# UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG

## Representation of Colonialism in Swedish Education

- *A qualitative text analysis of ideas*

Hanna Heikki

Bachelor thesis in Global Studies

The Institution of Global Studies, Gothenburg University

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Supervisor: Hauwa Mahdi

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## Abstract

Western educational systems are frequently criticized for silencing Western countries' participation in colonialism. Sweden has rarely been exposed to this criticism in comparison to other Western countries that globally are more associated with former colonial rule. Nevertheless, Swedish involvement in colonialism is a big part of the country's history. This study focuses on how the Swedish and the rest of the Western world's role in colonialism is represented in the Swedish educational system. Further, it is centered around examining what epistemology/ies that are behind the particular representation of their role in colonialism. The study proceeds from the method of analyzing ideas in a Swedish history textbook and syllabus. The study takes its theoretical stance in concepts and theories centered around decolonization and power. The main results of this study include absence of Swedish colonial history-writing and a Western perception on teaching colonialism in Sweden.



**Key words:** Colonialism, Education, Sweden, Power, Decolonization

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# 1. Introduction

This chapter starts with presenting an overview of the issue of study in this essay. It is followed by a section of background information related to the study. Thereafter, the aim and research questions are stated. The fourth subchapter is centered around how the study is delimited and the last section clarifies relevant definitions for the study.

## 1.1 Problem Assessment

Western countries, that are historically acknowledged as major colonial powers, are repeatedly receiving criticism regarding their national educational systems for diminishing and silencing the colonial violence they have performed throughout history (Hennessey, 2022, pgs. 2-4). Critics in the United States exemplify this by highlighting the role and power of the educational system and curriculum in establishing consensus regarding the domination of traditional discourses that suppress movements or theories that operate against structural injustices, for example the critical race theory. Additionally, critics argue that the educational system and curricula assists in the destruction of colonial resistance and the systematic erasure of knowledge and experiences of groups that historically have been/are marginalized. Instead the educational system and curricula operate to favor eurocentrism (Fúnez-Flores, 2023, p.7), that emphasizes discourses that highlight colonialism and its consequences as something positive (Hennessey, 2022, pgs. 2-5).

Globally, Sweden is considered a Western country, however Sweden is not associated with colonial rule compared to other Western countries. Internationally, Sweden is often seen seeking the reputation and image of being a humanitarian country that positions itself as neutral in political conflicts and happenings. The country furthermore portrays itself as a country with high morals and is frequently seen expressing solidarity with non-Western countries. However, Sweden has had colonies overseas, the North American colony of New Sweden from 1638 - 1655 and the Caribbean Island St. Barthélemy from 1784 - 1878 (Hennessey, 2022, pgs. 2-5). Moreover, Sweden is criticized concerning the treatment of different indigenous groups in Sweden. Some of the criticism regarding Swedish colonialism is aimed towards the absence of Swedish history-writing regarding colonial rule abroad but also lack of Swedish history-writing concerning the oppression of indigenous groups and colonialism within Sweden (Carlsson, 2020, p. 270). In 2011, Sweden recognized the Sámi people as an indigenous group in fundamental law. ILO:s convention (ILO-169) and the UN's

declaration on indigenous rights are constituted to protect the rights of indigenous. Sweden has agreed to the UN's declaration on indigenous rights but not to the ILO-169 convention (Amnesty, n.d.). This study aims to examine how the role of Sweden and the rest of the Western world in colonialism is represented in Swedish education. Sweden is an interesting country to examine to understand where the country positions itself in the intersection of being a Western country on one hand and its self-image of being a humanitarian country on the other.

## 1.2 Background - Tornedalingar, Kväner and Lantalaiset

This subchapter is centered around a minority group in Sweden: Tornedalingar, Kväner and Lantalaiset. It is important to state that this chapter largely proceeds from a government-commissioned study since a lot of academic research has not yet been performed to investigate the specific minority group. Nevertheless, I have made the decision to include the perspective of the particular minority group in this study. I consider the information from the interviews performed in the government-commissioned study as highly relevant within the academic field of Swedish colonial research and it should therefore be acknowledged in this study. Furthermore, the Sámi people are mentioned a few times in this subchapter, however, they are more particularly addressed in subchapter 2.5.

A recent government-commissioned study was aimed to investigate the oppression of the minority group: Tornedalingar, Kväner and Lantalaiset in Sweden (SOU 2023:68, p. 3). Tornedalingar, Kväner and Lantalaiset are three different identity expressions. Tornedalingar is the term used to describe the group of people that formed a movement to protect and preserve the language, Meänkieli, spoken by the minority group. It was a movement that grew rapidly during the 1980s in the northern part of Sweden called Tornedalen where this population lives. When the movement reached the Swedish government, the population naturally got associated with the term Tornedalingar. However, it is not a term that everybody in the group associates with since the term is strongly connected to the area of Tornedalen. Other terms of the group are therefore needed since people that share the culture and the language but are not living in Tornedalen otherwise might feel excluded by the term. Kväner is the term used for the original group of people that lived in the area that today is part of northern Sweden, Norway and Finland. It is not confirmed how long the minority group have lived in Sweden but at least since the year 800. Kväner associate with the term Kvän,

Tornedaling or Lantalainen. The term Lantalainen is an identity expression used most commonly by the population that speak Meänkieli but do not associate with the term Tornedalingar because of them not being geographically connected to Tornedalen (Svenska Tornedalingars Riksförbund, n.d.).

After Sweden lost Finland to Russia in the war of 1809, the area where the population lived was separated and the Meänkieli speaking minority that lived in the Swedish part of Tornedalen formed a new minority group (SOU 2023:68, p. 33). Many of the people interviewed for the study describe the loss of rights concerning their land, as a consequence of the Swedish state's management of the land and extraction of natural resources, as a colonial process (SOU 2023:68, p. 572).

The minority group was seen as less developed compared to the Swedish population and therefore also seen as a threat to the Swedish population. If the Swedish "race" would be mixed with the "Finnish race", it could lead to degeneration of the Swedish "race". According to Darwin's theories on language and origin, older languages were seen as less valuable and Swedish authorities were concerned that Meänklieli would spread and influence the Swedish language. The question of language became a question of race (SOU 2023:68, pgs. 198-199). Many names of places in the north of Sweden that were in Finnish or Sámi were changed into Swedish names (SOU 2023:68, p. 214). In the government-commissioned study, some of the people interviewed describe how their own names were changed if they sounded Finnish. Instead, they were given names that sounded more Swedish, against their will (SOU 2023:68, p. 298). Not until 1999 was Meänkieli recognized as a national minority language in Sweden (SOU 2023:68, pgs. 34-35).

The educational system was crucial to the state's assimilation policy. In 1888, four schools were established in Tornedalen, where only Swedish was allowed to be spoken. Boarding schools were another important part in the structure of the assimilation policy, where from the age of seven, children were conscripted into them and forbidden to speak their mother tongue (SOU 2023:68, pgs. 34-35). The conscripted children were described as savages and therefore in need of Swedish acculturation (SOU 2023:68, pgs. 331- 335). Several of the persons interviewed in the commissioned study, describe different forms of abuse and violations that took place in the boarding schools. Oftentimes, the violence was performed when the children spoke Meänkieli but not necessarily always so. One man describes that he

got wet from being outside, when he came in he was punished for getting wet, he had to undress so he only wore a shirt, no pants or undergarments. The girls were called to stand and look at him in the hall and he was ordered to walk upstairs with them watching. Another man described how his cousin had peed in the bed one night, the teacher took the sheet and beat him with it. Several people had memories connected to food, either forced feeding or starvation. One person remembered that he several times watched kids being forced to eat their own vomit. Another man described one incident where he was beaten with a whip, the next morning when the teacher discovered that his sheets were bloody, he was abused again for getting the sheets dirty and was further punished with starvation (SOU 2023:68, pgs. 341-344).

In 1922, the race biological institute was established in Sweden where research, such as measuring of the skulls, was performed on the minority group and the Sámi people to prove that they were biologically inferior to the Scandinavians (SOU 2023:68, pgs. 198-199). The practice of collecting human remains for race biological purposes, was also performed on the minority group but not to the same extent as for the Sámi people (SOU 2023:68, p. 519).

Many of the participants in the study state that they feel like the knowledge about the minority group is in general very limited in Sweden and that one reason for that, is that the Swedish educational system is not inclusive of the minority group. They further express that they feel like their heritage is not discussed to the same extent as the Sámi heritage. Authorities, research and museums that highlight the Sámi culture and history are not inclusive of  Tornedalingar, Kväner and Lantalaiset, even though both of the groups are connected to parts of the same geographical area. Several cultural practices that historically have characterized both of the groups are only considered Sámi (SOU 2023:68, pgs. 302-303). For example, reindeer herding has historically been a big part of the minority groups' culture and way of living, however, the law regulating the practice of reindeer herding is today limited to the Sámi people (SOU 2023:68, p. 399). Many of the interviewed express how they were brought up in smaller agricultural communities and lived off fishing and hunting. In many cases there was a reindeer mark in the family, the mark is found in the reindeers ears and shows who is the owner of the reindeer. Several participants further express sadness that they have also lost the fishing and hunting rights that come with the reindeer herding (SOU 2023:68, pgs. 406-407).

## 1.3 Aim and Research Questions

The aim of this study is to examine how the role of Sweden, along with the rest of the Western world, is represented in Swedish education. This essay also aims to analyze epistemological perceptions and power that relates to the specific representation/s. The research is performed through an analysis of ideas identified in the Swedish history textbook *Bilden av historien 1b* and in the syllabus for the history course Historia 1b, which are aimed for students in the Swedish upper secondary school. The study proceeds from the following questions:

- How do Swedish history textbooks and syllabuses represent the Swedish and the Western world's role in colonialism?
- What epistemological perception/s are behind the specific representation of their role in colonialism?

## 1.4 Delimitations

The research of this essay focuses on the history course Historia 1b in the Swedish upper secondary school. The Swedish upper secondary school consists of 19 national programmes. Among the 19 programmes, 13 programmes consist of more practical courses that are supposed to prepare the student for a particular profession after graduation and the remaining six programmes contain more theoretical courses that are supposed to prepare the student for further studies at university after graduation. Additionally, Sweden has four introduction programmes, and six national recruiting programmes, (Skolverket, 2023), these will however not be included in this essay. The data used for this study consists of the syllabus for the course Historia 1b along with the textbook *Bilden av historien 1b*. The selection of the source materials for this essay is further discussed in chapter 4.1. *Bilden av historien 1b* was published in 2016 (Liber, n.d.), and the syllabus for the Historia 1b course was established in 2010 (Historia, 2010, pgs 7-10). The time period for this essay is hereby delimited from 2010 until today.

## 1.5 Definitions

Colonialism is a complex concept that can be difficult to define, it is therefore important to acknowledge that the definition this study proceeds from is: “Colonialism can be defined as the conquest and control of other people’s land and goods” (Loomba, 2005, p. 32). Other

words and notions that require a definition are the Swedish upper secondary school and Skolverket. The Swedish upper secondary school is the term used in this study to describe the public Swedish “Gymnasiet” and Skolverket is the Swedish national agency for education. Skolverket is furthermore the institution that establishes curricula along with guidelines for grades and syllabus for the Swedish public school (Skolverket, 2022a).

# 2. Previous Research and Academic Relevance

This chapter addresses previous research concerning the subject of this study. The first two subchapters involve global processes and issues that relate to the subject of Global Studies. The first subchapter addresses the system of white supremacy on a global scale and how it is ingrained in institutions. The second subchapter concludes research that more particularly focuses on the role of Western education in maintaining oppressive colonial structures. The third subchapter also involves a global perspective and focuses on how the Swedish educational system has changed in line with the Europeanization process. The last two subchapters narrow down research about Sweden particularly. The fourth subchapter revolves around Swedish external colonialism, including former colonies, processes of trade and Swedish missionaries. The fifth subchapter addresses Swedish internal expansion, including the exploitation of Sápmi and the racialization of the Sámi people.

## 2.1 The Global White Supremacy System

According to Beliso-De Jesús and Pierre it was the European expansion across the globe in the fifteenth century that gave rise to the current international power system. They highlight the connection between the European expansion and the white supremacy system as means of sustaining a hegemonic Western logic. Therefore, they emphasize that the white supremacy system can never be limited to groups that are racial extremists, instead it should be understood as a system that is embedded in all structures of global power. For example, that includes liberal understandings of international law, the hierarchical order of nation-states and the Euro-American educational system (Beliso-De Jesús & Pierre, 2020, p. 67).

The global power system set by the Western world through colonial practices is not limited to the past, it is constantly present in the development today. It is visible in the constructions of identities that are racialized and gendered, and in the emergence of neoliberal economies in postcolonial nation formations. For example, a discussion concerning discrimination of race

and gender in Brazil could not be performed without including the global perspective of Brazil being part of global structures of European exploitation, colonization, the enslavement of Africans, the violence against indigenous, and the classification of people depending on their race. The local context must be examined in relation to global histories of race and white supremacy (Beliso-De Jesús & Pierre, 2020, pgs. 66-68).

## 2.2 Criticism Towards the Western Educational System

Previous research associated with colonialism and education on a global scale contains several postcolonial theorists arguing that the Western educational system and curriculum are constructed to maintain colonial structures and therefore must be decolonized. Anibajo Quijano draws attention to the correlation between hegemonic discourses and epistemology that must be apprehended in order to understand the processes of colonialism. For example, he emphasizes that slavery, as a means to produce commodities for the world market by a specific "race", was legitimized by the Eurocentric epistemological understanding of capitalism (Quijano, 2000, p. 218).

Jairo Fúnez-Flores was inspired by Quijano's work and did his own research on decolonization and geopolitics of the educational institutions and curriculum. His research focuses on the Eurocentric educational system and how it upholds oppressive colonial structures that generate an epistemology and a knowledge that benefit Western geopolitics at the expense of the non-Western world. Fúnez-Flores argues that the educational institutions along with the Eurocentric pedagogy and curriculum are based and built from the logic of colonialism. The educational system and curriculum contribute to creating and shaping a "universal" Western capitalist rationality that encourages imperial domination and capitalist exploitation, while simultaneously and systematically excluding the non-Western world. Therefore, he further means that decolonial theory is an important perspective to include when analyzing social practices and discourses such as those in the domain of the educational system (Fúnez-Flores, 2023, pgs. 2 & 5-7). "When knowledge is conceived as global, it creates the illusion that it benefits everyone equally, while neo-developmental, tourist and service industry projects continue displacing Indigenous, Afro-Indigenous, Black and campesino communities with the assistance of the university" (Fúnez-Flores, 2023, p. 11). He argues that education, curriculum and governance structures are linked to larger political, economic, and sociocultural patterns of colonial power, which is centered around the

perception of organizing people from the principle of race. In previous colonial projects, educational institutions and systems have had a big role in legitimizing colonial domination and capitalist exploitation. Fúnez-Flores argues that the educational system still possesses this central role in colonialism through the power of deciding what knowledge is legitimate and as the springboard for developing technologies deployed in the dispossession of communities (Fúnez-Flores, 2023, p. 10).

## 2.3 Global Influences Affecting the Swedish Education

Andreas Nordin did his doctoral thesis on discourses of knowledge related to the educational system in Europe and Sweden. In his thesis, he highlights the prominent connections between the development of the Swedish educational system and the process of Europeanization (Nordin, 2012, p. 202). Europeanization was originally meant to be a process to favor trade along with building a sense of European solidarity and identity between the European states (Nordin, 2012, pgs. 41-42). The earlier governing documents from the European Union (EU) mainly focused on socialist values, for example decreasing social gaps between classes. However, after the Lisbon strategy was established, the EU evolved into a more labor market oriented organization dominated by an economic growth discourse. Nordin suggests that this view of knowledge could be associated with technical-instrumentalism.
Technical-instrumentalism is a view of knowledge geared towards meeting economic objectives. The role of knowledge in the educational system, school and curriculum is structured to favor economic competitiveness. Knowledge is not considered having value in itself, rather it is given a value when it is favorable to economic growth (Nordin, 2012, pgs. 192-193).

The Europeanization process has come to affect the European states in different ways, it can be described as a process that transfers power from the European member states to the EU. Within the sphere of education this change is visible in how the power of developing educational goals and directives successively has transferred from the European member states to the EU, whereby the educational system is now governed more from a centralized approach rather than from a decentralized approach (Nordin, 2012, pgs. 41-42). Quantitative indicators are usually easier to measure, compare and evaluate. The education related indicators and goals, developed by the EU, are predominantly quantitative, result-based and labor market oriented (Nordin, 2012, pgs. 149-150). The change towards a more result-based

school is also visible in the Swedish educational system. For example, PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment), was originally meant to be an indicator to compare different countries' educational systems. Today, a high PISA ranking is one of the primary goals within the Swedish school, in which the indicator has been transformed into the goal (Lindgren, 2014, p. 100). The subjects that PISA measures receive more resources from the Swedish government along with governing documents and national exams. Consequently, this can lead to neglect and decrease in teaching the more qualitative humanitarian goals within the school, since they are usually harder to measure and not necessarily viewed as favorable for economic growth (Lindgren, 2014, pgs. 112-115). This change has also led to teachers having less influence over education. The development of a result-based Swedish schooling could therefore be associated with the Europeanization process where the EU and the Swedish Government have an interest in more power and control over the knowledge taught in school to align it to economic growth targets (Nordin, 2012, pgs. 200-201).

## 2.4 Swedish External Colonialism and Expansion

There are many sources confirming the Swedish participation in European colonial expansion. However, in comparison to countries like France and Britain, Sweden has not been as intensely involved in the discussions about decoloniality (Naum & Nordin, 2013, pgs. 3-4). This has enabled Sweden’s international relations to develop a strategy built on mediation and non-alliance. How Sweden contributed to and benefited from colonialism was not of much interest and therefore not thoroughly examined (Fur, 2013, p. 24). It is more recently academics have become interested in and researched the Swedish participation in colonialism (Naum & Nordin, 2013, pgs. 3-4).

### 2.4.1 Former Colonies Abroad

As previously mentioned in the introduction, Sweden had two colonies abroad, New Sweden, which was located in today's Delaware, America from 1638 to 1655 and St. Barthémely, a Caribbean island from 1784 to 1878 (Hennessey, 2022, pgs. 2-5). The colony of New Sweden was colonized on the arguments that the colony would be beneficial for trade relationships and therefore enrich investors and the Swedish crown. Another argument was that the colony would assist in civilizing indigenous Americans as well as spreading Christianity. However, the commercial outcome did not turn out as expected in the first years of Swedish ruling and investors chose to pull back on their investments due to disappointing results. This resulted in

new reforms, the Swedish Johan Printz became governor for the colony and his mission was to constitute and develop institutions that aligned with Swedish models of legal and religious systems. He was also instructed to establish plantations that produced, for example tobacco. He was governor for eleven years between 1642 and 1653 and his governorship was characterized by growth, economically and territoriality (Ekengren et al., 2013, p. 169-171). Printz understood the indigenous Americans in a way that aligns with other Western ethnographic perceptions during the same time period, as "strong and stout, wise in trade, skilled in hunting and crafts, as well as barbarously heathen, vindictive and ill-tempered" (Ekengren et al., 2013, p. 179). In 1655, New Sweden was attacked and taken over by the Dutch and was no longer a Swedish colony (Ekengren et al., 2013, p. 171).

The Swedish colonization of St. Barthélemy was a consequence of political negotiations between Sweden and France. France, was the previous colonizer but exchanged St. Barthélemy for storage rights in Gothenburg, Sweden. Through this agreement, Sweden attained the status of being a slave-owning power. However, the Swedish law, which in theory was supposed to apply to the colony as well, did not recognize slavery (Wilson, 2019, pgs. 329-330). Nevertheless, after the island's transition to Swedish territory, Sweden engaged in slavery by using the already existing population of slaves to perform work, for example in the development of the city Gustavia. The whole population as well as the slave population in Gustavia grew under Swedish rule. From 1788 until 1796 the total population of the city had increased from 656 people to 2051 people. The growth continued and in 1806, the white European settlers were 835 people, the free population of color were 802 people and the black slaves consisted of a population of 1424 people (Wilson, 2019, p. 333).

### 2.4.2 Trade

Trade was another way Sweden engaged in colonialism and important for Swedish expansion. In order to engage in the trade of slaves and commodities, around 80 forts and three castles were built on Ghana's Atlantic coast to monitor and protect European interests. The buildings were used as places of trading, they were used as places to mobilize defense and further as residences. It was a way for European colonists to exploit Africa. One of these castles, Carolusburg in Cape Coast, was built by Sweden in 1653. In total, Sweden accounts for nine percent in building forts and castles in Ghana (Addo, 2011, p. 408). Additionally, the production of metals and the mining industry has historically been very important for

Sweden. Research about techniques that could boost the production of metals were of big importance during the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, it was not of concern to research what the metals were produced for. The Swedish production of metals was used specifically for machinery parts and work tools for the plantations in North America and the Caribbean and were therefore of high global demand (Ojala & Nordin, 2015, p. 11). The production of metals in Sweden was driven by capitalist interests where Sweden saw an opportunity for economic expansion in providing the global market with a resource of high demand (Evans & Rydén, 2007, p. 3 & 228).

### 2.4.3 Swedish Missionaries

Sweden further had engaged in colonialism as workers and missionaries in countries colonized by other European countries. An example was the Congo Free State (CFS), colonized by Belgium. The Swedish Missionary Society sent 124 Swedish missionaries to the colony and established nine Protestant missionary societies between 1881 and 1908. It was not just Swedish missionaries that migrated to the CFS, a lot of Swedes also migrated to explore or work. Africa was viewed as the land of savages who needed to be rescued by the white man through civilization, which justified the practices of colonialism (Natermann, 2023, pgs. 464-465). The Swedish missionary Evard Vilhelm Sjöblom who lived in the CFS stated in his journals: “Poor people, if it was not for me, they would know nothing of Christmas” (Natermann, 2023, p. 475). Swedish missionaries believed they had a duty to educate the world's less “developed” population, Africans. The Swedes were active agents in the colonization of central Africa by carrying white culture, Western worldviews and Christianity to the colonies, however it is something that historically has been ignored (Natermann, 2023, p. 470).

## 2.5 Swedish Internal Colonialism and Expansion

The Sámi people is an indigenous group that partly lives in the north of Sweden, and is probably the minority group in Sweden that is most discussed nowadays in relation to colonialism within Sweden (Hennessey, 2022, pgs. 2-4). The knowledge about the oppression of the Sámi people is very limited in Sweden. Scholars argue that the Swedish state is unwilling to recognize the Swedish history of colonial practices and violence that the state exposed the Sámi people to (Ojala & Nordin, 2015, p. 10). The exploitation of Sápmi is usually not associated with imperial colonialism rather it is preferably perceived as internal

colonization, which is theorized as a milder form of colonization in contrast to European expansion and colonialism abroad. However, it is important to acknowledge that the perception of Sápmi as an internal region in Sweden, denies the colonial perspective of the expansion of Swedish policies in Sápmi (Lindmark, 2013, p. 132).

Sápmi is the area where the Sámi people have lived for thousands of years, long before the establishment of the Swedish state. The Sámi people survived in the subarctic area through reindeer herding, hunting and fishing (Andersson et al., 2005, p. 294). Today, Sápmi is spread and divided over Sweden, Norway, Finland and Russia and it is uncertain exactly how long the Sámi people have lived there, the discussion revolves around a range between 3000 and 10 000 years (Sametinget, 2024).

Between the seventeenth and nineteenth century the Sámi people and their land Sápmi was exposed to colonial policies such as exploitation and "civilizing" of the people. The Swedish state developed policies that "justified" control over religious, economic and cultural beliefs of the Sámi people (Ojala & Nordin, 2015, p. 10). The Swedish state realized that Sápmi contained opportunities to develop the mining industry and other valuable natural resources that were important for the expansion of the state (Naum & Nordin, 2013, pgs. 6-8). A Swedish Council member wrote a letter to the Swedish Chancellor where he expressed his thoughts about the findings: "We hope that this with the help of God will become the West Indies [i.e., America] of the Swedes" (Ojala & Nordin, 2015, p. 11).

The Swedish colonization of Sápmi resulted in various forms of abuse and violations of the Sámi people. The Swedish state forced the Sámi population to work in the mines or perform other forms of labor that would benefit the state. Their cultural possessions, for example the Sámi ceremonial drums and sacred stones along with sacred places were destroyed or taken by the Swedish state. The destruction and confiscation were justified by the missionary campaigns that sought to christianize the Sámi people (Ojala & Nordin, 2015, pgs. 12-14). The Sámi people were assigned attributes associated with impulsiveness, primitiveness and childishness and were considered "undeveloped" according to the scientific doctrines of the time. Carl Linnaeus (Carl von Linné), was one theorist that through his research arranged human beings in different types of categories depending on cultural and physical attributes. The Sámi were placed by Linnaeus in the category of Homo Monstrosus, regarded as degenerate and freakish creatures" (Naum & Nordin, 2013, p. 12). In the nineteenth and

twentieth century, Sámi graves were plundered for race biological studies. The purpose was to prove that the Sámi population were biologically inferior to the Scandinavians. Sámi skulls were flogged off as goods of trade, both nationally and internationally. Some of the human remains are still stored in Swedish institutions or museums. In 2007, the Sámi Parliament in Sweden demanded the return of the remains for reburial. The debate got a lot of attention which has resulted in some of the remains being returned and reburied (Ojala & Nordin, 2015, pgs. 12-14).

# 3. Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

This chapter constitutes the theoretical framework for this essay. It is built on the chapter of previous research and particularly proceeds from concepts of decolonization and power that have been central in the criticism previously presented towards the Western educational system.

## 3.1 Decolonization and Epistemology

Grosfoguel argues that we need to understand decolonization beyond the perception that it simply involves a state's geographical area. He argues that colonial power structures did not end when Western countries withdrew from their colonies. Even though the majority of previous colonies are now independent, the global is still ruled by the West and the non-West is still exploited and dominated (Grosufugel, 2007, p. 219). Epistemology can be described as the theory of knowledge. According to Bhargava, in contrast to physical colonial violence, colonization of lands and plundering of natural resources, epistemic power has to do with injustices that are rooted in the mind. Bhargava exemplifies the power of epistemology through the understanding that colonial control would not have been possible without the understanding of the colonizers as superior. The colonial violence included not only the lands and resources, but also the minds and cultures. Epistemological injustice occurs when the perception of how a people view themselves and the world is displaced and replaced by the colonizer's perception and worldview (Bhargava, 2013, p. 413-414).

## 3.2 Discourses and Hegemony

How one knowledge can appear superior to another could be elaborated through a discussion of discursive power and hegemony. According to Michel Foucault, power is rooted in everything, and it is something that is constantly present and which we constantly anchor in

our relationships (Foucault, 2002, pgs. 103-106). Central to Foucualt's theory is that knowledge can never be considered or understood as objective. Rather, language, knowledge and power are intertwined in an inseparable system (Foucualt, 2002, pgs. 108-109). It is through dominating discourses, which is the way we systematically think and talk about our existence, that produce our perception of "knowledge". The power within the discourses constantly operates through the language which produces and establishes norms about what is considered normal and what is considered abnormal. It creates an understanding of what a legitimate knowledge is, and arranges and organizes it into binary systems, where what is considered legitimate stands in opposition to what is considered illegitimate (Axelsson & Qvarsebo, 2017, pgs. 132-134). Essential to Foucault's theories is further that there is no such thing as a universal rationality, rather power must be analyzed within its cultural and historical context in order to understand dominating discourses and structures of power, that might give the impression of a universal rationality (Axelsson & Qvarsebo, 2017, pgs. 110-112).

Chantal Mouffe is another theorist that criticizes the understanding of consensus and universalism through her theory of hegemonic power. She draws attention to how the organizing of political and social orders are linked to power relations. She means that an order that appears natural is only the result of a hegemonic practice, it is not shaped from a standpoint of objectivity. "Things could always be otherwise and therefore every order is predicated on the exclusion of other possibilities" (Mouffe, 2007, p. 2). Society and all its social orders are a product of hegemonic orders, power relations. In order to unveil voices that have been excluded, we must question and challenge existing orders that appear to have been built on consensus (Mouffe, 2007, pgs. 4-5).

## 3.3 Why Decolonization?

According to Subedi a decolonizing approach in constituting curriculum offers a framework for critically investigating and analyzing global happenings and issues. It is important to understand how other approaches differ from the decolonization approach in order to understand why a decolonization approach can be relevant in the field of education.

### 3.3.1 The Deficit Approach

The decolonizing approach criticizes the deficit and accommodating approach on constituting curriculum. The deficit approach emphasizes a Eurocentric understanding of the global. It is characterized by organizing the world in dichotomies where Western industrialized countries are understood in terms of always being progressive, democratic and not having any social problems, while non-Western countries are understood as countries with poor conditions and problems. The understanding of the global in this way suggests that Western countries are culturally superior to non-Western countries and it does not leave space for other perspectives. Therefore, a deficit approach on shaping curriculum generates knowledge that privileges the Western people, their histories, experiences and ideologies. Simultaneously, it silences stories and experiences of people that have not historically been in power. Furthermore, it is an approach that seeks to equalize a eurocentric perception with a universal perception. It creates a possibility for the West to operate from a value-neutral global standpoint, instead of having their standpoint understood as eurocentric. It exemplifies for the way the Western world is understood as constantly progressive and sets the standard for how societies should be organized. This results in marginalizing the non-Western world in terms of contributing to world history (Subedi, 2013, pgs. 623-624). Linda Tuhiwai Smith explains this as the research through imperial eyes. It creates an understanding of Western ideas being the only legitimate and rational way of making sense of the world (Tuhiwai Smith, 2021, p. 63). History is being taught through the colonizer's perspective and the knowledge and experiences of marginalized groups are not represented (Tuhiwai Smith, 2021, p.33). "In fact, history is mostly about power. It is the story of the powerful and how they became powerful, and then how they use their power to keep them in positions in which they can continue to dominate others. It is because of this relationship with power that we have been excluded, marginalized and 'Othered'" (Tuhiwai Smith, 2021, pgs. 37-38).

Another feature of the deficit approach is the essentialization of cultural narratives brought up by the non-West. It homogenizes non-Western communities in specific traits and embraces an understanding of those traits as naturally given to the majority. The perspective lacks a way of critically examining differences and does not seek to give space for knowledge originating from the non-Western world. Additionally, a deficit curriculum is usually founded on a logic of exceptionalism, that encourages students to understand their country as exceptional in comparison to other countries and global concerns. It is a logic that favors nationalistic

loyalty towards the country over global responsibility. In order to understand one's own country as exceptional it further requires that other countries are understood as not/less exceptional. This representation of one's own country as exceptional usually results in students detaching from learning to have a critical approach in understanding privileges and power that reinforce oppression, racism and inequities and instead favoring for example national capitalist interests. Another example is normalizing wars in terms of describing and teaching the understanding of them as crucial to uphold for example democracy. It fosters an understanding of protecting one's own country before critically examining global structures. In the context of teaching colonialism, one example is teaching colonialism in terms of expansion rather than colonization (Subedi, 2013, pgs. 625-627). It is the same kind of thinking that affects the representation of Columbus. Columbus is often described in positive terms such as a hero, an explorer or adventurer in Western history books. Descriptions about the destruction that the Europeans caused for the indigenous in America are typically not represented (Tuhiwai Smith, 2021, p. 23).

Representations of the non-Western world in Western curriculum and textbooks are further central in the critique towards the Western educational system. History books aimed to educate about global history are problematic when using whiteness as the center and norm (Subedi, 2013, p. 629). Whenever non-Western populations are represented, they are stereotyped as undeveloped groups and cultures, unable to bring forth any sort of progress (Schaefli et al., 2018, p. 477). They are associated with danger and inferiority and the non-Western countries are further often represented as a liability for the Western democracy. These representations are often visible in current discussions about social problems in the Western world, such as terrorism, increased immigration, unemployment and diseases. Students that repeatedly are exposed to stereotypes and misrepresentations of the non-Western communities are socialized into an understanding of the non-Western world as culturally inferior to the Western world (Subedi, 2013, pgs. 621-623).

### 3.3.2 The Accommodation Approach

The accommodation approach in designing curriculum also departs from the decolonizing approach. Distinctive for the accommodation approach is that it seeks to include knowledge that historically has been marginalized. However, when attempting to include marginalized knowledge it often results in reinforcement of stereotypes or dominant understandings of

knowledge instead. It is because the approach lacks a critical dimension of why certain knowledge appears more legitimate than others. The accommodation approach often embraces a relativistic perspective that may equally include different perspectives and representations, however it fails to acknowledge the politics and power behind why certain perspectives are represented in a certain way and how it contributes to maintaining a hierarchy of knowledge. This approach further fails to recognize critical perspectives on what is considered a universal knowledge or value and how a universal understanding of certain knowledge can assist in marginalizing knowledge that has been and is already oppressed (Subedi, 2013, pgs. 629-631).

## 3.4 The Decolonization Approach

According to Subedi, in contrast to the accommodation and deficit approach in structuring curriculum, a decolonizing approach operates from antiessentialism, contrapuntal readings and ethical solidarity. An antiessentialist approach urges to critically examine what is understood as cultural differences and how those understandings produce binaries between the non-Western world and the Western world. It furthermore recognizes that there are differences within one community that cannot be homogenized, it seeks to represent multiple experiences in one community and not assume one as representative for the whole. A key feature of anitessentialism is that differences should not be constructed in a way that establishes hierarchies. Therefore, the approach also criticizes understanding the world in dichotomies, since they usually promote one side of the dichotomy as being superior to the other (Subedi, 2013, pgs. 632-633).

Contrapuntal readings refer to questions of imperialism and colonization. For example, it means understanding the exploitation of the non-West as a means for the West to uphold a privileged way of living and that the understanding of being white as superior, legitimized the exploitation. It is a way of including a historical perspective on power relations that are currently existing. It offers analysis on questions related to who it is that has the authority and voice to speak and be heard and who is not. Additionally, it draws attention to cultural narratives that originate from the specific cultural community, not the knowledge that is known about the community in the West. That also includes highlighting complexities and differences in the knowledge (Subedi, 2013, pgs. 633-635). “For instance, such a practice points to the need to complicate discussions about oppression so that educators do not

reinforce the view that the colonized were (only) victims and not agents of social change" (Subedi, 2013, p. 635).

The dimension of ethical solidarity is the third perspective Subedi theorizes as an essential part of the decolonization approach. Ethical solidarity emphasizes the need to critically examine perceptions of solidarity so it does not end up as a process of recolonization. For example, in 2001 when the United States of America invaded Afghanistan, many Western women expressed solidarity with Afghan women from Western liberal narratives. Their attempt to express solidarity with the Afghan women often framed the oppression in a way that enforced an understanding of the Afghan women as subjects needed to be saved. It resulted in that the Western narrative imposed an understanding of Afghan women as unprogressive and inferior to Western white women. The example illustrates the problem in theorizing feminism and social change without questioning Western epistemologies. Ethical solidarity rather encourages critical examination of Western conceptions of what it means to be progressive. It is an understanding that embraces both the structural oppression of women but also recognizes that the understanding of marginalized women goes beyond simple victimization (Subedi, 2013, pgs. 635- 636). "It attempts to speak with the Other rather than to speak for the Other" (Subedi, 2013, p. 635).

A decolonizing approach in constituting curriculum is characterized by the understanding that structures and relationships of power and social differences are central to understanding the production of knowledge. A decolonizing curriculum challenges the reality by questioning how interrelationships between the local and global are constituted in the curriculum and is invested in including perspectives of race, oppression and social justice. It criticizes the understanding of a universal global curriculum and draws attention to things that are absent and silenced but should be heard (Subedi, 2013, p. 683). However, a perspective on epistemological power that is important to highlight in the discussion of acknowledging silenced voices is brought up by both Bhargava and Grosfoguel. The consequences of displacing a population's knowledge can lead to people themselves developing an identity that aligns with the oppressors and an unconscious resistance towards the reality of the colonial violence the people have been exposed to (Bhargava, 2013, 413-414), or as Grosfoguel states:

> The fact that one is socially located in the oppressed side of power relations, does not automatically mean that he/she is epistemically thinking from a subaltern epistemic location. Precisely, the success of the modern/colonial world-system consist in making subjects that are socially located in the oppressed side of the colonial difference, to think epistemicaly *[sic]* like the ones on the dominant positions (Grosfoguel, 2007, p. 213).

It is a relevant perspective that includes certain difficulties, however it also illustrates the need to highlight current structures of power and question social orders even more.

# 4. Method

This chapter addresses the method used for this essay. The first section is centered around explanations of how the data has been collected. It is followed by a section that revolves around the analysis of the source material and the choices that have been made concerning analytical tools and theories that have been used. The last section acknowledges problems and difficulties of collecting the source material as well as a discussion about important aspects of research ethics that have been relevant in this study.

## 4.1 Collection of Data and Source Material

The original idea was that the syllabus alone would serve as the primary empirical material for the analysis in this essay. However, the syllabuses written by Skolverket are typically short and concise. In the syllabus for the Historia 1b course, one criterion is that colonialism should be included in the course (Historia, 2010, pgs 7-10). Nevertheless, the syllabus lacks guidelines of what the learning process and learning outcome regarding colonialism should include. To get a more nuanced insight and depth into the question of how colonialism is represented in the Swedish school, one textbook used by schools in fulfillment of the syllabus requirements on the theme has been selected.

The Swedish upper secondary school offers six different history courses that are divided between the different programmes (Skolverket, 2022b). Three of the courses are mandatory and three of them are advanced elective courses sought through personal choice by the students. The three mandatory courses are Historia 1a1, Historia 1b and Historia 2b - kultur (culture). The 13 practical programmes and Teknikprogrammet, which is classified as a

theoretical programme, have Historia 1a1 as a mandatory history course. The five other theoretical programmes all have the course Historia 1b as a mandatory course in their programme. Out of those five theoretical programmes, two of them also have the course Historia 2b - kultur as mandatory (Skolverket, 2023). As previously stated, this essay is delimited to the Historia 1b course, despite the fact that more programmes have the course Historia 1a1 as a mandatory course. This decision was made because statistically more students applied and got accepted to a theoretical programme for the academic year 2022/2023 than to the practical programme. The number of students that applied to a national programme was 129 000 students, 64 % of those students applied to a theoretical programme and 36 % of them to a practical programme (Skolverket, 2022c).

Skolverket does not make any decisions or give any guidelines concerning what textbooks the schools should use, the choice of textbooks is decided by the schools and teachers themselves, the learning material can therefore differ between different schools (Skolverket, 2006, p. 10). The choice of textbook in this study is based on a government-commissioned study of learning materials in the Swedish school. According to the study, there are five publishers that manufacture the majority of textbooks used in the Swedish school: Gleerups Utbildning, Liber, Natur & Kultur Bokförlaget, Sanoma Utbildning and Studentlitteratur (SOU 2021:70, p.111). One history book recommended for the course Historia 1b from Liber has been chosen. Proceeding from the publishers above, there were approximately 15 textbooks aimed for the course Historia 1b that could have been appropriate for this study. However, Liber was the publisher that provided the most detailed descriptions of their textbooks and how they relate to the syllabus in comparison to the other publishers, which is the main reason why a textbook from Liber has been chosen for this study. Liber recommends two textbooks for the course, *Bilden av historien 1b* and *Epos 1b*. *Bilden av historien 1b*, is the book from Liber used in this analysis since it was published in 2016, more recently than *Epos 1b* which was published in 2012. The book contains 632 pages (Liber, n.d.), and the whole book has been read in order to select information that relates to colonialism in some way. The textbook analyzed in this study is selected with consideration to the publisher's recommendations of textbooks along with the publication year of the textbooks. The syllabus used in this study is a document of 17 pages in total and involves other history courses as well. However, three out of those 17 pages are aimed at the history course Historia 1b and those are the pages that constitute the syllabus material for this analysis. Apart from the

syllabus and the textbook, academic articles and books are essential in establishing theoretical and analytical aspects throughout this essay.

## 4.2 Data analysis

This essay proceeds from a qualitative text analysis of ideas. An analysis of ideas can be appropriate when the aim is to examine ideas that for example affect people's worldviews or attitudes. Central to the method is furthermore to analyze the cultural, social and historical context in relation to the ideas (Bergström & Svärd, 2018, pgs. 138-139). It is therefore a relevant method to use for this essay since it is based on questions of how colonialism is represented in the school, and the underlying ideas behind the representation.

An analysis of ideas relies on the hermeneutic understanding of humans as individuals that constantly are trying to make sense of their existence and environment through language and communication. Humans are constantly producing ideas concerning themselves, other people and the world through interpretation of their new experiences in relation to previous experiences. An analysis of ideas is performed by constructing hypothetical theories of ideas that could be behind different representations in the empirical material chosen for the analysis (Bergström & Svärd, 2018, p. 139).

An analysis of ideas can also be focused on distinguishing ideas either in a *descriptive*, *explanatory* or *critical* way. For this study, the analysis proceeds from a *descriptive* form, which means that it is focused on describing the ideas of study (Bergström & Svärd, 2018, p. 140). A *descriptive* analysis is applicable, especially on the first research question in this study, since it is centered around how colonialism is represented. However, an important part of the descriptive form is that it should not only summarize the collected material, it should also present new results. For example, it could be highlighting underlying messages or contradictions that are not explicitly stated in the particular source (Bergström & Svärd, 2018, pgs 140-141). Therefore, the method is further applicable for the second research question that is focused on highlighting underlying epistemological perceptions.

It is important to acknowledge that the descriptions of ideas are formed from an interpretation of the material. Therefore, the researcher's interpretations and results can not be understood as objective, the analysis should rather be understood as the researcher's attempt to create a

framework of ideas related to the material. A descriptive analysis of ideas should furthermore have a somewhat argumentative structure, the arguments serve as the explanations to the researcher's interpretations (Bergström & Svärd, 2018, p. 141).

It could have also been interesting to use for example a critical discourse analysis for this study. Critical discourse analysis does often proceed from questions related to power and is usually centered around semiotic practices, which is the way we express ourselves both when for example writing and talking (Boreús & Seiler Brylla, 2018, pgs. 308-312). It could therefore have been an interesting and appropriate method since this study is focused on representations identified in writing and how they can be related to power. However, I chose to proceed from an analysis of ideas because of differences in structuring the work. In this study, when using the analysis of ideas as a method, the focus is first on bringing forth ideas and later relate it to the theoretical framework that includes dimensions of power. In my opinion, it organizes the different steps of the analysis in a more structured way compared to a critical discourse analysis that would require dimensions of power being included already in the process of going through the source material.

### 4.2.1 Operationalization

The ideas can be structured in different ways. For example in: *Assumptions of reality*, which refers to the perception of what the world is like. *Assumptions of values*, the moral, political and/or aesthetical perception of how things should be. *Regulation of actions*, the understanding of what actions are suitable in different situations proceeding from the constitution of norms, recommendations and customs (Bergström & Svärd, 2018, pgs. 133-134). These three different levels of organizing ideas are the methodological framework that will assist in structuring the results in this study. In addition to these three levels of structuring ideas, *dimensions* will serve as the analytical tool for the analysis/discussion. *Dimensions* is an analytical tool based on establishing two opposite standpoints within the same subject that relates and is essential to the study. The purpose is thereafter to identify the position of ideas identified in the source material within the dimension (Bergström & Svärd, 2018, pgs. 153-156). The structure of the dimensions in this study are based on some of the key concepts that were presented in chapter three, the theoretical framework.

*Figure 1. Dimensions*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Reinforces the idea of stereotyping and misrepresentations of colonized | Rejects the idea of stereotyping and misrepresentations of colonized |
| 2. | Reinforces the idea of colonialism as a process centered around white Europeans and Western knowledge | Rejects the idea of colonialism as a process centered around white Europeans and Western knowledge |
| 3. | Reinforces the idea that eurocentrism equals universalism | Rejects the idea that eurocentrism equals universalism |
| 4. | Reinforces the idea of Sweden and the rest of the Western world as superior to previously (or still) colonized countries | Rejects the idea of Sweden and the rest of the Western world as superior to previously (or still) colonized countries |

## 4.3 Critical Assessment of Source Material and Research Ethics

Since Skolverket does not provide any recommendations or guidelines on what textbooks are suitable for courses, it is uncertain to which extent *Bilden av historien 1b* is used in Swedish education. Therefore it is important to state that the results of this essay cannot be generalized for the education of the Historia 1b course as a whole. The purpose is rather to contribute to the discussion with a thorough analysis of some of the material that is currently used to present the colonialism theme in the course.

Additionally, the impact teachers have should also be mentioned. Teachers along with each school are responsible for deciding what textbooks they see fit from their individual interpretation of the syllabuses. Thereafter, teachers are responsible for structuring the lectures, design exams and select what content is appropriate and how it is taught. Teachers therefore have a big impact on shaping the learning processes, outcomes and education overall. Because of this, the study cannot illustrate how students' knowledge and education may differ depending on their teachers' learning approaches. From this perspective, it could

have been appropriate to collect the source material from interviews instead, which would have also been an interesting perspective to research. However, I chose to proceed from a course textbook and syllabus because of an interest in examining how colonialism is rendered in the material that is aimed for the history subject. It is interesting to analyze the material that is given to students and teachers since it can reflect the opinions and perceptions of Swedish educational institutions, authorities and publishers on the subject.

The textbook and syllabus are both in Swedish, the citations of the source material in the analysis are my own translations from Swedish to English. Therefore, the citations may not be precise and it is possible that the meaning can somewhat differ between the English and Swedish versions. This can affect the validity of the research since the research entails interpreting the material as part of translating the materials.

Further, some aspects related to research ethics are important to acknowledge. Qualitative analysis methods are dependent on the researcher being transparent and thorough when performing the analysis for the sake of the research's validity and reliability. It is a prerequisite for the research to be considered and qualified as a serious and reliable contribution to the existing academic field (Bryman, 2018, pgs. 468-469). Research can never be performed entirely objective, it is important for the researcher to be aware of the fact that the research will be affected by the researcher's values and perspectives. Therefore it is essential for the researcher to be transparent and refer to previous research within the academic field to support interpretations and arguments (Bryman, 2018, pgs. 189-193). Additionally, when referring to previous literature, it is important that the literature is of academic value and reliable. Academic articles should be marked as peer-reviewed. It is an indicator that the academic source is reliable since it means that it has been read and "accepted" by the academic community (Thurén, 2019, p. 12).

# 5. Results

This chapter aims to present the results on what has been identified in *Bilden av historien 1b* and the syllabus for the course Historia 1b in order to answer the first research question: How do Swedish history textbooks and syllabuses represent the Swedish and the Western world's role in colonialism? The chapter is divided into subchapters organized by the three levels of

how different ideas can be identified and structured according to the chosen method for this study: *Assumptions of reality*, *assumptions of values* and *regulation of actions*.

## 5.1 Assumptions of Reality

This section is aimed to acknowledge representations that relate to assumptions of reality, a dimension that focuses on the understanding of what reality is like (Bergström & Svärd, 2018, pgs. 133-134). The section starts with results on how colonization is described, it is followed by a section that particularly focuses on representations of the colonized and the colonizers. The last section centers around Sweden and colonization.

### 5.1.1 Colonialism is Western History?

Colonialism is repeatedly described as a process characterized by exploration and development. “Columbus completed four trips over the Atlantic and discovered a big part of the West Indian islands” (Harrison Lindbergh & Harrison, 2016, p.139). I have identified 20 other similar expressions in the book. I chose this one because I think it represents the idea of how colonialism is understood in terms of exploration and discoveries. Moreover, there are many references between colonialism and economic development and trade throughout the book. “The Western trade-based capitalism grew in the 1600s and 1700s. The amount of voyages increased, the profits increased and generated new expeditions - which led to the appearance of European colonial empires in foreign continents” (Harrison Lindbergh & Harrison, 2016, p. 175). I have identified 26 more, but I chose this excerpt since it explains the understanding of colonial expansion as economically profitable and the idea that more colonies equaled more profits.

Additionally, when colonialism is addressed throughout the book, it is predominantly explained as a process centered around the perspective of the white Euro-American man, both in terms of struggles and achievements. “The European colonists were hit by lack of labor force when the indigenous Americans died in epidemics. The attempt to lure over poor European farmers failed; many escaped and became pirates. Therefore, they started importing slaves from Africa” (Harrison Lindbergh & Harrison, 2016, p. 177). I chose this example out of 46 other similar descriptions because the sentence represents the idea that colonial history is told and centered around the white man. The sentence accounts for the fact that indigenous Americans died in epidemics, however it is the white colonists that are explained to be

struggling when they did not have any labor force. When the shipping of slaves from Africa to America is addressed, it is stated that a lot of African slaves died on the ships:

> Around 17 percent of the slaves on Dutch and French ships died during the voyage. The deaths of slaves were even higher on the Portuguese ships between Angola and Brazil, between 25 and 30 percent during the first half of the 1700s (Harrison Lindbergh & Harrison, 2016, p. 178).

Later in the paragraph the crew of the ship is addressed:

> From Dutch sources it is stated that around 17 to 18 percent of the ship crew. … died during the voyages. We should remember that slaves were more valuable than the seamen, according to the slave traders. A dead slave meant an economic loss. A dead seaman meant one less salary to pay (Harrison Lindbergh & Harrison, 2016, p. 178).

In these two paragraphs it is also evident that even though it is stated that African slaves died on the ships, the authors give a special acknowledgement to the seamen.

### 5.1.2 Representations

The European colonists, colonized groups, indigenous and African slaves are represented in various ways. I have found 19 examples of European colonists and the colonial process being described as warlike, violent, aggressive and/or racist towards colonized, indigenous and/or African slaves. An example is:

> The Indigenous Americans were persecuted and forced out by millions of white settlers to the West. … In the 1830s alone, ten thousand indigenous Americans were forced from their lands east of the Mississippi river to new lands in the West, remembered in history as the Trail of Tears (“Tårarnas väg”). Some indigenous peoples fiercely fought back against the white settlers before they were defeated and deported (Harrison Lindbergh & Harrison, 2016, p. 293).

In this description, European colonists are presented as violent. However, a frequent theme throughout the book is adding a story of one or several individuals that relate to the historic

happening that has been described. I have found ten stories related to colonialism. These stories are usually presented after descriptions of the European colonists in negative terms. Right after the description above, there is a story about two white settlers, Lewis and Clark, that were on an expedition to map the geographical area. They met Sacajawea, an indigenous woman, who had been sold to a French-Canadian man when she was 13. She helped the settlers on their expedition since she wanted to get back home. It is a story about their friendship (Harrison Lindbergh & Harrison, 2016, p. 294). This is an example of that after a negative description of the European colonists has been written, the authors usually include a positive story involving European colonists, in this case between an indigenous American and two European colonists. In addition to the citation above it is also presented that some indigenous practiced resistance, they fought back. This is not a common representation of the indigenous Americans throughout the book.

Racism is addressed from different angles in the book, but not discussed to a large extent. I have found seven different reasonings that involve racism. “Most of Africa was unknown to the Europeans and their prejudices about Africans were extensive. Hundreds of years of transatlantic slave trade had made the Europeans believe that black people were more stupid and inferior to white people” (Harrison Lindbergh & Harrison, 2016, p. 317). This is one of the few times where racism is acknowledged in the book and where Europeans are described with a claimed superior mindset. The citation also highlights the idea that racism is understood as a result of the slave trade rather than a cause to the formation of the transatlantic slave trade. Another story about racism and colonial violence is mentioned about two French colonists in Mali and Chad. Their oppression and abuse of the Africans are described as awful. The part about racism follows as “The destruction caused by Voulet and Chanoine was typical for the few Europeans, hardened by racism, imperialism and the Western civilisation, that let their worst sides go out over people that were incapable to fight back” (Harrison Lindbergh & Harrison, 2016, p. 320). In this description, the colonial violence is understood as being connected to racism, imperialism and Western civilization. The idea that colonial violence and racism only characterized a few European colonists also appears from this explanation. Additionally, how the Africans are described, as incapable of resistance, is a more common description of both Africans, colonized and indigenous throughout the book compared to representations of them being resistant to the colonizers. In the few descriptions that address indigenous, colonized or Africans practicing resistance they are often described as rebellious or dangerous. “The slaves set plantations on fire and killed

the white colonists they came over. It ended with a victory for the rebellions who formed the state Haiti" (Harrison Lindbergh & Harrison, 2016, p. 179). "The settler life was dangerous. The indigenous Americans that came over weapons to force out the new settlers were just one of the many reasons to be worried" (Harrison Lindbergh & Harrison, 2016, p. 299).

European colonists are also represented in positive terms, 21 representations in total, describe colonists as strong, helpful, peaceful, clever and/or rational. "Far from everything the British colonists did in India was bad. They built impressive railway networks and telegraph lines. Indians were educated to officials that handled a big part of the administration" (Harrison Lindbergh & Harrison, 2016, p. 313). This is a representation of understanding the colonists as helpful and as contributing to the colony. Another representation of the European colonists that also acknowledge a frequent representation of African slaves is "Compared to America, Africa was slightly affected by the European discovery voyages. The Portuguese bought metals and slaves from African kings, but they did not conquer any imperiums and they did not inspire to a big European emigration" (Harrison Lindbergh & Harrison, 2016, p. 142). In this description, Europeans buying slaves are not explained in a particularly bad way, their actions are simply described as having a slight impact on Africa. The understanding of buying slaves as having a slight impact on Africa furthermore represents a perspective of Africa in the book. The perspectives of African slaves are generally less acknowledged in comparison to the European colonists, but also in comparison to indigenous Americans, which this representation also is an example of. The spread of various representations of the European colonists, colonized groups, indigenous and African slaves is extensive. One sentence that in my opinion summarizes the spread of different representations of European colonists throughout the book is: "The expansion was both warlike and peaceful" (Harrison Lindbergh & Harrison, 2016, p. 138). The quote is also applicable in understanding the different representations of indigenous groups, colonized groups and African slaves in how they sometimes are represented as groups that have been exposed to colonial violence, sometimes as groups that have received help from colonists and sometimes as quite unaffected by colonialism.

Moreover, throughout the book, the indigenous Americans are always addressed with the Swedish word, "indianer". Several Swedish sources urge to not use the word "indian" because it can come across as offensive to indigenous populations in America since the name originates from the colonizers (Svanberg, 2021). It is explained in the book that "indianer" is

a European naming of the group that originates from Columbus thinking that he had reached India in 1492 (Harrison Lindbergh & Harrison, 2016, p. 139). However, it is used in every description of indigenous Americans throughout the book. It is therefore important to state that when I have translated citations that involve descriptions of indigenous Americans, I have translated the Swedish word “indianer” to indigenous Americans.

### 5.1.3 Sweden and Colonization

The representation of Sweden related to colonialism is small in comparison to other Western countries in the book.

> The Dutch colonized New York, the Swedes Delaware and the French Canada and Louisiana. It did not take long until the colonial powers started battling against each other. The Dutch conquered the Swedish colony but were quickly defeated by Britain. (Harrison Lindbergh & Harrison, 2016, p. 226).

In this citation, it is stated that Sweden colonized Delaware. What can be discerned from the description, is that Sweden did not have the colonial possession for a long time because of the colonial powers’ struggles Sweden’s colony was taken over by the Dutch. Since this is the only reference in the book of Sweden having a colony, and it being described as not for long, it mediates the understanding of Sweden’s colonial past as limited. This suggests that Sweden was absent in colonialism. However, Carolusburg is mentioned once. “Before the slaves boarded the ships, they had usually been forced to spend weeks or months in small dungeons in West African forts. The British fort Cape Coast Castle in Ghana (see figure) was originally a Swedish fortification called Carolusburg” (Harrison Lindbergh & Harrison, 2016, p. 178). Additionally, there is one story in the book that addresses Swedish missionaries in Africa. It is a story about a Swedish woman that emigrated to Africa to “help sick people and preach the words of the lord to the heathens in today's Eritrea” (Harrison Lindbergh & Harrison, 2016, p. 298). It is described that her emigration to Africa was troublesome but “luckily there were a lot of other Swedish missionaries there” (Harrison Lindbergh & Harrison, 2016, p. 298). The story continues with that her husband got murdered and that she decided to go back to Sweden after a year (Harrison Lindbergh & Harrison, 2016, p. 298).

The Sámi population are addressed in two pages out of a total of 632 pages in the book:

> The Sámi population had lived in Sweden for centuries, indeed under the Swedish crown, but in practice they had managed themselves. This changed during the decades around the 1900s. ... The northern part of Sweden should be exploited, especially the woods and the iron ore, and that could only happen at the expense of the Sámi people. The reasoning of Swedish politicians is reminiscent of the arguments the United States of America's leaders had used to drive indigenous Americans away (Harrison Lindbergh & Harrison, 2016, p. 338).

The Sámi people are understood, as in theory ruled by the Swedish crown, but in practice as they have managed themselves. It is also presented that the Sámi people were exposed to exploitation due to natural resources in their area, and that this was something that started in the decades around the 1900s. Further, the Swedish politicians' reasoning is described as being reminiscent of the way leaders in the United States of America argued in driving away indigenous Americans, the term colonization is never uttered in the context of the Sámi people. Additionally, formulations in the textbook address the ways in which the Sámi people became subjects of scientific interest. "While the Sámi people were threatened like never before, they were also acknowledged and embraced as natural and primitive human beings that lived in symbiosis with nature" (Harrison Lindbergh & Harrison, 2016, p. 339). This description states that the Sámi people should be understood not only as having been poorly met, but also met with embrace over their "primitive" way of living.

> They were photographed and described in ethnographical reports. They were sent on tours all over Europe, where they would be presented in zoological gardens, and at Swedish markets. … The Sámi people were understood as a splinter of an old tribe that in the past had been powerful but now were on their way to extinction. This made them scientifically interesting. In the 1840s, Sámi skulls were measured and theories about their intelligence and other characteristics started to develop. This research is today understood as unscientific, but it continued to thrive during the interwar period (Harrison Lindbergh & Harrison, 2016, p. 339).

In this description, the Sámi people are explained as having been understood as somewhat different in the past. Some of the racism the Sámi people have been exposed to is also acknowledged, however it is not described in terms of being racist. It is rather presented as

the Sámi people being interesting and treated differently because people thought they were about to be extinct. Furthermore, the idea of why these actions and research is no longer valid today is explained to be because it is simply unscientific, not racist.

Sámi is the word used to describe the Sámi people throughout the book with one exception. “In the year 1879, it was possible to pay 25 pennies at a Swedish market to see how the Sámi people lived, how ‘lapparna’ threw lasso and sang traditional Sámi songs” (Harrison Lindbergh & Harrison, 2016, p. 339). In this citation, the Sámi people are once referred to with the Swedish term “lapparna” within quotation marks and with no explanation to why the term is used. In a statement from the Swedish Sámi state agency, they criticize the usage of the term “lapp” as a derogatory name that were used by the race biologists and that the Sámi people refer to themselves as Sámi and that it should be the name used by everybody else as well (Sametinget, 2017, p. 5).

## 5.2 Assumptions of Values

This subchapter seeks to highlight representations of colonialism that relate to *assumptions of values*: moral, political and aesthetic ideas of how reality should be organized (Bergström & Svärd, 2018, pgs. 133-134).

A typical value that is repeatedly mentioned in the book is democracy. In *Bilden av historien 1b*, democracy is frequently discussed in relation to countries transitioning from colonies to independent states:

> Decolonization was not easy. In several places, liberation movements were forced to fight guerilla wars for years before the colonial powers surrendered. To this came, eventually, even worse troubles. Many colonies lacked democratic traditions. The education level was low, the population poor, and the economy was dependent on export to the old colonial motherland. The consequence of the decolonization often resulted in civil wars, military coups and dictatorships (Harrison Lindbergh & Harrison, 2016, p. 475).

In this reasoning, democracy, education and a good economy are portrayed as important values and understood as the “natural” way of how countries should be organized, even to the

extent that the lack of such things are considered worse than fighting the colonists for independence. I have identified seven other similar representations concerning democracy. “In Africa, the development towards democracy and well-being has been slower compared to other continents. The majority of the world’s poorest countries are located here” (Harrison Lindbergh & Harrison, 2016, p. 583). In this citation, democracy is assumed to be something to aim for. Moreover, it illustrates the perception and value of democracy as the natural idea of how countries should be ruled. Additionally, education was also mentioned as an important value. The reasoning exemplified earlier is further applicable in the context of education because when the British colonists are described as not only doing bad things in India, educating the Indians is highlighted as one thing that British colonists did that was good (Harrison Lindbergh & Harrison, 2016, p. 313). The assumption that a lot of things Britain did in India was not bad relies on the high value perceptions of modernization, industrialization and education relative to the bad things the British may have done. I have found four other similar descriptions involving education and colonialism. Moreover, the syllabus itself further illustrates the value of education.

Economic values are repeatedly stated in discussions of former colonies. “Latin America's most successful nation during the first half of the 1900s was Argentina, whose export of agricultural products made it to one of the world's top ten richest countries” (Harrison Lindbergh & Harrison, 2016, p. 484). This is an explicit representation of how the economy is understood in terms of big value since it is used as an indicator to determine how successful the country is. I have identified ten other similar formulations. Furthermore, modernisation and industrialisation are assumed to be natural paths of how countries should develop. The processes are frequently used as indicators to determine the development of former colonies. “The most powerful country in northern Latin America was and is Mexico. The country went through an extensive modernization with foreign investments, agricultural export and industrialization during the decades around the 1900s” (Harrison Lindbergh & Harrison, 2016, p. 486). I have identified eleven additional formulations like this one.

For Sweden, there are not a lot of assumptions of values that are expressed as related to colonialism in the textbook. However it is stated that: “In the 1800s, Sweden experienced a big increase of their population - from 2,4 million inhabitants in 1815 to 5,1 million in the year 1900 - an incipient industrialization embossed by the Swedish natural resources” (Harrison Lindbergh & Harrison, 2016, p. 313). Even though it is not explicitly expressed,

the period correlates with Sweden's interest in natural resources and colonialism, since the range of the period is from 1815 and forward. Further, the same time period correlates to the wider European colonial expansion and industrialization. The reasoning represents an understanding of the change as a way of increasing the inhabitants well-being and that the increase was linked to the industrialization process and exploitation of natural resources.

## 5.3 Regulation of Actions

The purpose of this section is to bring forth representations of colonialism that relate to *regulation of Actions*. The dimension is focused on actions that are considered appropriate according to current norms, customs and recommendations (Bergström & Svärd, 2018, pgs. 133-134).

In the syllabus for the course Historia 1b it is stated that the course should involve the democratization and industrialization process along with important global processes and happenings including colonialism (Historia, 2010, p. 7). Even though it is not elaborated in the syllabus, what the learning process and outcome concerning colonialism, democratization and industrialization should include, the need to include the themes in the course itself is clear. Therefore, the inclusion of colonialism, democratization and industrialization in the syllabus can be seen as a proposed action because it is considered appropriate proceeding from the norms, customs and recommendations within the subject of history.

In the textbook *Bilden av historien 1b*, slavery is often described as an action that was required because of shortness in labor force. "In order to get labor force to plantations in Madeira, the Portuguese started buying slaves" (Harrison Lindbergh & Harrison, 2016, p. 138). A few times slavery and colonialism is described as actions legitimized by racism and/or capitalism:

> Capitalist interests, such as hard work, investments and profits became the norm. This way of thinking embossed European thinking during the 1800s which resulted in racist attitudes. Many people assumed that the Europeans took the lead in the world, simply because the Europeans were better than Asians and Africans. The new ideals legitimized a wave of colonialism and imperialism (Harrison Lindbergh & Harrison, 2016, p. 210).

According to this explanation, this was a thinking that embossed and formed racist attitudes at first in the 1800s.

# 6. Discussion

This chapter focuses on the second research question: What epistemological perception/s are behind the specific representation of their role in colonialism? It proceeds from the results presented in chapter five along with the chapters on previous research and theoretical framework. Additionally, the discussion is structured from the different dimensions presented in chapter four.

## 6.1 Stereotyping and Misrepresentations

Throughout the textbook *Bilden av historien 1b*, whenever colonists are described in negative terms, such as aggressive or violent, indigenous, colonized and Africans are simply described as victims of the history. When the destruction caused by two French colonists in Mali and Chad were presented, the description ends with "that let their worst sides go out over people that were incapable to fight back" (Harrison Lindbergh & Harrison, 2016, p. 320). In this example, the Africans are described as incapable of resistance to the violence the colonists caused. This example aligns with what Subedi describes as the accommodation approach, which seeks to include marginalized groups in the teaching, however the approach does not problematize the perspectives of the marginalized and therefore end up reinforcing misrepresentations and stereotypes instead (Subedi, 2013, pgs. 629-631). It is further why she argues for a decolonization approach, she specifically emphasizes that both in the perspectives of contrapuntal readings and ethical solidarity, the highlighting of complexities within a representation is essential. Educating about oppression is not simply recognizing the colonized as victims, their own perspectives must be highlighted and how they were also agents in shaping history and social change (Subedi, 2013, 633-636).

Moreover, whenever there are descriptions of colonized practicing resistance they are often portrayed as dangerous or rebellious. Portraying the colonized as a liability for the Western world or reinforcing misrepresentations and stereotypes of colonized as for example dangerous, characterizes the deficit approach in teaching (Subedi, 2013, pgs. 621-622). Relevant to this is further the essentialization of cultural narratives of marginalized groups.

When some traits are repeatedly portrayed as associative with the non-West, it results in homogenization which forms an understanding of those traits as naturally given to the majority of non-Western communities (Subedi, 2013, pgs. 625-627).

Additionally, the constant usage of the Swedish word “indianer” to describe indigenous Americans is further worth discussing. The authors state in the book that the Swedish term “indianer” originates from the colonizers (Harrison Lindbergh & Harrison, 2016, p. 139), however they still use the term consistently throughout the book. It can be understood as what Subedi explains as educating global history from the norm and center of whiteness (Subedi, 2013, p. 629), it emphasizes a perception that it is the colonizer’s perspective that the global history originates from. Subedi’s explanation may also be applicable to the description presented in the results of Africa as slightly affected by Europeans buying slaves (Harrison Lindbergh & Harrison, 2016, p. 1429, since the assumption exemplifies a white centered perspective that aligns with Subedi’s theorizing (Subedi, 2013, p. 629).

## 6.2 Is Colonialism Western History?

The results presented in chapter five presents various ways of how colonialism is taught. I identified 20 citations where colonialism is described as a process of exploration and discovery. Additionally 26 citations described colonialism simply as a process of economic development. Descriptions of colonialism taught in terms of exploration, discovery and economic development correlate with the deficit approach in education related to exceptionalism. Teaching exceptionalism encourages students to prioritize their own country before global responsibility and fosters an understanding that things the country may have done in the past have been to protect the country and its important values. It has led to the country being exceptional today and therefore the things done in the past do not need to be questioned. It does not encourage students to critically examine their country and question power structures that maintain racism and oppression (Subedi, 2013, pgs. 625-627). Rather, it reinforces a positive discourse of colonialism and its outcomes (Hennessey, 2022, pgs. 2-5).

Additionally, the frequent emphasis on economic development and values throughout the book could also be understood as a result of what Lindgren and Nordin explain as the transition towards a more result-based school. It is a way for both the Swedish government and the EU to implement their policies and control that education will result in prioritizing

economic development in order to reach capitalist targets. The transition towards a result-based school further correlates with a decrease in teaching humanitarian values (Lindgren, 2014, pgs. 112-115; Nordin, 2012, pgs. 200-201).

Also, descriptions involving African slaves or indigenous dying from bad conditions or diseases were predominantly written as circumstances that affected the European colonists. Tuhiwai Smith states that when teaching is centered around the colonizer's perspectives it contributes to marginalizing history known by the colonized (Tuhiwai Smith, 2021, p. 33). Tuhiwai Smith's discussion is highly relevant in the explanation presented in the results concerning that the Europeans were struggling when not having access to labor force because the indigenous died of diseases (Harrison Lindbergh & Harrison, 2016, p. 177). It is evident that how the description is written focuses on the European colonists and their perspectives, and that the indigenous perspective is not elaborated, the indigenous dying is simply explained as a struggle for the Europeans. According to Tuhiwai Smith, this is a way of maintaining Western power and dominating the non-West through the silencing of indigenous perspectives and highlighting the colonizer's perspectives (Tuhiwai Smith, 2021, pgs. 37-38).

Descriptions of Swedish involvement in colonialism largely differ between the book *Bilden av historien 1b* and the previous research presented in chapter two. The Swedish colony St. Barthélemy (Hennessey, 2022, pgs. 2-5), The minority group Tornedalingar, Kväner and Lantalaiset (SOU 2023:68, p. 3), how the Swedish economy benefited from producing metals for the plantations in the Caribbean and North America (Ojala & Nordin, 2015, p. 11), the destruction of traditional Sámi possessions and the forced labor and christianizing of the Sámi people are just a few examples of Swedish involvement in colonialism that is not mentioned once throughout the whole book.

Several descriptions of happenings or processes that are included in the textbook also differ extensively to the research presented in the previous research chapter. When the Sámi people are mentioned in the textbook, they are never described with the term indigenous. Additionally, the descriptions related to the Sámi people being exposed to racist treatment is never described as racism, it is described as a result of scientific interest (Harrison Lindbergh & Harrison, 2016, p. 339). Carl Linnaeus (Carl von Linné) is mentioned in the textbook, famous for analyzing plants and animals and that a big part of his work was aimed at mapping natural resources in order to exploit them (Harrison Lindbergh & Harrison, 2016, p.

217). However, his interest in race biology and categorization of the human species, for example the Sámi population that he categorized as undeveloped, freakish and degenerate (Naum & Nordin, 2013, p. 12), is not mentioned. I have stated in the results that there were few discussions that involved racism overall in the textbook, seven in total. Sometimes it is described that a racist mindset of superiority was something that characterized a few European colonists (Harrison Lindbergh & Harrison, 2016, p. 320). Additionally, racism is described as result of the transatlantic slave trade "The constant meetings with Africans in slave positions contributed to the rise of racism in the Western world" (Harrison Lindbergh & Harrison, 2016, p. 179). When racism is actually described as something that legitimized colonialism and imperialism, it is explained as originating from capitalist mindsets first in the 1800s (Harrison Lindbergh & Harrison, 2016, p. 210). Racism is not mentioned in the discussion of the Sámi people, the colony of New Sweden or in the story of the Swedish missionary. However, the previous research chapter states that Swedish missionaries were very much racist, they traveled to Africa to educate Africans because Africans were assumed to be a less developed human species (Natermann, 2023, p. 470). One main argument to establish the New Sweden colony was built on racism; the colony would assist in civilizing the indigenous (Ekengren et al., 2013, p. 169-171). In the Swedish colony St. Barthélemy, Swedish ruling increased the amount of slaves in the city Gustavia (Wilson, 2019, p. 333). The Sámi people were of scientific interest because of race biological interests, because they were considered inferior to Scandinavians (Ojala & Nordin, 2015, pgs. 12-14). Generally, racism was important overall in legitimizing the slave trade and colonization for the Europeans (Quijano, 2000, p. 218), not something that only characterized a few European colonists, not something that emerged first in the 1800s and not something that originated from meeting Africans in slave positions.

The lack of problematizing racism and slavery and the absence of perspectives of its important role in colonialism throughout the book could also be connected to exceptionalism. It might be a way of teaching the students to protect the image of the Western world and Sweden as exceptional. It may also be why there was no explanation to why the Sámi people were once referred to as "lappar" in the textbook, because the explanation to why the word is not used anymore would require a historical perspective of the Sámi people having been systematically oppressed and racialized. Further, it might also be the reason why the textbook generally lacks representations of the colonized and why the authors have made the decision to include positive stories of the colonizers' interactions with indigenous and slaves after

descriptions of colonists as aggressive or violent. Additionally, it might also be the reason why Sweden is portrayed as generally absent in colonialism. The seeking of a reputation and self-image of being a humanitarian superpower (Hennessey, 2022, pgs. 2-5) might not correlate with a colonial and racist history.

## 6.3 Does Eurocentrism Equals Universalism?

Throughout the book, many descriptions concerning different countries' development were presented. Industrialization, democracy, education, economic development and modernization are used as indicators to describe if a country is developed and progressive or not. Repeatedly, colonialism is portrayed as something that has helped former colonies or that former colonies deteriorated after independence. Those statements rely on explanations that former colonies generally lack democracy, economic growth, industrialization, education and modernization. This is what both Subedi and Tuhiwai Smith explained as teaching that universalism equals eurocentrism. Teaching for example democracy as a universal value suggests that Western countries objectively can be understood as progressive and developed. It is a way of promoting Western values while giving the impression that the values can be understood from a value-neutral position (Tuhiwai Smith, 2021, p. 63; Subedi, 2013, pgs. 623-624). It can be connected to the power concepts of hegemony, epistemology and discourses. According to Mouffe, a value that seems to be built on consensus is only a result of different hegemonic power relations and relies on the exclusion of other values, not on objectivity (Mouffe, 2007, pgs. 2-5). Additionally, it is further central to the theory of discourses, where knowledge that appears universal is defined as dominating ways of talking and thinking. A universal value is the result of dominating discourses that are reinforced through for example the language and should rather be understood as values that represent the current historical and cultural context (Axelsson & Qvarsebo, 2017, pgs. 132-134 & 110-112). The historical and cultural context is something Bhargava emphasizes in his theorizing of epistemological injustice and power. According to Bhargava, one way colonizers executed their power was by replacing indigenous knowledge with the Western world view (Bhargava, 2013, p. 413-414). Beliso-De Jesús and Pierre argue that the development towards neoliberal economies in former colonies is what makes the Western power domination visible, it is the result of a global Western power system (Beliso-De Jesús & Pierre, 2020, pgs. 66-68). Proceeding from these different theories, the way values concerning democracy, education, modernization, industrialization and economic

development are explained to be crucial for countries development in *Bilden av historien 1b*, is a way of maintaining the dominance of the West and executing power over the non-Western world.

## 6.4 Western Superiority

This section is highly connected to the previous sections above, subchapter 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3. In section 6.1, examples found in *Bilden av historien 1b* of homogenization of colonized, stereotypes, misrepresentations and emphasis on the colonizer's perspective on colonialism is highlighted and discussed. Subedi draws attention to the fact that such representations socializes students to perceive non-Western communities as culturally inferior to the Western world (Subedi, 2013, pgs. 621-623). Subchapter 6.2 revolves around examples where colonialism is described as economic development and discovery but it is also highly centered around perspectives of racism and perspectives of the colonized that are absent throughout the textbook. The examples presented illustrate the large amount of Western perspectives on colonialism that the textbook contains. Teaching colonialism from the perspectives of the West is a way of silencing marginalized knowledge. Portraying the West as the center of history and as exceptional further neglects critical perspectives on privileges and power that reinforce oppressive structures and emphasizes capitalist interests instead. Understanding the West as exceptional further relies on the dichotomy that the non-West is not, which further constitutes a perception of the West as culturally superior to the non-West (Subedi, 2013, pgs. 625-627). In section 6.3, examples of how several eurocentric values, (democracy, economic development, modernization, education and industrialization), were described as universal values, was highlighted. Equalizing eurocentric values with universal values, is not only a way for Western countries to control what is considered universal objective values and knowledge. It further fosters an understanding that Western countries are naturally better than non-Western countries because they generally have the things a "progressive" country should have, which again promotes a perception of the West as superior to the non-West. The perception is evident in how several descriptions involve portraying colonialism as something that helped former colonies. One country is portrayed as helpful, the other as in need of help. It strengthens the dichotomy that Western countries should be understood as better than non-Western countries (Subedi, 2013, pgs. 623-624). How something is said or not said is constitutive of hegemonic discourses, it fosters a perception of what is a legitimate understanding and not (Axelsson & Qvarsebo, 2017, pgs.

132-134; Mouffe, 2007, p. 2-5). The frequent misrepresentations, emphasis on Western perspectives, insistence of equalizing eurocentrism and universalism and absence of marginalized perspectives all contribute to reinforcing a mindset of Western superiority.

# 7. Conclusion

This study has been aimed to highlight how the Swedish and the rest of the Western world's role in colonialism is represented in Swedish education. Further, it has been aimed to highlight what epistemological perception/s that are behind the specific representation of their role in colonialism. The first two sections of this chapter will conclude results in order to answer the two research questions, the last section provides examples of further research within the field.

## 7.1 Colonial Representations

The role of Sweden and the rest of the Western world in colonialism has been represented both in positive and negative terms. For Sweden particularly, there are few representations of the country's involvement in colonialism overall. The one time colonialism is mentioned in the context of Sweden, is in the description of the Swedish colony New Sweden. There is an absence of descriptions concerning former colonies abroad, slavery, the colonization of Sápmi and the Sámi people, other minority groups in Sweden that have been exposed to colonial violence, the role of Swedish missionaries, how the Swedish economy has benefited from trade and slavery and the Swedish history of racism. The Swedish role in colonialism is generally represented as quite absent and insignificant. Representations of other Western countries' participation in colonialism contain more descriptions. Positive descriptions of colonialism involve it being described as for example exploration, economic growth, development, industrialization and helpful. Negative descriptions involve colonialism being described as violent, destructive and rarely but sometimes racist. However, the representations generally also lack perspectives of the colonized, indigenous, slaves as well as perspectives of racism and power.

## 7.2 Epistemological Perceptions

The representations related to colonialism throughout the book are mainly centered around a Western epistemology. It is visible in the ways colonialism is frequently described in positive terms and in the emphasis of the colonizer's perspectives as the center of colonial history. It is

further evident in the focus on values of democracy, economic growth, industrialization, development, education and modernization. Also, it is visible in the absence of descriptions of involvement in colonialism, as well as absence of perspectives concerning racism and perspectives of the colonized, indigenous and slaves. Occasionally, there are efforts to include marginalized perspectives and descriptions of colonialism and colonizers in negative terms. However, oftentimes the descriptions end up homogenizing marginalized perspectives which lead to reinforcement of stereotypes and misrepresentations instead. For example in the portrayal of indigenous Americans as dangerous instead of resistant. The results presented in this study highlight repetitive descriptions of: stereotypes and misrepresentations of colonized, indigenous and slaves, emphasis of Western centered perspectives, eurocentric values explained as universal values, Western superiority, shortness of perspectives originating from the non-West, and shortness of descriptions of involvement in colonialism. Because of this, it can be assumed that both The textbook *Bilden av historien 1b* and the syllabus for the course Historia 1b are proceeding from a Western epistemology in teaching colonialism. A Western epistemology measures progress through industrialization and economic growth, prioritizes economic values above social values, "protects" the West instead of taking global responsibility, portrays Western knowledge as the only legitimate knowledge and continues to claim superiority and dominance over the non-West. Therefore, even though this study cannot generalize the results for Swedish education on a whole, it can be used to highlight that more research concerning decolonization of the Swedish educational system is required.

## 7.3 Further Research

The results presented in this study highlights that this field requires more research. Since this study proceeds from only one textbook and the syllabus, it would be interesting to compare different textbooks and publishers and see if the content corresponds with the results presented in this study or not. Additionally, it would be interesting to perform similar studies in elementary school or high school. Moreover, different methods of collecting the source material, for example interviewing teachers or students, could uncover perspectives that this study cannot display. Since the teachers have a lot of power to decide both what textbooks to use but also how the subject is taught and how exams are designed it would have been beneficial to investigate their perspective in order to understand if and how the actual education might differ from how the learning material is designed. Similarly, another method

for analyzing the material, for example a critical discourse analysis or a narrative analysis, could also contribute with further aspects.

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