Masculinities: A Case Study on Gendered Texts Used in the English Classroom

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Preface

We decided to write this final thesis together without dividing the different section between us. Every element of the paper was a collaborative writing process. Theories were discussed between us and the interview as well as the text analysis was done together.
Abstract

This paper discusses the issue of how different masculinities are being represented in the English classroom. It specifically aims to examine how a teacher’s own principals concerning gender will be reflected in the texts she chooses to use. The field was explored through a case study, where interviews with an upper secondary English teacher as well as a content analysis on the texts she chose to use in the classroom were central to the study. The results of the case study showed tendencies towards a discrepancy between the teacher’s self-expressed thoughts on gender issues and her choice of texts. The teacher conveyed modern ideas on gender issues, while most of the texts she chose to use in the classroom were positive towards more traditional gender patterns. Therefore, our hypothesis did not correspond to the findings. The findings were analyzed by comparing the teacher’s reported attitudes to the different aspects of gender in the chosen texts. In relation to these findings, the paper focuses on the possibility of further studies within this field of research, such as e.g. observation of how gendered texts are being used in classroom and a more quantified investigation, concerning the number of teachers being studied.

Keywords: EFL classroom, gender stereotyping, hegemonic masculinity, plural masculinity
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1. Introduction

Comparing our own school experiences with what we have encountered in our partner schools, we can see how gender stereotyping is still an issue, both in classroom settings and in the texts used. Boys who, for example, are academically successful can be ridiculed by their peers for not being “masculine” enough. In textbooks we can still see a pattern of sports being for the boys, while themes for girls focus on topics such as horseback riding and emotions. These types of masculine and feminine stereotyping may affect male students’ in detrimental ways. Traditional masculinity that reinforces “macho type” manliness has been deemed self-destructive by limiting boys academically and in the work force (Salisbury & Jackson, 1990, p.4). It has also been shown to damage boys’ lives emotionally as well as social relationships (1990).

The Swedish curriculum for compulsory and secondary school implies that gender identity is an important aspect regarding students’ learning and well-being. It states that schools are an institution that contributes to the development of the students’ understanding of femininity and masculinity. It goes on to state that schools have a responsibility to counteract traditional gender patterns (Skolverket, Lp 11, henceforth Lp11), which is an important factor, especially considering the research conducted on the topic of how gender representations in textbooks might influence students’ perspectives about gender at a formative age (Britton and Lumpkin, 1977, p.41). Moreover, teachers’ notions and practices in terms of gender can have an influence on establishing and maintaining students’ gendered behavior (2003). Furthermore, with these issues in mind, one might realize the impact teachers can have on their students, which is all the more reason to take into consideration the representation of gender in the classroom.

This field of research is important since teachers have an obligation to fulfill the requirements of the Swedish national curriculum by counteracting traditional gender roles (Lp11). Teachers may be able to accomplish this partly through the material presented in the classroom. As suggested previously, a teacher’s choice of material and how that teacher aims to use the material in the classroom can be seen as a reflection of their principles. The types of texts and how the teacher decides to make use of these texts in the classroom may determine how well that teacher holds to the national curriculum.
This research is especially important due to our focus on masculinity, which is a research area that has not been as studied as femininity. A major focus of past studies have been on representations of femininity in textbooks used in the EFL classroom and specifically the negative impact this has had on female students when it comes to language learning (Hellinger, 1980, and Crawford and English, 1984). Some more recent studies have taken up similar issues concerning boys’ lower performance in school in general (Björnsson, 2005). Furthermore, gender identity can be a sensitive area when it comes to bullying and harassment in schools. As highlighted in the Swedish national curriculum, schools have an obligation to the students when it comes to discrimination and harassment. This has to do with the non-toleration of discrimination and more specifically, harassment due to gender identity and expression. The Swedish national curriculum states:

No student should be a target of discriminating behavior due to sex, ethnicity, religion or other beliefs, gender identity or expression, sexual preference, age or handicap. Tendencies such as these should be actively counteracted. Intolerance must be met with knowledge, open discussion and active measures (Lp11. our translation).

For the purpose of this research, a key phrase to identify in the quote is “discrimination due to gender identity or expression, sexual preference…” (Lp11). Hence, an important point to recognize in the curriculum is the action that is to be taken by the school to work against harassment and discrimination. The fact that intolerance must be met with knowledge, open discussion and active measures can mean that the teacher has a responsibility to present these topics in the classroom.

1.1. Purpose

As we have stated previously, the Swedish national curriculum says that schools have a responsibility to counteract traditional gender patterns, our aim was to look into how one particular teacher chose may choose texts based on her attitudes towards gender. We based the inquiry on how masculinity was represented in the texts used in the English classroom and how the teacher planned to use these texts. We did this by presenting different theories on masculinity from both traditional and modern views and examined how they were presented in the texts. The
reasons for choosing masculinity are that most studies in the field of gender have dealt with the feminine perspectives and studies have shown how masculine stereotypes affect boys' school performance in a negative way. Drawing on these different aspects the following research questions were formed:

1.2. Research questions

1. How does an EFL teacher bring up and discuss gender in her choice of classroom texts?
2. How is masculinity represented in the texts chosen by an English teacher of an EFL classroom?
2. Previous research

This section will provide an overview of previous research in the area of masculinity. It will specifically focus on research connected to how masculine stereotypes affect boys’ self-identity as well as their performance in school.

2.1. Boys' self-identity and their performance in school

Research has shown how homophobia and heteronormative ideas in schools create hierarchies of sexual and gender identity that affects boys’ self-recognition (Martino & Palotta-Chiarolli, 2003). A study conducted by McCann, Plummer and Minichiello (2010) shows an example of how traditional views on masculinity can be harmful to boys and their self-identity. Several of the men interviewed in this study claimed to have been victims of childhood bullying based on homophobic humor. During their adolescent years, these men endured continual homophobic name-calling, social alienation and bullying that led to humiliation, violence and physical harm. These men were treated in this way because they did not live up to the traditional definition of masculinity. They were different from their peers. As a result of this, these men suffered from depression well into their adult lives (2010).

Boys’ self-recognition is not the only thing that suffers from traditional masculine gender patterns. Boys spend their school days seeking recognition from their peers by demonstrating their position within the hierarchy of masculinity; this often does not allow room for high performance in the classroom (Björnsson, 2005). Boys who have good study habits and focus on high marks can be at risk for being the target of bullying. Therefore, they are forced to balance the demands of the school and recognition from their peers even though they are well aware of the importance of their education (2005).

Studies in Sweden have focused on this pattern of boys performing poorly in school. In Björnsson’s study, Kön och skolframgång tolknningar och perspektiv, from 2005 it is stated that girls outperform boys when it comes to average scores in most school subjects. In this particular study, the conclusion was that the factor of sex has an actual connection to performance in school, one specific area being literacy. Girls performed at a higher level than boys when it came to reading, which in turn led to girls outperforming boys in other subjects (2005).

In order to explain these results, it is necessary to take a look at how girls have reached
this point of higher performance. One central aspect could be related to how girls have adapted their gender identity to fit the demands of society (Björnsson, 2005). Women now have a wider sphere of action to choose from, compared to the past, which can include a family and/or a career. Because society has encouraged this, women have been able to expand their gender identity in a way that men and boys have not been able to (2005). It is still not as acceptable for men to take on the more traditionally feminine roles in the family or society in general.
3. Definitions and theories

In this section we will present theories and definitions about gender, and specifically masculinity, which have inspired this case study.

3.1. Gender identity and stereotyping

One aspect to explore, in connection to gender stereotyping, is how a person's identity is formed and to what extent a person may be affected by gender issues when forming their personal identity. Butler (1990) suggests that since one's identity is formed through the perception on sex, gender and sexuality, the idea of “the person” (the essence of an individual) is challenged when the individual fails “to conform to the gendered norms of cultural intelligibility by which persons are defined” (p. 23). In other words, a person's sense of identity comes into question if that person decides to resist traditional gender patterns. Gender identities that do not correspond to the norms set by society may be perceived as developmentally insufficient. A boy may not feel comfortable expressing himself as he may wish if that expression is considered “unnatural” by classmates who only recognize traditional gender roles.

3.2. Definitions of sex and gender

The terms sex and gender have been closely linked to the field of research. According to Shapiro (1981), sex is generally used to refer to the biological differences between male and female. Gender has come to be known as the “social, cultural, psychological constructs that are imposed upon these biological differences” (p. 449). A more recent definition of gender has been proposed by Butler (1990). She says that gender should be seen as an action rather than an attribute. By this she means that instead of having set characteristics when it comes to masculinity and femininity, a person can identify with various ways of behaving, in different situations, without being tied to a specific gender stereotype. This way of viewing gender as an action rather than an attribute is the definition we think correlates the best with our research.
3.3. Feminist arguments

In order to gain a better understanding of why male students might be affected by feminine gender stereotyping, it is important to get a picture of the background of some feminist issues regarding gender. Some feminists argue that only the feminine gender is pinpointed, meaning that women are defined according to their sex and that men are considered to be the epitome of a universal personhood (Butler, 1990, p. 13). This notion may seem extreme, but the thought of femininity ranking lower may be harmful to young men and boys who may wish to express themselves in a more “feminine” way. Other feminists have argued that women have been viewed as being the “unrepresentable” and even the “Other” (Butler, 1990, p. 13). Beauvoir (1949) maintains that women are seen as the negation of men, and that in this sense femininity is something that is lacking. Furthermore, the masculine identity can be viewed as a contrast, separating itself from the feminine one (Pascoe, 2007). This to may constitute regret and fear in boys if they do not live up to the masculine ideal.

3.4. Definition of hegemonic masculinity

Our point of departure was hegemonic masculinity and the negative aspects that can accompany this form of gender stereotyping, especially considering Butler’s (1990) ideas about femininity being viewed as the sex that is lacking. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) define hegemonic masculinity as a construction of several different attributes, which include power and dominance over femininity. They continue their explanation by stating that hegemonic masculinity requires the subordination of all other types of masculinity. These other types of masculinity are ones that can be seen as being feminine in a patriarchal society. An example of this could be a man’s occupation that has been stereotyped as being feminine, for instance, a hair stylist. Hegemonic masculinity can be seen as being the normative type of masculinity by which all other types are measured. That said, all other types of masculinities are seen as a contradiction to hegemonic masculinity based on society’s view of the term masculine (p.832). With this in mind, it is easy to see how school culture can be difficult for boys when it comes to trying to fit in. The hegemonic view on masculinity means that boys must struggle to live up to this norm (if they don’t want to be considered feminine). Consequently, boys’ declining performances in various subjects can be attributed to their attempt to meet the requirements demanded of them by a hegemonic view on
gender. Hence, hegemonic masculinity promotes an “anti-studying culture” for boys (Björnsson, 2005). Because boys’ performance in school has declined in recent years, it is important to look at the connection between performance and classroom representations of hegemonic masculinity. Therefore, our position on hegemonic masculinity goes hand in hand with the Swedish curriculum, which states that traditional gender patterns should be counteracted (Lp11).

3.5. Theories on masculinity

To understand the concept of hegemonic masculinity it can be helpful to look at some other theories of masculinity. Connell (1995) suggests four different strands, when defining masculinity, namely: Essentialist account, Positivist definitions, normative assessment and semiotic approach. Essentialist views of masculinity are very often connected to the male body or the male “genetics”, expressing innate masculine traits or specific hormonal features shared by all men. Positivist definitions try to describe “masculine” behaviors and patterns. One such definition, by Craig (1992) states that “Masculinity is what a culture expects of its men” (cited in Horsley, 2005, p. 45). This implies that masculinity is a cultural construct, based on the beliefs of one’s society. Along side the positivist view is the normative assessment, which formulates what men ought to be, dealing with society’s idea of masculinity. Finally, Connell (1995) mentions the semiotic approach, which distinguishes masculinity and femininity as two opposites. Masculinity can only exist in contrast to femininity, in other words a male is a non-female.

These four theories named by Connell (1995) can be narrowed down to a list of attributes that can describe hegemonic masculinity. These masculine attributes can be seen as being based on biology, culture, and society’s view of what masculinity is, along with the idea that masculinity is non-female. Hence, boys are put in the difficult position to balance their social status with their performance in school (Björnsson, 2005). In this sense, the role of the teacher as a role model as well as one who makes active choices concerning classroom materials are important factors when it comes to the students’ sense of gender identity.

As opposed to these rather traditional definitions more modern views on masculinity, based on both social-psychological and ethnographic research, have not found any fixed pattern of “being a man” but rather fluid and dynamic definitions of masculinity, depending on type of culture and period in history (Connell, 2000). Different cultures, subcultures, societies and
institutions have different ways of explaining and constructing masculinity. Because we, for the purpose of this paper, acknowledge and refer to different types of masculinities, we will refer to these as plural masculinity throughout the paper.

Similar to the Essentialist theory, the humanist position has labeled gender as an attribute of a person that is distinguished primarily as being pregendered (Mcelhinny, 2003, p. 27-28). Pregendered means that a person is born with a predetermined gender, which in turn means that a person’s gender is biological. This can be problematic regarding the connection of gender identity and gender as an action (Butler, 1990). If a person is pregendered, as the humanist position states, then gender can not be seen as an action. However, as Butler further proposes, a person’s identity is made up of social and cultural elements and is not fixed, which is the standpoint for our research.

The relationship between these ideas of biologically predisposed feminine and masculine traits and the cultural constructs have sometimes been used in additive terms, to explain the views on masculinity and femininity from an essentialist point of departure (Connell, 1987). Drawing on that approach, culture is seen to use the biological predispositions to strengthen gender specific roles by, for example, linking “caretaking” with the ability to breastfeed. This way of looking at gender tends to simplify the relationship between femininity and masculinity by proposing that an individual can only be assigned to one category, either male or female, determined merely on the individual’s genitals and that these categories are fixed throughout one’s lifetime (Garfinkel, 1967).

### 3.6. Gender as an action/performance

Many of these theories make use of an interchange between sex and gender. Butler (1990) argues that a distinction should be made between the two terms. She suggests that sex can be referred to as being biological, while gender should be seen as something culturally constructed. Therefore, gender cannot be thought of as being fixed or being the result of sex. Because of this notion that gender is formed by culture, it cannot be expected to accompany sex in any specific fashion (Butler, 1990, p.8). Thus, just because one might be male does not mean that that person necessarily needs to express himself in hegemonic masculine ways. Furthermore, Butler challenges the idea that sex and gender need to be in relation to one another by questioning a binary gender system that implies that gender reflects sex or is limited by it (p.9). Based on these
ideas gender can be understood as being more complex. It might not be seen as being two, but can be viewed as a range of different genders. Instead of having a binary gender system, one might suggest a gender scale, which provides a variety of degrees of masculinities and femininities one can manifest at any given time or situation.

This way of viewing masculinity and femininity as being more than two genders can be recognized in what is called “queer theory”, which can be seen as being founded by Judith Butler. Some of the main points of queer theory as discussed in Gauntlett (2008) are that a person’s identity is not fixed; one’s identity has to do with social and cultural elements that that person has expressed. Another is that gender is a conscious or unconscious performance reinforced through repetition. Lastly, the division between masculinity and femininity is a social construction formed from the division of men and women (p. 147).

From this notion of a having a variety of genders, gender as an activity rather than an attribute should also be considered. One of the most prominent theories is called activity theory, which is embedded in the work of Vygotsky (Engeström, 1999) and elaborated on by Goodwin (1990) who argues that interactive studies should be done from the concept of activity as a unit of analysis instead of cultures, groups, individuals, or gender (cited in Mcelhinny, 2003, p. 29). This means that research within this field should be based on activities performed by individuals rather than basing the research on a particular group of people, such as a cultural or gender group. In this way the research would be given a different perspective if one were not focused on the specific group.

Goodwin’s (1990) research reflected this method. She focused on the activities of some boys and girls creating different social structures in a span of play and speech activities. Examples of the activities observed were: argument, gossip, stories, playing house, and making slingshots. The findings of this research showed that in some activities boys and girls constructed systematically different social methods and gender identities through their speech, while in other activities the children built related approaches (1990). An example of this is Goodwin’s conclusion when comparing the children in “task activity” and “pretend play” (1990, p. 284). It was found in both types of activities that girls work with their relationships. When it came to confrontations, however, “justice and rights” were at the forefront of the arguments, instead of “care and responsibility” (1990, p.284). In short, it was found that instead of just having one aspect when it came to the social structure and speech actions, girls varied their actions and speech depending on the situation. These findings proposed “individuals have access to different activities, and thus to different cultures and different social identities, including a range of different genders” (Mcelhinny, 2003, p. 29). These ways of understanding gender as activities or
performances and not merely as an attribute, along with the idea of a range of different genders may be challenging to a hegemonic perspective in the classroom.

Another theory based on the idea of gender being a performance is the post-structural approach, which asks the questions of “how and why gender differences are being constructed in that way, or what notion of gender is being normalized in such behavior” (Mcelhinny, 2003, p.24). By asking the question “What difference does gender make” instead of “What are the gender differences”, one can get a better understanding of how gender is developed. This approach inquires how gender categories are formed, such as “woman”, and how the political interests are served by the creation of these different identities or categories (Mcelhinny, 2003, p.24).

The post-structural approach in linguistics focuses on forms of sex/gender “transgression”. This means men or women breaching the rules that dictate what is “normal” speech or behavior when it comes to being masculine and feminine. These sex/gender “transgressions” help to disclose prevailing norms of sex, gender and sexual identity (Mcelhinny, 2003, p.25). Cameron (1997) maintains this by also arguing for gender as a performance instead of an attribute. She states, “Gender has constantly to be reaffirmed and publicly displayed by repeatedly performing particular acts in accordance with the cultural norms…which define ‘masculinity’ and ‘femininity’” (p. 49).

Another example of examining gender as a performance can be found in a study done by Cameron (1997) wherein she evaluated a recorded conversation by a group of college men watching a basketball game and gossiping about other men whom they labeled “gay” in a demeaning, alienating way, not to mention possibly comical, according to them. According to Cameron, the group’s criteria for depicting the men as gay had nothing to do with their knowledge or suspicions of the men’s sexual preferences or experiences. Cameron explains this by presuming that abnormality expressed by the group of men for the term “gay” was more of a gender abnormality rather than a sexual one “being ‘gay’ means failing to measure up to the groups standards of masculinity or femininity” (p. 53). From Cameron’s research, Mcelhinny (2003) concluded that this way of exposing others sex/gender “transgressions” reveals how some men maintain the need to promote themselves as heterosexuals by disparaging other men (p.25). According to Björnsson (2005), traditional stereotypes surrounding normative definitions of what it means to be a man and a woman can also have negative effects on boys’ performance in school. He states that, since the hegemonic view of boys devalues the status of studies, making it a “feminine action”, male students who prioritize studying run a risk of being bullied (2005). This could be seen as one of the contributing factors in boys’ declining school results.
4. Methods

This section describes the methods we used to conduct the case study.

4.1. Overview of the research

Our research was conducted as a case study, which was conducted at an upper secondary school in the southern part of Sweden. The reasons for choosing this particular school lay mostly in factors of convenience and availability. The case study included a semi-structured interview with a teacher and a content analysis of the texts that particular teacher chose to use in her classroom. The interview was done for the purpose of creating a background from which to base the analysis of the different texts she used in the classroom. Part of our aim was to enquire a teacher's motivation for her choice of particular texts she used in the classroom and her report on how she used these texts. We specifically inquired about the teacher's attitudes towards traditional and non-traditional gender roles presented in the texts she had chosen to use in her classroom. The teacher interview was recorded, transcribed, and analysed. A content analysis was then conducted on the texts the teacher chose to use in the classroom. The content analysis specifically focused on the different ways masculinity was represented in the texts the teacher chose.

4.2. Case study

This study is a case study that has to do with examining a particular, isolated case. This can be done on different levels depending on the purpose for the research. The type of case study we chose to conduct was a representative one, using a situation or event that can be seen as typical and representative for a broader field (Bryman, 2008). One of the advantages of a case study is that it can focus on qualitative information, which provides a more in depth aspect to the research. The drawback can be the external validity, meaning that the results from such a study cannot be directly applied to other studies within the field.

The purpose of a case study can be to get an understanding of participants intentions, and contextual influences. Case study research can be defined as investigating “a contemporary phe-
nomenon within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 1994, p. 13). The objectives of a case study has to do with description, explanation, prediction and control of the individual process. For this research, we focused on the description objective, which tries to answer questions that have to do with who, what, where, when and how (2010).

Case study research can include a number of research methods such as, asking participants for explanations and interpretations of data, observation of the environments of the case, and analysis of documents and observations (2010). The methods that were used in this research involved interviewing a teacher to get explanations of the texts she chose and an analysis of the texts.

4.2.1. Semi-structured interview

As stated previously, the interview of the teacher was mainly done as a way of providing background information for our research. It was important to get an idea of the teacher's attitudes when it came to gender, to find out how she motivated her choice of texts, as well as her report of how she used these texts in order to have information to base the content analysis on.

The semi-structured interview was chosen on the basis that our interview schedule was in a general form and therefore, flexible to adapt to the responses of the respondent, even to the point that spontaneous questions could easily be woven into the interview. The interview model was created on the basis of an attempt to get an idea of the teacher’s attitudes when it came to aspects and issues surrounding gender. Therefore, broad questions that enquired the teacher’s thoughts on gender in media were asked first, followed by more narrow questions about her criterion when it came to choosing texts for her classroom. The interview questions can be found in the appendix as attachment I.

Another advantage to the semi-structured interview method is that the questions are able to vary in sequence (Bryman p.196). This type of interview method is recommended for our type of research based on the idea that more significance is placed on the interviewee’s own report and explanation of her choice of texts (Burton & Bartlett, 2005, p.109). This was an important factor because our topic of research was considered one that welcomes open discussions, thus the teacher was encouraged to discuss and explain. Open questions were mainly used in the interviews because of the advantages of retrieving the respondents’ approach on issues regarding gender (Bryman, p. 232). This type of interview may be seen more as an informal discussion.
between the participants and the interviewers and is useful in qualitative research (Burton & Bartlett, 2005, p.110). One advantage to this is that it may help to create a more relaxed environment in which the participants may be more willing to share their thoughts and feelings about the subject matter. Any time an interview is conducted there is a risk that the respondent may give answers that they think the researcher wants to hear or that are politically correct. This is especially the case when the topic of the research has to do with a certain ideology or social norms. Thus, within the practice of interviewing lies a concept called “presentational data”, which are the appearances and answers to questions that respondents try to establish in the eyes of the researcher (2010). This type of data is usually ideological and normative. It has to do with a “manufactured image of idealized doing than with the routine, practical activities actually engaged in by members of the studied organization” (Van Maanen, 1979, p.542). In this research presentational data had to do with the teacher's attitudes about masculinity and the ideal way (according to her) of presenting a particular text that represents masculinity in the classroom. Keeping in mind that the respondent may give politically and socially acceptable answers, we tried to keep the interview at an informal level. Furthermore, having two interviewers carry out the interview may have been beneficial because the interview style seemed to be more unstructured and more like a conversation, which is typical in conducting qualitative research (Bryman, p.197).

4.2.2. Qualitative content analysis

Our second method of research was a qualitative content analysis on the texts the teacher planned to use during one school term. This content analysis was done in order to examine its representations of masculinity. We specifically looked at how masculinity was depicted in the texts according to the different definitions and theories presented earlier. These theories and definition mainly included hegemonic masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005) versus gender as an action, as described by Butler (1990). However, Connell's (1995) four strand definition of masculinity was also taken into account during the content analysis of the texts. As stated previously, this definition includes the essentialist, the positivist, the normative and the semiotic approach. Masculinity's affect on gender identity as well as boy's school performances was also considered in the content analysis of the texts.

Content analysis can be a useful method for this research, since it can give the researcher an understanding of “how language is used in communication” (Lazaraton, 2009, p.243).
Another method that we used, which lies within the frame of content analysis, is ethnographic content analysis. This method is specifically used in qualitative content analysis, which focuses on permitting categories to transpire from the data. Ethnographic content analysis has to do with constantly comparing the texts in order to discover emerging patterns or themes in the texts. We did this by looking for different representations of masculinity in the chosen texts, which in turn caused patterns to form from the texts. Space was allotted for new representations to emerge from the texts.

One problem that can arise when doing a qualitative content analysis is that the research can be conducted in terms of “latent content”. This means that the focus is on “interpreting meanings that lie beneath the surface” (Bryman, p.275). This can be an issue when it comes to defining the traditional indicators of masculinity and femininity, due to the notion that these terms contain multiple perspectives depending on the person defining them (Bryman, p.291). We tried to avoid misinterpretations of masculinity and femininity by constantly referring to the definitions outlined for the terms while analysing the texts.
5. Results and analysis

In this section we report and analyze the results from the interview. We will also report and discuss the results from the text analysis.

5.1. Interview

The interview was carried out at an upper secondary school in the southern part of Sweden. The teacher interviewed has had thirty-five years of experience as an English teacher. She teaches English in a variety of programs, which include dance, theater, hairdresser, civics, science and technique. She has three classes that only consist of girls (24, 16 and 17). The fourth aesthetics (estetik) class consists of 24 girls and 4 boys. One of the English classes has more boys than girls (19 boys and 7 girls), while another consists of 17 girls and 8 boys. The school makes it a point to mix the programs into different classes in order to integrate the diversity of students. For example, an English class can consist of students from both the aesthetic program and the science program.

The teacher chooses her own texts and makes her own lessons from the chosen texts. She does this in order to not run the risk of habitually using texts that are irrelevant and uninteresting for the students. Even when it comes to the classical English literature she chooses not to do traditional lessons, in the sense of activities that mainly focus on form e.g. translation and grammar activities (Lightbown & Spada, 1999). An example that the teacher used was reading a text and reproducing it, stressing the limitations of this method compared to the communicative approach that she seemed to prefer using. From looking at her lesson plans it seemed as if she included several discussion and analysis type lessons for novels and films. Lightbown and Spada (1999) explain the communicative approach of language teaching as focusing on meaning rather than form, in terms of classroom interaction and language use as a means of acquisition. The teacher chooses texts based on whether the students will find them interesting, relevant and understandable. Although the teacher mentioned that she does not take any special consideration into the representation of gender when choosing texts, she stressed that she would rather choose a text that is controversial in order to provide opportunities to speak.

She also said that since gender in itself is controversial, those aspects come up frequently.
There was in fact a correlation between what the teacher said she did and what she actually did when it came to bringing controversial topics into the classroom (which might contain aspects of gender). Based on the analysis of the texts seven out of 18 texts had to do with gender. Of those gendered texts, all could be considered controversial depending upon the perspective of the students. The fact that the teacher regularly chose controversial topics with aspects of gender can be seen as the first step in complying to the national curriculum relating to the counteraction of traditional gender patterns (Lp11). However, it also must be taken into consideration the ways in which the teacher actually used these texts in the classroom.

When asked about the risk of controversial topics offending some students, the teacher replied that one should be careful, especially when it comes to religion. Furthermore, she felt that the students were comfortable enough in her classroom to be able to discuss and debate such issues and that she always stresses, to the students, the importance of understanding that the texts are just opinions and a means of learning English. It is the teacher’s opinion that one should not “put a lid on” controversial issues, but rather have open discussions. Encouraging open discussions about controversial issues is one way the teacher adhered to the national curriculum, that stresses the importance of discussion around such issues, regarding action to be taken against harassment (Lp11).

The teacher also said that sometimes she feels the need to prepare a student for a certain text if she thinks it might be offensive. She does this beforehand by informing the student in question that a certain issue will be discussed during class and that it is for teaching purposes only, not meant to offend anyone. The teacher has experienced students being offended in the classroom in the past, but not because of a particular text. Someone making an insulting comment in the classroom about homosexuals affected that particular student. The fact that a student made a negative comment about homosexuality can be seen in the light of Cameron’s (1997) idea that a person’s gender identity has to be confirmed by acting out on socially accepted norms. In this case, by ridiculing homosexuality one can be seen as strengthening one’s own heterosexuality (Mcelhinny, 2003). However, attempting to strengthen hegemonic masculinity in this way can weaken others’ self-identity as well as performance in school (Butler, 1990; Björnsson, 2005). In the previously mentioned situation the teacher responded by saying that insulting comments are not acceptable in society today. By responding this way the teacher might seem to be restricting the students’ right to voice their opinions. On the other hand, according to the national curriculum, she needs to actively counteract any kind of discriminating behavior (Lp11).
The teacher would consider using texts that support traditional views on gender. The fact that she considered using traditional gendered texts can be seen as contradictory to the national curriculum, which states that teachers are to counteract these stereotypical views. This directly relates to the research question about how the teacher’s choice of texts is connected to the national curriculum. However, the choice of texts alone does not fully indicate the teacher’s attitudes towards gender roles and cannot predict how the teacher will use the texts in the classroom. In the light of this she said that she uses these texts in a way that compares the modern perspectives with the traditional ones. This way of working with the texts can be viewed as a way of actually counteracting the traditional gender patterns; therefore, one can consider her to be in alignment with the national curriculum. She also stresses that it is important to give the students the opportunity to take in different views. This notion of presenting the students with different points of views goes along with the national curriculum in the following quote:

The school should be open to different opinions and encourage all of these different opinions to be presented. It should point out the importance of personal convictions and give opportunity for such personal convictions. The education should be factual and comprehensive (Lp11. Our translation).

She mentioned that since many of her foreign students have “very typical male role models”, it is important to bring up these aspects “in a natural way”. This goes hand in hand with her previous response concerning the way she handles issues regarding homosexuality. This way of working with the texts “in a natural way” is beneficial to her students. In one way, the students to whom the different aspects apply might better receive a different perspective if it is presented in a way that is not confrontational. Taking into account her student body and handling the different points of view with care and respect towards her students when presenting texts is a thought out way for the teacher to bring up controversial topics.

When asked what aspects of gender issues she regarded as being important she mentioned role models, lifestyle, relationships and family compositions. These aspects were clearly marked in the different texts the teacher chose to use in the classroom. The teacher was consistent regarding what she said she thought was important, concerning gender aspects, compared to the types of texts she chose to present to her students. All of the gendered texts had to do with one or more of these aspects.

The teacher could see ”enormous changes” in representations of gender in media in the last decade. Especially when it came to female representation in the media. Even though she
welcomed these changes she expressed that she was against feminists that do not appreciate “what men can do”. She goes on to state that there is no ”masculine movement, so who’s fighting for the men”. By this statement one could argue that this view of men and women is one of polar opposites. Thus, making it an issue of “us” and “them”. This way of seeing only two represented genders goes hand and hand with the idea of bipolar assumption in the sense of the idea that men and women are binary opposites. A traditional feminist view has been that women have been seen as being “unrepresentable” in media and in that way viewed as the “Other” (Butler, 1990). However, as a contrast, the teacher’s comment may present an argument that today men can be seen as being the “Other” and are not being recognized “for what they can do”. In this sense the conflict between the sexes has come full circle. Now men might be the ones struggling for recognition. However, drawing on the idea of plural masculinity there does not necessarily have to be polar opposites. Just because women are getting more attention in the media does not mean that men necessarily need to be ignored. This idea is further emphasized by Björnsson (2005), who says that it is important to challenge ideals surrounding gender without neglecting either group. 

The teacher could even see some changes in course literature today when it came to gender representations. She also mentioned the importance of the students being exposed to different views on gender. She gave an example of the latest text she used called Someday this pain will be useful to you. It is a novel about a boy who may or may not be homosexual and struggles with this and other teenage issues. When asked how her students received the book mentioned above, she said that most students found a text about homosexuality completely normal, especially the students in the aesthetic programs. If there is a reaction, the teacher said ”We don’t make a big deal out of it” and that they are open for discussions. She went on to say that the students have a right to their own opinions and that she does not take sides. The fact that the teacher chooses not to “make a big deal” out of gender issue encounters in the classroom and welcomes open discussion about these topics can be helpful to the students. Since children’s gender identity is being shaped by their environment (Nelson, 2006) and since school plays a major role in this area, the teacher’s approach towards gender issues can influence the students’ realization of their gendered self (Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003). In this way a teacher may be able to assist the students when it comes to developing their gender identity by presenting them with different views to discuss in a “natural” way, thus letting it be known that the decisions they make on the different issues is theirs’ to make. This way of presenting different perspectives and encouraging the students to form their own opinions also follows the national curriculum quoted previously about the school’s responsibility to allow different opinions to be
Going along with the idea of presenting different opinions, the teacher also expressed that it is valuable to recognize both traditional and non-traditional role models, since both are represented by the students. By addressing both types of gender role models the teacher is presenting a neutral (in one sense) view on gender that may help to create a balance between the two. Although this way of approaching gender still implies two polarities (Butler, 1990), it gives the students the opportunity to reinterpret the norms. The teacher mentioned that she often speaks about traditional gender aspects by linking them to society’s historical views. By using terminology such as “old-fashioned” when talking about traditional gender issues, the teacher can be seen as adhering to the specific gender aspects in the Swedish national curriculum, which states that the “…school has a responsibility to counteract traditional gender patterns” (Lp11). Another way of viewing the teacher’s terminology in relation to traditional gender aspects is that she is positive towards modern concepts of gender. This can be seen in the way she made it a point to stress the connection of the term “old fashioned” with traditional gender patterns.

In order to try to steer the interviewee as little as possible towards socially acceptable answers surrounding gender, we decided to first do the interview and then ask for the texts she uses in her classroom. It would also make us less controlled by these texts, when doing our interview. After examining the texts we posed a follow-up question about how she intended to use a couple of the texts in the classroom. The following section contains the results and the analysis of that question.

5.1.1. A discussion of how two of the texts are used in the classroom

Boys to men was a newspaper article article that had to do with modern versus traditional “manhood”, advocating the latter (Bresler, 2009). Modern masculinity was described in the article as being less serious, while the traditional version was preferable. Furthermore, the author presented a picture of the traditional man as being hardworking, educated, family oriented, and successful; while the modern man is viewed as being confused, childish, and irresponsible.

The teacher said that she only used this text in a class where at least half of the students were boys. She also stressed that it was important to understand she used that kind of article for the purpose of making “the students aware that there may be differences between sexes that could/should be acknowledged and to “knowingly provoke and stimulate discussion”. The teacher then focused the attention to the boys in the class, making them the “reference group” while the
Girls in the class were advised by the teacher to be “truthful, but empathetic support”. Both boys and girls were encouraged to draw from their knowledge and experience of boys/men and of course, the boys were to also rely on their own knowledge. B = questions posed to boys and G = questions posed to girls.

1) **B/G** - Do you believe there are “male myths”? If so, please name some of them.
2) **B/G** - Do you think that any of these “male myths” just might be true? If so, please be able to give examples.
3) **B** - Do you sometimes feel that you are expected to be and act a special way just because you are a male? If so, please give examples.
4) **B/G** - What is your opinion on the feministic movement and what kind of effects do you think it has had on male/female roles in the home and in society?
5) **B** - How do you see your future as a male in Sweden today? What do you think your future life will be like? Do you think your life will be different from the lives that your father and grandfather have led?
6) **B/G** - Do you think that this article gives a true/fair picture of males and futures today?

Since she presented points such as “do you believe there are male myths?” and “do you sometimes feel that you are expected to be and act a special way just because you are a male?” the students were given the opportunity to reflect on the concept of masculinity from different angles and their own subjective points of view. Another point that she used in the discussion was “do you think that this article gives a true/fair picture of males today?”. From these types of questions it seems as if the teacher challenges the principals of the article and wants to provoke the students to do the same. By doing this she complies with the part in the Swedish curriculum that stresses the importance of counteracting traditional gender patterns. Furthermore, by presenting one view and giving the students the opportunity to question it, she is encouraging the students to express different opinions. This also corresponds to the curriculum, which states that the school should endorse different opinions (Lp11).

The other text that we followed up on in the interview was *What dads are made of*, which had to do with the importance of male role models in children’s lives. The text presents fathers and mothers as being binary opposites in the way they care for their children.

The teacher stated that she was able to use this text in any class “since it focuses on a father’s interaction with his children and the differences between the ways fathers and mothers
differ in handling their relationships with their children”. She explained that before the creative writing exercise, the students were to read and prepare the text for the short discussion. However, before the class discussion the teacher pointed out the fact that not everyone has a father or a father figure in their life and that the students should be sensitive to the fact that there are students in the classroom that this applies to. The teacher said that the following points would then be discussed:

1) Parental stereotypes
2) Differences in the ways their parents (male/female) handled different situations in the home.
3) In the cases where there are students who don’t have a father present in their everyday life, if they would share this experience with us and we could use their information in the discussions
4) The question of the importance of a father figure to girls as well as boys
5) Why the students think that many men shy away from the nurturing and teaching jobs today
6) Have they noticed any differences or conflicts between their parents when it comes to parenting skills.

After the discussion, the teacher assigned a creative writing exercise. The students were to choose one of the following topics:

1) Why my dad is an important part of my life
2) Fathers are important parts of their child’s development

The fact that the teacher brought up the question of parental stereotypes shows that she questions these stereotypes and aims to evoke discussions around them. On the other hand, by using phrases such as parental differences and by pointing out that men shy away from nurturing and teaching jobs, she is implying that there actually are differences when it comes to gender. This goes against what Butler (1990) says about gender being an action rather than an attribute, questioning the idea of binary gender opposites. Furthermore, by assigning the task of writing an essay using a fatherhood theme, the teacher may contribute to the reinforcement of existing gender stereotypes. In the interview, the teacher stated that one of the aspects of gender that she found to be important was that of family compositions. From this statement it is difficult to get an idea of the teacher’s position surrounding the question of family compositions. However, based on the design of the task, one might consider how the assignment could affect students from a non-traditional family setting. A potential problem arises for students who might have two mothers, and therefore, would have little
experience of what it means to have a male role model.

5.2. Analysis of the texts

In the texts, we looked for direct representations of masculinity. Since, as Pascoe (2007) mentions, masculinity can also be seen in the light of femininity, we also looked at texts with representations of femininity. In the analysis of the texts we talk about traditional as well as modern masculinities. We refer to the definitions of hegemonic masculinity as traditional and plural masculinity as being the modern view. Of the 18 texts the teacher chose, seven had elements of masculine or feminine representations and 12 did not. Of these seven texts only two actually took a stand against hegemonic masculinity. The other five texts had, in some way, a traditional or stereotypical take on masculinity/femininity.

The text *Summer of love* had to do with same sex marriage in Europe and the United States. It was an informative article that raised some issues surrounding gay rights in society. The text also brings up the question of same-sex unions raising children. This text could be seen as being positive towards same-sex unions in the sense that the author seemed to express the ideals behind the notion of same-sex unions as being inclusive, while the opposition (mainly the Catholic church) being exclusive.

Some of the highlights of the text include one statement about how the distinction is being diminished between gay marriages and traditional ones in the Netherlands. By this notion the texts seems to imply that there should be no distinction between a gay marriage and a traditional one. This idea of non-distinction can be applied to McElhinny (2003) who refers to the post-structural approach of sex/gender “transgression”, meaning that men and women, today, set their own rules on norms of sex, gender and sexual identity (p.25). This notion of taking a text that discusses same sex marriages as equally legitimate as the traditional marriages can be positive in the light of accepting plural masculinity in the classroom.

As stated previously, the text is positive to homosexuality and gay marriages. Especially in the way it’s author chooses to present the two different sides of the issue. First of all, it is brought to the attention that the Netherlands queen knighted a man for his work as a gay rights activist. This tells the reader that the work the man did was so good and important that he received an award for it. To present the other side’s opinion, the author explains the Catholic Church’s take on gay marriages using words such as “an abomination”. Another negative
standpoint the author addresses is a quote from the French Family Minister who states that “A man and a woman are necessary to have a baby – everything else is artifice”. A similar quote from the text says “Marriage is holy, while homosexual acts go against the natural moral law”. These two quotes are examples of how the author makes his point of how being negative towards the idea of gay rights is not only being exclusive and not accepting, but moreover, not even being tolerant. Another approach to these two quotes is the distinction between what is considered natural and unnatural and by whom. This concept goes hand in hand with the essentialist view on gender as being constructed according to biological predispositions only (Connell, 1987). If a person does not behave in a way that corresponds to their sex, that person may be judged as being unnatural.

The text On line dating poses honesty issues was about on-line dating. The focus of this text is from the woman’s perspective of the topic. Little direct attention is given to men. However, indirectly men are portrayed as dishonest. The text also points out the polar opposites of men and women, saying that women are more vulnerable than men and that men do not have the same intuition as women do when it comes to potentially abusive partners. From this perspective men are seen as the opposite of women since they are more guarded and secure, and are not as intuitive as women. Connell (1995) describes this concept of viewing men and women as having innate gender attributes as connected to the essentialist view of masculinity, which can be seen as being negative for men in more than one way. On the one hand, men are dishonest and are not intuitive. This is bad for all men, even for the hegemonic masculine man. On the other hand, they are seen as not being vulnerable, which may be unfavorable for men who are on the more feminine side of the masculinity scale. A man who behaves in a vulnerable way may be stereotyped as being too feminine. This stereotype can reflect negatively on him due to societies view of how a man should be the perfection of hegemonic masculinity (Goffman 1963). This idea of plural masculinities correlates with the ideas of gender not being fixed (Butler, 1990) and it being based on activities rather than attributes (Goodwin, 1990).

The text Sexually suggestive clothing shouldn't fly for our children is a newspaper article discussing an opinion against girls wearing sexually suggestive clothing and how this can have negative implications for girls. For the main part, boys were not considered in the text. They were only mentioned in passing as not “immune from the wardrobe war”. However, men were, again, indirectly mentioned in the text as being prone to “ogle” at young girls bodies. This idea of men in general viewing a girl’s body as if he were attracted to her insinuates that in order to be a “normal” man, one must find the female body attractive, and that same sex attraction is not an option. Cameron expresses similar thoughts in her idea that masculinity is measured by standards
created within the dominant peer group. In this same sense, it can be argued that the text did not take into consideration the idea of other women “ogling” at young girls bodies. The emphasis is placed on men responding negatively towards girls wearing suggestive clothing.

Two of the texts were taken from an English work book. These two texts were presented together, making up one combined texts for the students to work with. They are called *Parents must challenge high school culture* and *High school culture*. The first text focused on high school sub-cultures in relation to traditional gender roles, listing some masculine and feminine stereotypes that can be found in high schools. Some of the phrasing used in this text was: “Alpha male” and comparing male athletic skills to their level of prestige, while the opposite, being a member of the library club not being a prestigious activity. For girls it mentioned how physical beauty and fashion sense are necessary in order to be popular and that girls are able to get away with high academic achievements, whereas boys are not seen to fit in if they are intelligent. However, this text does not promote the gender stereotypes, but instead it questions them. It gives the reader/student an opportunity to also question them, calling for a discussion to compare the school culture in the text to the students’ own school culture. This way of opening a discussion around the topic of gender stereotyping can be a way of starting the process of counteracting traditional gender roles as called for in the Swedish national curriculum (Lp 11).

*High school culture* had to do with typical male-female relationships as seen in teen movies and shows similar aspects of gender stereotyping as the previous text. Two of the captions portray girls’ fashion sense in connection to popularity, whereas three of them describe boys as being dishonest and “corrupt”. Spence and Helmreich (1978) go against these stereotypes in their dualistic view on gender. They advocate that a person can have traits that represent traditional masculinity as well as traditional femininity. The stereotypes in the text could be seen as being specific to the sub-culture of high school. This can be connected to one of the modern views on gender described by Connell (1995) that supports more fluid and dynamic definitions of gender, depending on what culture/sub-culture one belongs to.

*Boys to men (Or are they just staying boys)* is about boys’ journey to manhood, promoting the traditional views on masculinity and devaluing popular culture by contrasting it to what Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) referred to as hegemonic masculinity. An example of this can be clearly seen in the image preceding the text. It shows four young boys dressed in clothes stereotypical of masculine occupations, such as a fireman, doctor, policeman and a businessman. The author compared what it means to be a man today with the traditional idea of “manhood”; where career, responsibility, military service and hard work (without complaining…) were some of the guideposts. Furthermore, he talked about, and gave examples
of role models from older popular culture that were associated with “traditional manliness” – such as Clark Gable, Jimmy Stewart and Gary Cooper. These men are then compared with, as the author describes them, “less serious men” such as Woody Allen, Warren Beatty and Hugh Hefner. The latter is described as someone who has “never acted as an adult”. There was a very hegemonic picture of masculinity portrayed throughout the text. The basic assumption is that because today’s men do not have the outlined “path to manliness” to lean upon, they are feeling disoriented and stray.

One can easily see the connection between the author’s thoughts on “manhood” and the positivist as well as the normative concepts on masculinity (Connell, 1995). The positivist theory states that masculinity is culturally constructed based on the norms of one’s society. The normative theory defines masculinity as being “what men ought to be” (1995), according to one’s society. While Craig (cited in Horsley, 2005, p. 45) negatively describes masculinity as being “…what a culture expects of its men”, the author of Boys to men seems to use the same description but in a positive manner. He glorifies the traditional hegemonic characteristics of being a man, as previously mentioned. Furthermore, he criticizes today’s role models by stating that, “Boys need to experience a popular culture that encourages them to real manhood”. By only focusing on one type of masculinity, the author goes against the idea of plural masculinities and leaning towards an essentialist approach (Connell, 1995). As stated in the introduction, reinforcement of this type of macho manliness runs a risk of negatively affecting boys in the classroom.

Along the same lines, the text What dads are made of talks about the importance of the hegemonic male role model in a child’s life. The main theme throughout the text stresses the idea of men and women being opposites, much like Connell’s (1995) semiotic approach, which states that men and women are binary opposites, meaning that men can only be seen in contrast to women. The text also stresses the different ways in which fathers and mothers contribute to their children’s development. The emphasis lies on the importance of the fatherly attributes when it comes to raising children. Some examples of this from the text are that children acquire skills such as negotiation and leadership qualities from the father; hence, the mother does not possess these skills. The text goes on to describe the father as an explorer and an expert, again implying that the mother is none of the above. From this point of view the woman is seen as being the “Other” and the “unrepresentable” (Butler, 1990). In this sense, the text can be seen to represent hegemonic masculinity by presenting fixed characteristics for men as superior and unique. This leads to the question of how this might affect boys who do not identify with these fixed characteristics as mentioned in the introduction.
6. Discussion

Our first research question had to do with how an EFL teacher discusses gender in her choice of classroom texts. Our second research question asked how masculinity was represented in the texts chosen by a teacher of an EFL classroom. We hypothesized that the teacher would have consciously chosen texts based on her attitudes with respect to gender roles.

From this hypothesis, we came to the conclusion that this teacher did not choose texts based on her attitude concerning gender roles. According to her reported answers, the teacher seemed to have a modern view of gender; moreover, most of the gendered texts she chose had to do with a more traditional take on gender. However, we cannot confirm the notion of the teacher making a conscious decision to include certain texts based on the fact that they contained specific aspects of gender. The teacher informed us that she did not choose texts for the sole purpose of creating a discussion specifically around the topic of gender, which brings us to the first research question. Her main criteria when it came to choosing texts were that they were controversial and the purpose for choosing controversial texts was to create a discussion in the classroom. As stated before, this particular teacher has had 35 years of experience. Thus, by not making a conscious effort to include texts that focus on gender issues, and still manage to incorporate several texts with explicit gender aspects, might be considered an aspect of teaching that, over the years, has come as second nature to this teacher. The Swedish national curriculum specifically takes up the importance of creating a discussion around gender issues that arise in schools (Lp11). Pertaining to this, the teacher was seen as following the Swedish national curriculum by presenting texts in her classroom that contained gender issues. We cannot confirm that the teacher chose these texts based on her own attitudes when it comes to gender. Even though the teacher expressed a modern view on gender in the interview, most of the texts she chose reflected the opposite.
Drawing on the study by Martino and Palotta-Chiarolli (2003), saying that the school in general and the teachers’ approach to gender topics in particular has had an extensive effect on boys’ self-identity, we also considered how this particular teacher planned some of her lessons based on the chosen texts. She approached the texts from a comparative standpoint, connecting the traditional views on gender to “old fashioned” ways. She also presented opportunities for the students’ to reflect on the way the texts presented gender in comparison to their own ideas of what it means to be masculine and feminine. However, since no classroom observation was conducted, it cannot be known how the teacher actually used these texts in the classroom.

The second question had to do with how masculinity was represented in the texts the teacher chose. As stated above, five of the texts the teacher chose were positive towards hegemonic masculine themes. Two in particular were overwhelmingly so. These were *What dads are made of* and *Boys to men*. One can question how advantageous it is to present texts such as these, since they may not be received by the students in the way that the teacher expects. Although, how the teacher uses the texts in the classroom may cause the students to reflect on these traditional gender aspects highlighted in the texts. By choosing texts that contained different views on masculinity, she presents an inclusive approach that can give the students a broader picture of what it means to be masculine and feminine; thus, contributing to the students development of gender identity (Martino & Palotta-Chiarolli, 2003 & Lp11). On the other hand one could argue that by presenting texts that clearly are positive towards traditional gender roles it is of even greater importance that the teacher uses the text in a way that also counteracts the stereotypical gender roles. This idea correlates with the part in the national curriculum that emphasizes the schools’ responsibility to work against traditional gender patterns (Lp11).
6.1. Conclusion

This case study has been beneficial for the purpose of showing an example of how to introduce and work with gendered texts in the classroom. It compared a specific teacher’s attitudes towards gender roles to how she chooses texts as well as her aims when working with them. We could see a connection between her attitudes and the way she aims to work with gendered texts, but there was little connection between her reported attitude on gender and her actual choice of texts. We could also see the complexity in finding texts that are relevant and intriguing for the student and at the same time gender inclusive. Since we conducted a case study, looking at one specific teacher from one school, the external validity of the results is low, meaning they cannot, with certainty, be applied to other cases. In order to get more extensive results, one could have included more teachers to interview, and classroom observations to get an idea of how the teachers actually work with the texts. Another aspect to include in further studies would be focus group interviews with students, in order to obtain their take on how they receive the texts. Thus, the results from this particular study should only be seen as a basis for further studies on the topic of gendered texts used in the classroom.

As future teachers it is important to take into consideration the impact that our choices of texts and the way we conduct our lessons in reference to them has on our students. This is relevant not only when it comes to the students’ general views on gender issues but also on their own gender identity development (Britton and Lumpkin, 1977), as well as their learning performance and academic development (Björnsson, 2005). Presenting and working with texts that contain a vast variety of gender representations is one way of incorporating the idea of inclusiveness into the classroom.
6.2. Summary

We conducted a case study, which investigated how a teacher motivated her choice of texts in connection to the Swedish national curriculum that stresses the school’s “responsibility to counteract traditional gender patterns” (Lp11). Based on this question it was found that the teacher did not take into consideration gender aspects. Furthermore, only 7 of the 18 texts had aspects of gender. Her main criterion for choosing texts was that they were controversial for the purpose of provoking a classroom discussion. Our second question had to do with how masculinity was represented in the texts the teacher chose. Based on this, it was found that different masculinities were represented but only two of them actually took a stand against hegemonic masculinity. The other five texts had, in some way, a traditional or stereotypical take on masculinity.

We hypothesized that the teacher would choose texts based on her attitudes when it came to different gender aspects. The results of the study did not correlate with our hypothesis; since the teacher’s attitudes towards gender were seen as being modern while the majority of the gendered texts she chose were of a more traditional nature.
References


Attachment I
Interview questions

1. What kinds of changes in representations of masculinity in the last decade can you see in society? Do you welcome these changes?

2. Can you see these changes that are occurring in society as also being a pattern in course literature that is used in the English classroom?

3. Why do you choose not to use the textbook?

4. When you choose texts to use in your classroom, what criteria do you base those selections on?

5. If you think that there is a student in your classroom who might be offended by a particular text, would you still consider using it? How would you use it?

6. Have you ever experienced a student being offended by a text? What happened?

7. If you come across a text that supports traditional views on masculinity, would you use it or not? Why? How?

8. To what extent do you take into consideration the representations of gender when choosing texts?

9. What aspects of gender issues do you regard as being important? Why are these important to you?
Attachment II
Lesson plan – Boys to men

Article ”Boys to Men” RC/Discussion

This article would only be used in a group where at least ½ of the students are boys. At this moment it was EnC. It is important to understand that use these kinds of articles for two reasons:

- to make the students aware that there may be differences between sexes that could/should be acknowledged
- to knowingly provoke and stimulate discussion (I do this all the time!)

In this article, the boys in the group, with their knowledge of themselves and other boys/men they know would be the “reference group” The girls in the group, with their knowledge of the boys and men around them would be advised to be truthful, but empathetic support.

Preparing the article

The students would be given the article at the end of lesson time and told to read through the test and prepare the questions for discussion until the next lesson. B = boys  G = Girls

Questions for discussion

7) B/G Do you believe there are “male myths”. If so, please name some of them.
8) B/G Do you think that any of these “male myths” just might be true? If so, please be able to give examples.
9) B Do you sometimes feel that you are expected to be and act a special way just because you are a male? If so, please give examples.
10) B/G What is your opinion on the feministic movement and what kind of effects do you think it has had on male/female rolls in the home and in society?
11) B How do you see your future as a male in Sweden today? What do you think your future life will be like? Do you think your life will be different from the lives that your father and grandfather have led?

12) B/G Do you think that this article gives a true/fair picture of males and futures today?

Discussion

First, the students will be divided into groups of 4-6 which are proportionate to the number of boys/girls in the class. The teacher decides who is in the group in order to give the most positive outcome of the discussions.

A boy is chosen to be group leader and lead the discussion. Another student takes notes as to the opinions and findings of the group.

After about 30 minutes of group discussion we will go together in the full group to find out the opinions/findings of the smaller groups and hopefully get into a deeper discussion about one or more of the opinions/findings.
Attachment III
Lesson plan – *What dads are made of*

**Article ”What Dads are Made of” LC/Creative writing**

I have only used this article for a short discussion which leads to a creative writing exercise, but it could be used as full-scale discussion material. Since it focuses on a father’s interaction with his children and the differences between the ways fathers and mothers differ in handling their relationships with their children, it is usable in any group. The language level is OK for EnB and up.

The students would have one lesson and homework to prepare the text for the short discussion that would precede the essay. When we begin our discussion I would make a point of the fact that not everyone has a father or father figure present in their life and that we should be sensitive to the fact that there certainly are students, even in the group, who don’t have much contact with their fathers and perhaps have never even met their fathers. We would talk about the following:

7) Parental stereotypes  
8) Differences in the ways their parents (male/female) handled different situations in the home.  
9) In the cases where there are students who don’t have a father present in their everyday life, if they would share this experience with us and we could use their information in the discussions  
10) The question of the importance of a father figure to girls as well as boys  
11) Why the students think that many men shy away from the nurturing and teaching jobs today  
12) Have they noticed any differences or conflicts between their parents when it comes to parenting skills.

This discussion will be followed with the assignment of an essay on one of the two topic:

**Why My Dad is an Important Part of my Life**

45
Fathers are Important Parts of their Child’s Development

This enables the students to convey their thoughts even though they may not have a father who is active in their lives. The essays should be supported with personal experiences, ideas and thoughts and should not only be based on facts from the article or the following discussion.
Summer of Love

Move over, San Francisco. France is about to celebrate its first gay wedding. Is Europe ready for equal rite?

By JAMES GRAFF PARIS

Domenique Adamski and Francis Dekens have been dreaming of a June wedding for a long, long time. Adamski, 50, a psychotherapist, and Dekens, 58, a retired bank employee, have been together for 25 years. They were the first gay couple in France to officially register their partnership, in 1990, under the then-controversial law setting up "civil solidarity pacts" (Pacs). Pushed through against strong conservative opposition by France's Socialist-led government, the Pacs law gave the couple some legal recognition, but not exactly the same rules on taxation and pensions that apply to married couples in France. Now they want to take the next step. "We want to be formally recognized as a couple," says Adamski. "Marriage, period. That's the contract that best protects our interests and best symbolizes our love."

And so on June 19, Williams Meriel, the mayor of Marseillan, the little town on the Mediterranean coast where Adamski and Dekens live, will join the two in marriage. It will be a joyous day; it is also against French law. The Adamski-Dekens match is part of an argument over same-sex marriage that has spread through the developed world in recent months. Last week in Massachusetts, where gay marriage has been legal since May 17, the Cape Cod resort of Provincetown yielded to a request from the Governor to stop marrying out-of-staters. In Australia, Prime Minister John Howard asked Parliament to define marriage as the union of a man and a woman. The discussion in France reaches a milestone this Saturday when Green Party leader Noël Mamère, in his capacity as mayor of the Bordeaux suburb of Bègles, will kick off the June season with France's first gay wedding by marrying Bertrand Charpentier, 31, a nurse's aide, and Stéphane Chapin, 33, a warehouse worker. In a front-page piece in Le Monde last week, Mamère wrote that he was performing the wedding in order to use "provocation as a political tool." The Marseillan wedding will follow two weeks later, and at least two other French mayors have said they're willing to perform gay or lesbian marriages if asked.

A French public prosecutor last week faced Mamère a warning against following through with the wedding, admonishing him that "as a person invested with public authority you should abstain from all initiatives destined to block the execution of the law." Mamère is undeterred. This is a political initiative to reverse prejudice," he says. "It's in line with the Greens' orientation towards openness and equality." What better time to demonstrate that commitment, he says, than just before the June 10-13 elections for the European Parliament?

Same-sex legal partnerships—though
The State of Gay Union in Europe

MOVING TOWARD MARRIAGE

REGISTRATION PARTNERSHIPS

In 1998, Denmark became the first country to institute legislation granting registered same-sex partners the same rights as married couples. Adoption, artificial insemination and church weddings were not part of the deal, though by 1999, couples could adopt each other's children. Norway, Sweden and Iceland enacted similar legislation in 1996, and Finland followed suit six years later. In 2001, Germany enacted a law that allows same-sex couples to register as "life partners," but a second act—promising equality on taxes, pensions and child custody—was rejected. Since 2003, France has granted couples the same rights as married couples on taxes, but such arguments ignore the fact that homosexuals are simply asking for what heterosexuals have always had—the right to express or dramatize this "bourgeois structure" and not have a government make the decision for them. Manfredi's initiative has in any case given the political class in France something to chatter about. But it's hardly a major act of civil disobedience. The Green leader's legal adviser points out that the fine he faces for disobeying the prosecutor's warning comes to €450—the modern equivalent of the 90 francs penalty set for such infractions in a 1846 revision of the Civil Code. That's one remnant of the past that advocates of gay marriage are not keen to see change.

—With reporting by Lauren Condeau/Amsterdam, Helen Glazer/London, Niall Murphy/Paris, Jane Walker/Madrid and Charles P. Wallace/Paris.
Online dating poses honesty issues

Dear Carolyn: Aside from hiring a PI, how can I tell if a guy who looks fine on a major dating site is in fact OK? I don’t mean nice per se, but like — not a felon, on abuse registry, con man. I am not a worrywart but I am not comfortable.

— Online dating site vetting

Remember, the people you meet in person who aren’t friends of friends, established colleagues, your mom’s friend’s kid, etc., are strangers, just like the people online. Seeing one in, say, the supermarket checkout line does give your senses a lot more useful information than ads do — but taking some obvious precautions can allow you to meet an online prospect in person and let your senses get to work.

Getting to know someone from scratch requires the same process it always has. You still have to take your time, be skeptical, pay attention to small things, meet his friends and family, introduce your friends and get their takes on him, listen to the way he talks about himself, you, other people, and I could go on. It’s something we all do regularly without thinking a whole lot about it.

A long online-courtship phase can also fill you into thinking you know someone better than you really do. But that just means you account for those risks as you go.

Re: Vetting: Don’t you think the question indicates a certain unhealthy level of paranoia or mistrust? I’m a man on an online dating site, and I’ve had e-mail exchanges with women who are too afraid to tell me even their first name and will cite the dangers of the Internet though I’m not sure what damage I could do with only a first name. And I seriously doubt if I struck up a conversation with these women in a bar that they would be wary of telling me their first name.

Thank you for pointing out that the people of the online world and the real world are pretty much the same people.

— D.C.

I agree the original poster had lost a little perspective. However, for what it’s worth, some people do give out fake names in bars, and there is just, in general, a keen sense of vulnerability among women than there is among men.

I actually think men in general would benefit from a little extra vigilance before trusting women. It’s common for guys to be on alert for women who are clingy or annoying, but I think a lot of guys aren’t as wired to look for abusive women — not just women who hit, but also women who are emotional/verbal abusers. So defenses do have their place.
Sexually suggestive clothing shouldn't fly for our children
The scariest recent trend is so-called fashionable clothing is "super skinny" jeans. As if the "skinny" jeans weren't bad enough, we now have a pants leg so narrow it looks like it wouldn't fit an arm, let alone a leg. Who can wear these?

Wearing inappropriate clothing pushes girls to confront the issue of sexual identity at a young age, the researchers said. Girls who wear sexualized outfits are at a higher risk for poor body-image issues, low self-esteem and depression. They also are perceived as being "less competent, less intelligent and less moral."

I guess that's why I always find myself looking longingly at the racks of plain pants, nondescript white shirts, and unadorned jackets and sweaters in the school-uniform section.

I've accepted the fact that uniforms will never reach most suburban school districts, including ours. But I still take time during those exhausting shopping trips to gaze at the easy-care fabrics, de-sexualized construction, and wonderfully anonymous styling of those simple clothes.

There's something to be said for emphasizing the outside of a kid, not the inside. And that's exactly what doesn't happen with sloppy, overpriced, sourly mature or ill-fitting clothing.

Popular culture might be "brining sexy back."
That's fine for adults, but as far as our kids go, we want it pushed back, way back...

John McCreary Jr. Reeves can be reached at mcreary@jfp.com and will accept letters for column topics.
Parents must challenge high school culture

Recent tragedies remind us of how dark and terrible a place high school can be to some of our children if they are made to believe that they do not fit in. The high school years coincide with the tremendous physical and social changes of adolescence. Changes to one's voice and body shape that cause powerful feelings of self-consciousness and self-doubt.

In order to cope with these anxieties, teens are quick to form subcultures that assure them they are not alone. These little groups then adopt behavior, speech patterns and tastes in clothes and music that they use as criteria by which to judge who is 'in' and who is 'out'. These cliques are both the cause and the cure of teenage insecurity.

Any high school will contain numerous subcultures, such as jocks, goths, metal-heads, preppies or misfits. The names might vary but everyone in the school will know who belongs where. Each group will have an 'Alpha male' (a boy who is the undisputed leader), and perhaps an 'Alpha female' too.

In the world of the high school there will be those who are respected and those who are widely hated, and most kids will learn it is best not to stick out. Athletic skill gives prestige to male students, the library club does not. Conventional physical beauty and a good fashion sense are prior qualities for females. Girls are allowed by their peers to get good marks, but being an intelligent boy can be a disadvantage. A strong anti-intellectual current exists in most high schools.

Gerry Bowler
High school culture

Great adaptations
The world of the American high school has inspired numerous books, TV series and films. These popular films are all set in high school, but their plots are adapted from classic works of European literature.

Clueless (1995)
Cher, one of the most popular girls in her school, 'adopts' Tai, a new and unfashionable student, and tries to make her more popular. But Tai falls in love with Cher's stepbrother, Jesh, who Cher loves without realising it.

She's All That (1999)
Zach, the class president, agrees to try to transform plain and shy Laney into the star of the end-of-term dance. He succeeds, and the couple start to grow close, but Laney then discovers that Zach's original motivation was a bet with his friends.

10 Things I Hate about You (1999)
Blanca Stratford, a beautiful student at Padua High, is not allowed to date boys until her sarcastic and unfriendly older sister Katarina has a boyfriend. Blanca's admirers pay Patrick, a new student at the school, to date Kat.

Cruel Intentions (1999)
Kathryn, a snobbish, rich teenager, bets her corrupt stepbrother, Sebastian, that he cannot ruin the reputation of Annette, their headmaster's innocent daughter. Sebastian accepts the bet with pleasure, but soon finds that he is falling in love with Annette's honourable character.

1. The Taming of the Shrew by William Shakespeare
A headstrong Katherina, a spoilt tempered woman, delights to argue for money and to prove that her husband is weak and to gain his love. But in the end they genuinely fall in love.

2. Dangerous Liaisons by Choderlos de Laclos
The bored and manipulative aristocrats the Marquises de Montmorency and the Vicomte de Valmont plot to destroy the lives of innocent girls for fun.

3. Emma by Jane Austen
Emma Woodhouse tries to arrange marriages for everyone she knows, and decides to socially improve her governessfriend Harriet Smith. But her plans never succeed because the wrong people always fall in love.

4. Pygmalion by G.B. Shaw
Higgins, a professor of linguistics, proceeds a bet to take flower-seller Eliza Doolittle from the slums to teach her to speak and act like a lady, and to convince everyone of a bet that she is a genuine aristocrat.
Boys to men

(Or are they just staying boys?)
...boy who has made a fortune without ever having to act as an adult.

Many men from an earlier generation may look upon this life of perpetual adolescence with envy. They shouldn't, Hugh Hefner, notwithstanding. Is a young man's life of sexual conquests and boozing preferable to the responsibilities of marriage and family? A recent book, "Guysland: The Perilsome World Where Boys Become Men" by Michael Kimmel, confronts this issue. Kimmel interviewed 600 young men between the ages of 16 and 26. He found many of them confused and unable to commit to marriage or a permanent career.

Young men do not know what is expected of them, so they flounder. Males are now less likely to go to college than females, less likely to excel once they get there and less likely to graduate.

Women have made extraordinary strides since the 1970s, and it is to be heartily applauded. I do not believe that the achievements of women have come at the expense of men. Simply because women are doing well is no reason for men to do poorly.

Nor is it the job of government to begin some affirmative action program for boys. They do not need to be treated as victims. It would excuse their failures and ignore what the culture has done to traditional manhood. Boys do not need their fathers or their teachers to be their "elums." They need them to set examples and to act with dignity and responsibility. Boys need to experience a popular culture that encourages them to real manhood.

The movies were once where a young boy could see a dignified adult life with its pains, challenges and excitements. It attracted children and made them look forward to being adults.

The popular culture now gives us adult promiscuity, vulgarity and incoherence. What then is the attraction of manhood? You might as well remain an adolescent. Too many young men have...
It is not clear what the text in the image is about. It appears to be a page from a book or a document, but the resolution and angle make it difficult to read. If you can provide a clearer image or more context, I would be happy to help.