prominent category both as an analytical perspective and as a selection criterion for empirical examples. Civics and religious education presented a more varied account of the different categories. When it comes to the level of analysis, civics and religious education include discussions of both identity issues and societal structures. Geography and history focus predominantly on a structural level, in geography through the global perspective and in history by elaborating on "the situation of".

As for critical perspectives on gender equality policymaking and gender mainstreaming, it was the occasional focus on the responsibility of individuals that was discussed. The message seemed to be that it is important that the individual show respect and tolerance towards others. On the one hand, this was criticised in accordance with Brown for putting the responsibility for individual and societal change on the individual. On the other hand, it was suggested that the rare case of making an appeal for change could also be seen as "sticky" in accordance with Ahmed's argument, namely, that it encourages students to act, show solidarity, and stand up for social justice.

Generalising how the above-mentioned use of the categories gender, class, ethnicity, and sexuality affects teaching and what it says about the different school subjects could be difficult. All syllabi list the same categories, demonstrating clear overlaps between these subjects (Skolinspektionen, 2011; Skolverket, 2013b). This seems to confirm one of the values that Schüllerqvist (2009) ascribes to comparative subject didactics: the potential to highlight specific and overlapping content. To expand on Schüllerqvist's remarks, my research further specifies that the existence of overlapping categories does not necessarily mean that they are given the same meanings or functions (see also Nyström, 2019).

I have analysed the use of the categories based on themes in discussions of intersectionality theory and critical perspectives on gender equality policymaking and gender mainstreaming. By taking a step back and pondering how these categories are used, they can be understood in a broader context of norm-critical and intercultural pedagogy. This study paints a slightly brighter picture of the representation of marginalised groups and the efforts to try to create a more inclusive representation in textbooks (cf., Kamali, 2006; Ohlander, 2010; Spjut, 2020). Although I problematise the writings on inclusion and tolerance for not sufficiently training students to think critically, it is important to note that the analytical categories listed in the steering documents have been implemented in the textbooks to a large degree.

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