Lgr 11’s Postcolonial Burden of History

The Swedish National Curriculum’s Representation of the Postcolonial World in the Subject of History

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Abstract

In 2011, the Swedish government created a new curriculum for the compulsory school. This curriculum included stricter guidelines about what was to be taught in a variety of subjects taught in public and many private schools. This policy, entitled Lgr 11, has potential to influence a generation or more of Swedes regarding their understanding of the postcolonial world and future dealings with that part of the world and its peoples. In this paper, elements of postmodern and postcolonial historiography is employed when analyzing Lgr 11’s history syllabus. How the postcolonial world and its histories are represented in Lgr 11’s narrative(s) is investigated. The importance of this document to Swedes is that, with a significant proportion of the Swedish population recent immigrants from the postcolonial world, the perspectives of that region are important in the development of identity for recent immigrants, Swedes themselves and in understandings of a large portion of the world for less recent immigrant Swedes. Swedish identity now includes postcolonial histories.

**Keywords:** postcolonial, Hayden White, Lgr. 11, history, interpolation, postmodernism, narrative, metanarrative, subaltern,
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I. Introduction

In 2011, as part of its mandate from the Swedish electorate, the right-wing coalition government implemented its new syllabus for the compulsory school (grades 1-9). The syllabus for the subject of history that is presented in the compulsory school document, entitled Lgr 11, will be investigated in regards to its representation of postcolonial history in this paper.

i.i Communication for Development and Lgr 11

The importance of Lgr 11 in the field of Communication for Development is the role that document has in representing other people in the postcolonial world and their developments over time. The postcolonial world comprises peoples of the Americas, Asia, Africa, Australia and Europe who have recently gained independence or a degree of autonomy and/or recognition from the dominant government within the geographic polity they inhabit. Their experiences tend to include subjugation of some form or combination of forms such as political, social or economic. Some postcolonial historians and scholars would argue that this subjugation continues and colonialism has not retreated, but changed form as the postcolonial world still finds itself in a disadvantageous economic position and may still perceive former colonial social mores such as language, dress and cultural pursuits as preferable.

From a standpoint within Europe or parts of North and South American society, a common representation of the postcolonial world is a world of civil war, corruption, child soldiers, terror and starvation. A postcolonial perspective, which may include a desire to be familiar with multiple perspectives in a given location, is important to help redefine European and North American, the beneficiaries of colonialism, views on the postcolonial world.

The importance of postcolonial perspectives in a history syllabus for Communication for Development in Swedish society is that since Sweden is a part of the global North and wields or has the opportunity to wield hegemonic power due to its economic power in relation to many postcolonial societies, it is important to attempt to provide Swedes with the understanding of how varied Southern societies are and the interconnectedness of those societies with Swedish, as seen in the recent demographic changes within Swedish society, as well as in cultural exchanges and trade. Postcolonial perspectives also help to muddle the representations of the “South” as seen in the media, traditional histories as Edward Said analyzed in Orientalism and postcolonial perspectives awaken the Northern student to considering other ways of viewing the world (McEwan, 2009, p. 28-29). This muddling of history by adding perspectives to history provides “a means by which to
understand a world thoroughly shaped at various interconnecting levels...“ (McEwan, 2009, p.253). This redirecting of knowledge as Ashcroft (2001) and McEwan highlight has the ability to transform people’s understanding of development and history (2009, p.254). The Northern students and educator learn to consider other perspectives and the large variety of perspectives there can be postcolonial societies and hopefully their own if they are not of a postcolonial society. They should consider their role in the larger world when they consume, vote, travel and work to take on a more cosmopolitan understanding of world issues and history.

From the standpoint of a middle and high school teacher, one of the sites to break down the binaries of civilized vs. barbaric, white vs. black, feminine vs. masculine, satiated vs. starving may be in the public education system. Since education is compulsory through grade nine in Sweden, teachers have a captive audience. Teachers’ freedom about what to teach is rarely undefined and in the case of a teacher in a public school in Sweden this is the case. What is to be covered is prescribed in Lgr 11. This makes Lgr 11 an important document that has the potential to sustain binary relationships and conceptions within Sweden, shatter those relationships and conceptions or have a mixed result.

**i.ii Research Questions**

The research questions for this paper are:

-How is the postcolonial world represented in Lgr 11’s history syllabus?

-To what extent does Lgr 11’s history syllabus embrace perspectives that provide knowledge to Swedes about postcolonial histories?
II. Literature Review and Existing Research

ii.i The History Wars

Recently in parts of the world there have occurred, what has been called “The History Wars” a series of academic battles about what to include in history teaching at the school level. Maylor, Read, Mendick, Ross and Rollock critiqued the British national curriculum and how it creates a sense of Britishness. They were concerned about the lack of attention given to people of color and their role in the history of Britain (2007, p.55-61).

In the United States, the work and popularity of Howard Zinn has resulted in a more multi-faceted history of the United States being taught in some schools that has allowed for focus on people of different race, sex and gender to be addressed in compulsory school. In addition Gary Nash (1997), highlights the plethora of social histories ignored by US syllabi by choice. Investigations by Nash and his colleagues found that fear that students would not love their country, if they knew the poor treatment of Native Americans, slaves and women, drove the decisions to ignore the histories of “others”.

In Australia during the 1980’s and 1990’s there was also great controversy in including the histories of Aboriginal peoples and their methods of combatting colonization lead to political debate and much hand-wringing (Parkes, 2007, p.384-91). The Australian curriculum’s focus on social history and the role of women and indigenous peoples was most controversial as it threatened the traditional narrative of pioneering white men and gentle colonisation.

Anne Hickling Hudson, teaching in the Caribbean, noted the lack of postcolonial attitudes within a syllabus when students were never taught to think from the perspective of slaves and the colonized. She notes the potential exploitative ability of syllabi in that they can exclude perspectives of people of different race, sex and gender. She finds that education should be about justice bringing to the fore histories of the marginalized and educators hold the key to justice in education (Hickling Hudson, 2007).

This engagement with their colonial pasts and postcolonial presents has led to debate and degrees of change within school curricula in other countries. While Sweden’s colonial past is of smaller impact since she was a smaller colonial power, her role as a country in the dominant global North and relations to postcolonial countries, especially in regards to immigration makes the policy document Lgr 11 and its history syllabus relevant in examining how Swedes perceive the postcolonial world and themselves. The “minor” role of Sweden in the colonial era is perhaps more reason to explicitly
state that postcolonialism histories need to be taught, because those histories may not be as evident as to perhaps a student in Australia, France, the US or Great Britain. The role of postmodernist and postcolonial historiography is important in deconstructing Lgr 11’s history syllabus to determine if these postcolonial histories are visible.

**ii.ii Hayden White and Postmodern Historiography**

**History Use of Narrative**

White argued that historians are working for elites and their use of narrative to tell a story makes history less of a science and also an art form that benefits the empowerment of certain elements of society (1987). White drew attention to perspective by asking what sense of reality authorizes the creation of a narrative to explain the world (1987). This narrative in turn highlights events that may be important only because they are chosen and recorded because they fit within a narrative of some sort, thereby creating a false sense of continuity of history. (White, 1987) The purpose of this use of history is to create a recognizable story that the reader or listener can digest and make use of in understanding the world. White’s issue with this is that it is pretends to hold the truth when it is presenting a perspective, possibly only the historian/writer, whereas an event or figure can have been perceived and experienced in a myriad of ways.

**History’s True Purpose**

Because history is an art form, it should serve its audience’s need to find a way to *progress* after a period of time when so much scientific and philosophic progress had resulted in the calamitous world wars and tense Cold War. Arising during the 20th century was the movement of postmodernism, a broad movement that includes the arts and philosophy and their focus on finding the use of the past. “For postmodernists the ‘past’ irredeemably absent and accessible only by way of spoors, fragments, and traces is the place of memory, reverie, and fantasy, and therefore of poetic inspiration, rather than a space of past human actions that can be recovered and represented more or less accurately as it really was.” (White, 2009). White and postmodernists see the past having almost limitless stories, lessons and potential, much like literature. “The contemporary historian has to establish the value of the study of the past, not as "an end in itself," but as a way of providing perspectives on the present that contribute to the solution of problems peculiar to our own time.” (White, 1966, p.125). Thus the historian is “charged with the special task of inducing in men an awareness that their present condition was always in part a product of specifically human choices, which could therefore be changed or altered by further human action in precisely that
degree. History thus sensitized men to the dynamic elements in every achieved present, taught the inevitability of change, and thereby contributed to the release of that present to the past without ire or resentment.” (White, 1966, p.131). From White’s identification of the true role of history and the historian I will attempt to see how Lgr 11’s demands allow for an understanding of conditions in the postcolonial world being the result of human choice and how human choices can spark positive change.

To further critique history, White frowned upon the use of narrative in history writing as it imposed upon the past heroes and villains and a plot-line where there is not one. For instance, the Second World War is often seen as a good war. It was good vs. evil. Fascism vs. democracy in a climactic battle to settle who dominates the world. Postmodern histories are becoming more prevalent today, an example being elements of Saving Private Ryan. While frowned upon by some as being another story of the Americans saving the day while ignoring the Russians, one cannot help but notice the numerous events in the film that include American soldiers committing war crimes or acting in not the most upstanding manner. Further television series’ break up the metanarrative of the Second World War being the “good war” fought by Tom Brokaw’s “Greatest Generation” like The Pacific which shows great loss of life and humanity amongst its protagonists, American soldiers, as they mindlessly, almost to the point of pointlessly, grind the Japanese out of a variety of jungle and coral strongholds.

On a personal level, I remember speaking with my grandfather about twenty years ago about his experiences during World War II. One of the most striking statements he made was along the lines of (here is where I must rely on fragments and traces of memory) “I didn’t think it was necessary; they should have worked it out another way.” If I may attempt to remember what my reaction as a teenage boy was, I believe at first I did not believe he believed what he said, but over the years I have found his conclusion interesting almost to the point of I am proud of what he said. In a manner, his conclusion and use of the past to inform the present and future is what history should be about according to White.

Postcolonial historians and theorists identify education and postcolonial historical events as important to identity creation and combatting binary. Edward Said’s Orientalism (1979) is one of the seminal works identifying the “West’s” representation of “darker” peoples as “others” in the sense that they, in history, especially European history creation of the 1800’s, were represented as less civilized, feminine, savage, etc. This stereotyping of large numbers of diverse peoples is what is needed to be combatted in an effective history syllabus.
Cheryl McEwan (2009) adds to the importance of postcolonial histories being taught as “they relate to who has the power to write histories and to represent other peoples and places. Postcolonial approaches arise from the fact that power still resides overwhelmingly in the West.” (McEwan, 2009, p. 9). McEwan’s *Postcolonialism and Development* brings together many aspects of postcolonial theories. Postcolonialism is a difficult term to define as it can signify a time period, after colonization, a condition, a theory dealing with identity, race, gender, ethnicity, etc, power and knowledge relationships, identity creation, literary theory and anti-colonialism (McEwan, 2009, p. 17). In this paper, postcolonialism will entail identity creation since there are peoples living in and moving to Sweden from postcolonial societies and power and knowledge relationships since Lgr 11 is a document that has the ability to empower a sizable population in the country of Sweden, namely public school students and teachers. Since this paper is dealing with history and history includes events, methodology and figures, the term postcolonialism I have decided will include histories dealing with events and figures before, during and after colonialism because of their importance in identity creation. To identify with a nationality must include achievements and failures, trials and tribulations throughout history. This interpretation of history’s role in identity creation embraces postmodern Hayden White historiography and postcolonial historiography. Postcolonial historiography includes, “destabilizing dominant discourses of imperial Europe such as history...” (McEwan, 2009, p.25) and attempts “to recover the lost historical and contemporary voices of the marginalized, the oppressed and the dominated through a radical reconstruction of history and knowledge production (McEwan, 2009, 26).

Bill Ashcroft, writer of Postcolonial Transformation devotes a chapter to the role of history seeing history as a vehicle of perpetuation, in postcolonialism as perpetuating a negative representation of postcolonial peoples. History is a chance for resistance as it allows for another story or stories to be created (Ashcroft, 2001, p. 82-83) Ashcroft identifies with White’s analysis of narrativity: “It is the narrativity of contemporary history which is its most salient and powerful discursive feature. One of the great illusions of narrativity is the assumption that the narrative doesn’t simply tell a story but reflects the continuity of events. So great is the influence of narrativity that we assume that life itself is shaped like a story.” (2001, p.86) Ashcroft adds to the metanarrative ideas of White by including the presumed role of the postcolonial peoples as “located at its edges, to be the site of uninteresting ‘events’, of a marginal reality which has little to contribute to general understanding of the world.” (2001, p.92) My use of the term “postcolonial” and its application to events before
colonization, during and after is related to Ashcroft’s desire to change to projection of history by the “hybrid profusion of life, into the linear and teleological movement of imperial history and, by so doing, to change our view of what history is. (2001, p.98)

A perspective important to postcolonialism is the subaltern, defined as, “The term ‘subaltern,’ drawn from Antonio Gramsci’s writings, refers to subordination in terms of class, caste, gender, race, language, and culture and was used to signify the centrality of dominant/ dominated relationships in history.” (Prakash, 1994, p.1477). The subaltern involves the study of perspective from peoples given no voice in histories due to one of the above features. The subaltern studies writers found sources of information may not exist in a public manner like in archives or libraries or written history. Rather there are histories missing in that sense that need to be explored and more importantly addressed. Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000) summarizing Ranajit Guha views the history of the subaltern as being of great value within postcolonial historiography as they were actors who responded accurately to their changing world despite lacking a recorded voice (p.17). Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988) added to this in Can the Subaltern Speak by bringing questions to the fore about the role of the historian in interpreting subaltern perspective and, by using an example of women represented without a voice in colonial India, the variety of powers at work that can silence a minority such as gender roles, economic status and sexuality. Spivak helps the reader of any history to consider the multitude of subjects without a recorded voice.

Again the message of the postmodernist and postcolonialist is the reminder that there are a plethora of perspectives to be considered when working with history. Lgr 11’s ability to give voice to a range of these perspectives is of utmost importance for communication for development.
III. Theories and Methodology

The theory used in this analysis is postmodernism historiography as mapped out by Hayden White and elements of postcolonial theory especially in regards to the importance of postcolonial history and education. Hayden White is one of the key postmodern historians for his criticism of history as a science. In addition, elements of postcolonialism historiography and perspectives will be addressed.

iii.i Postmodernism and Hayden White

As stated above the main theory used will be elements of postmodernism historiography criticism as postulated by Hayden White. His criticism of history written and done as a science and with the assumed authority of a science disturbed White. White identified the representation of history as being a science occurring in the 18th century. White identifies elements of literature in history writing in that history writing and teaching has often been done in a narrative format with main characters and a narrative written by the victors with introductions and conclusions. White argues that the role of history should be to present perspectives and create meaning for people’s present as well as empowering them to act to better their lives. To do this “The historian... like the modern artist and scientist, seeks to exploit a certain perspective on the world that does not pretend to exhaust description or analysis of all of the data in the entire phenomenal field but rather offers itself as one way among many of disclosing certain aspects of the field. (White, 1966, 130). I am applying White’s theory to the document Lgr 11 through a textual analysis of Lgr 11’s history syllabus and complementing that with information from interviews of Lgr 11’s history syllabus creators.

iii.ii Reflection on Application of White’s Postmodernism to Lgr 11

One of the most nagging and yet encouraging aspects of using White’s theory is that the reader, viewer, analyst’s perspectives are not necessarily incorrect. At the same time what is intended is not always knowable. An interview can provide an answer to a question, but the interviewer’s conclusion based off of answers may not be exactly what was intended by the interviewee. This problem can be more pronounced when analyzing a document and not having the creators there to explain in detail what is intended; and who knows if they even agree amongst themselves.
While familiarizing myself with White and postmodernism, the historian side of me struggled with his disdain of narratives, especially when he identified the narrative as an almost universal manner of communicating. An early concern was that with postmodernism humans will conclude that nothing is knowable and perhaps there is no reason to investigate the past because it does not have to mean anything to anyone since an event can be experienced in a myriad of ways by a myriad of peoples based on elements of race, gender, sex, time, location, etc. What helped to change my mind a bit was White’s discussion of the role of History as a teacher of how to progress humanity as a whole. While he takes issue with history as a purely a science, he does not take issue with history’s existence.

Postcolonialism

Postcolonialism has many elements of postmodernist thought. It aims to draw to attention the experiences of people from the postcolonial world. These experiences have come through a variety of literary and intellectual works. Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* presented elements of the author’s ancestral past before and during the coming of their colonial overseers. Within a rather short text the reader is able to interpret the experiences of men and women who embrace and abhor tradition to their detriment while also painting a picture of colonialism as beneficial to some and injurious to others while turning the main character’s world upside down. *Things Fall Apart* does not necessarily say that all white people are bad nor that colonialism was bad for all Africans. It also presents a variety of power relationships within the group of characters and shows that a system of binaries does not completely work for that society any more than it does for a European one.

Frantz Fanon’s work with Algerians during the Algerian War of Independence, a title rather misleading as most of the violence involved Algerian Muslims on Algerian Muslims and grew in intensity after the French left, focused on the psychological effects of colonialism and decolonization. While drawing attention to the effects of colonialism on the colonized Fanon did not eulogize the revolutionaries but reported on the damage inflicted on their psyches while decolonizing. The traditional metanarrative of revolutions being good (see American or French) or bad (Russian, Iranian) was thrown off unless the reader attaches the brutality to the binary of civilized vs. barbaric where the Europeans are civilized. However, knowledge of brutality within the French Revolution is well documented and while less bloody there are well-known instances of pro-British Americans being forced to leave their homes. Revolutions having a variety of effects on different people was now available to be consumed by the citizens of the world if they encountered these types of histories.
Postcolonial histories and literature attempt to give voice to the voiceless or the muffled which fits with postmodernism’s disapproval of metanarrative and desire to bring attention to perspectives and different approaches to history. The postcolonial I will refer to in this paper is what Cheryl McEwan defines as the temporal postcolonialism that will include the fall of colonial powers from their former colonies and the links left between the former colony and colonizing country. From a Communication for Development perspective this will include an emphasis on a changed type of colonialism that involves exploitation in the form of disadvantageous trade and political concessions in relation to colonizing societies. This postcolonialism is focused on exploring the power structures still in place as well as legacies of earlier colonialism (McEwan, 2009).

Lgr 11 is a government policy document that has the power to influence generations of Swedes. Swedes inhabit the global North, an area marked by early industrialization, colonization of the “darker” continents, early inoculation against disease, high average income and a diverse economy. While not participating in conflicts openly, it has sent military units into the Democratic Republic of Congo, has private companies that sell weapons abroad and is a part of an economic system that protects European companies and farmers, arguably at the cost of actors in the global South. There is a thriving industry of giving money for aid for development in Africa as seen on TV at various times of the year when mentally powerful images of starvation and rape involving children and women are shown to get Swedes to open their pocket books. In the meantime, the tsunami of 2004 that claimed the lives of several hundred Swedes and its remembrance focuses mostly on white Swedes rather than the thousands of “darker” Asians killed. This type of representation of the “darker” people as powerless victims and Swedes as civilized progressives needs to be addressed in Lgr 11.

The identity creation of Swedes today, whether of people who immigrated to Sweden millennia ago, in the 1700’s or in recent decades, will be affected by a document like Lgr 11. How teachers work with Lgr 11 and embrace the multicultural history of Sweden can affect students’ outlook on what it means to be Swedish. If they feel Swedishness involves a teleological development from Stone Age society to present day progressive welfare state that embraces immigrants and acts as a sort of conscience of the world then they have bought into a metanarrative. If they embrace a postmodern and postcolonial history then they will seek out a variety of perspectives of what it has meant and means to be Swedish including Sweden’s actions during colonization and their economic and political relationships with postcolonial societies since decolonization. Both postmodernist and postcolonial historiography work towards the examination of perspective and work as a type of
pumping the brakes when studying history. Instead of the clear cut metanarrative with good and bad
guys and easy to define issues, those historiographies ask the student to consider what they are
missing in history and what perspectives are lacking.

Does Lgr 11 make the students more cosmopolitan in outlook and able to work with others in the
world and see links to those people as Martha C. Nussbaum (1994) wrote. She argued for less
nationalistic focus in education and more of a cosmopolitan outlook as students will learn more
about themselves, are willing to cooperate internationally and recognize that we are part of a global
system that includes obligations beyond national borders. One could argue, as Elisabete do Rosario
Mendes Silva (2008) does, that Nussbaum may be a bit too optimistic and Eriksen (2007) also
points to the salience of nationality in people’s minds. Nevertheless, the opportunity or possibility
to influence students’ outlooks is relevant and worth attempting.

iii.iii Framework

My research for this paper has involved working with aspects of postmodernism and
postcolonialism. The acquisition of empirical data has been through interviews of the creators of
Lgr 11’s history syllabus. At the time of writing only two of the five creators have responded to my
inquiries. The person from Skolverket, the Swedish education institute, has not responded.

The use of semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions was to attempt to gain a variety of
information about the construction of Lgr 11’s history syllabus and to allow the creators a chance to
formulate themselves with their own words. I had a list of over ten open-ended questions with the
thought that I could ignore some questions if they seemed to lack relevancy or were answered by
the interviewee over time or if other questions, whose creation was sparked by something the
interviewee said, seemed more relevant at the time. While Barbour and Schostak (2005) highlight
that this type of interview can have a symbolic violence, I believe that by having sent the questions
ahead of time and stating the aim of my research, suspicion about ulterior motives on my part
would have been lessened. As Barbour and Schostak (2005) suggest, interviews carry some risks,
like what is hidden from the interviewer; different understandings of meaning between the
interviewer and interviewee and interpretation, perhaps doubly so due to differences in mother
tongue in this case and trust. The questions of the interview began with more basic questions about
their background with history as well as what they found interesting with history studies before
gauging their interest/expertise with postcolonial histories.
The use of textual analysis means that an educated guess is being made about the intentions of Lgr 11 and its representations of the postcolonial peoples (McKee, 2001, 1). The textual analysis is what Jill Blackmore and Hugh Lauder (Somekh, 2005, 99-100) define as research about policy. This is a reflexive study since I am an educator working with creating, implementing and modifying history syllabi for international students as well as having worked within a national curriculum and the possibility of doing so again in the future. This textual analysis of Lgr 11 will entail an investigation of how the narratives within the policy perpetuate hegemony and with what effects as well as what possibilities there are for remediation. The interviews are used in conjunction to help guide that educated guess. McKee points out the differences in culture that can lead to faulty interpretations. While the interviewees and I come from similar cultures, we do have different nationalities and different work cultures. I am an American educator of history at a middle and high school with few guidelines about how to work regarding content. They are Swedish educators working with history at university level who had to create a document to tell teachers what to teach at a national level. Our understandings of pedagogy could be different, our national histories and cultures may have different assumptions regarding values, the role of government in education, immigration, postcolonialism and out cultures complicity in the negative aspects of colonialism, etc.

### iii.iv Representation

According to Stuart Hall (1997, 15) meaning and language are connected to representation which forms understandings of culture. “Representation is an essential part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture” (Hall, 1997, 15). The interpretation of language from the interviews, textual analysis of Lgr 11 and its language use will allow me to interpret the use of language and signs in a constructionist manner as I will be interpreting meaning of Lgr 11 and to some extent what the creators of Lgr 11 mean to happen when teaching history. The interviews are meant to help guide me in my interpretation.

### iii.v Outline of Empirical Data

Empirical data has come from two interviews of the creators of Lgr 11’s history syllabus. Both creators have backgrounds in history, more specifically art history and environmental history. They remarked on the eurocentric tendencies of the document but also the document’s possibilities for incorporating perspective including postcolonial perspective. The document was not focused as much on presenting perspectives from the postcolonial world, but rather leaves that to individual teachers. There is focus on postcolonial peoples in Sweden, namely the Sami, as well as other marginalized groups like the Roma. Per Eliasson (2014) highlighted the role of concepts such as
migration and mixing, two concepts related to a modern understanding of globalization, but that can identified and used in the history classes from first grade onwards.

Because of the focus on teacher choice, especially in regard to how they engage with the postcolonial world the creators of Lgr 11 were asked about the role of the teacher and the importance of teacher education within history. Per Eliasson (2014) commented on the lack of funding that history receives in comparison to other subjects like the sciences. From a more positive standpoint Eliasson recommended I look at the textbook that history students in teaching school engage with to get an understanding of material to be familiar with.

iii.vi Self-reflexivity
There are elements of White’s postmodernism that appeal to me. As stated earlier, my personal and work experiences have led me to understand the importance of perspective and awareness of multiple experiences of events in history like World War II and colonization. At the same time my interest and love of history is something that I have carried with me since elementary school so skepticism I have towards Hayden White may need to be considered in that light. On the other hand an acceptance of multiple perspectives of an event and the different manners of interpreting history do not make me hostile towards postmodernism as a whole.

iii.vii Self-reflexivity and research
I have been successful in getting contact information for all but one of the creators of Lgr 11. Contact was made in October 2014 and two interviews held, one live and one via Skype, in late October. I did intend to contact four teachers of history who are employed in different parts of Malmö, Sweden to see how they teach history, especially in regard to postcolonial history. I doubted that that was viable due to the constraints of length of the final paper. However, the value of doing so would remain as one of the main points Per Eliasson (2014) made was that what is taught and how it is taught is very much managed at the local level. Both interviewees stated that interest groups were involved in guiding some elements of Lgr 11’s history syllabus. I have chosen not to spend much time investigating that, aiming for a broader focus. Both of those choices certainly affect what follows in the final paper.

Using elements of postcolonial and postmodernist historiography I am analyzing the policy paper Lgr 11, specifically its history syllabus. To help, I have interviewed two of the creators of the policy to help get a better understanding of the intentions of the policy. Answers were rather broad and the
general theme was that the creators could not prescribe methodology of the study of history and teachers had freedom to interpret the document as they felt. It was a bit frustrating as the interviews did not give as much guidance as one could wish for since answers tended to be broad and somewhat repetitive with a focus on freedom of the teacher, content less important that the concepts of cultural mixing and migration. Therefore, this paper has relied on postcolonial and postmodern interpretations of the document in conjunction with the information from the two interviews. One interview is available in its entirety in the Appendix as is the History syllabus of Lgr. 11.

An element of my own personality began to creep in as soon as I received emails from the creators of Lgr 11’s history syllabus stating they would be more than willing to be interviewed. The enthusiasm and criticism that the interviewees displayed does affect me as a person. While I will attempt to give a fair appraisal of the document and its potential, I hoped that there were obviously positive elements of postmodernist historiography involved.

The interviews were performed in a mix of Swedish and English. What is left out, like in historical records, may be of importance or interpreted differently by others. My English interpretation of a Swedish word or phrase may not reflect the intention of the interviewee.

Hayden White’s postmodernist thought does work with the methods of textual analysis, in so far as interpreting what the text highlights as important and why, and a interviews as it allows for an interpretation of perspective and gives insight into intention on the part of the creators of Lgr 11. The layout of the teaching of history over nine years will allow for a search for narrative structure as well as for what lessons, if any, are to be taught from history. The interviews allow for commentary and a more nuanced understanding of the document’s original intentions.

By focusing on the representation of the postcolonial world in Lgr 11, I am able to easily incorporate elements of White’s postmodernism since he was critical of history of the victors and narrative history writing as well as feeling that history should serve a purpose to explain the present and empower humans to progress. Postcolonial histories give a chance to empower individuals, especially peoples who have been at an economic and political disadvantage vis a vis societies in Europe and North America for centuries. Postcolonial histories have the potential to inform peoples from all around the world and break down binaries to a gray zone of varying perspectives and
experiences. This is important to Sweden, a country of recent immigrants and older ones, some who perceive “others” amongst them.

**iii. viii Ethical Issues**

The documents Lgr 11 and supplementary material are free to download from Skolverket’s website. The textbook, A Concurrent World History (*En Samtidig Världshistoria*) was borrowed from the public library for examination.

I have attempted to be open with the subjects I interviewed. Introductory emails were sent out introducing myself and what I was researching and for whom I am a student. Responses were received quite quickly stating their acquiescence to an interview and asking for the questions so they could prepare. Before I began asking questions I asked if it was acceptable to record their answers and in general stuck to the questions I had emailed or to questions related to their answers.

My interest in the topic is professional and modified by education with the Communication for Development program through Malmö University in Sweden. I do possibly stand to benefit on a professional level either through promotion or increased salary by showing adequate critical thinking. In addition, I currently am employed in an education system that does not follow the Swedish national curriculum. However, the system I work for is intended to allow for inclusion of national curricula and demands so there is not inherent tension between the two that would suggest that I attempt to be overly critical of Lgr 11. Completing this paper in January of 2015 a part of me finds it may have been more beneficial from a professional level to critique the system I currently work within instead of Lgr 11, but the future may find me working with a national curriculum and my current teaching position makes me a syllabus creator for the school.
IV. Analysis

iv.1 Overview of Lgr 11’s History Syllabus

The Lgr 11 history syllabus for the compulsory school is divided into three parts: Years 1-3, Years 4-6 and years 7-9.

Years 1-3: allows for multiple perspectives and focuses on local circumstances and then some focus on the world. The local perspectives allow investigation of concepts by making use of art, literature and objects as well as working with narratives about religion. An interesting note is the inclusion of knowing how to behave around motor traffic and identification of “key functions of society” including health care and schooling. This period in Lgr 11 does have flexibility for inclusion of postcolonial perspectives and experiences for students or teachers with a background or interest in postcolonialism, but there are no clear directives ensuring that inclusion. The creation and usage of narratives is prescribed, but so is the use of diagrams, maps, interviews to allow for creation of narratives outside of any metanarrative.

In years 4-6 a chronological frame is applied to this time period from ancient times to 1850. The majority of the topics to be used to guide learning are concerned with Nordic and Swedish history. These topics do not necessarily guide the teacher or student to believe that something was good or bad for people, but is open to the student and teacher’s interpretation and use of facts. Here is a postmodernist strength of Lgr 11 regarding perspective and multiple narratives. In regards to postcolonialism there is little hinting to the teacher to ensure those perspectives are covered. While Asia, the Americas and Africa are starting to be colonized in some manner at this time, the effects on those people is not prescribed, rather “Some European voyages of discovery, their importance and consequences” is prescribed. The question would be, can a teacher present the peoples of these continents or a group as strong and not just as a victim. The importance of this use of facts or creation of narrative would help show the current postcolonial world as not being a perpetual victim. An example could be, examining the failure of Europeans to expand into Africa due to biological weaknesses and the strength of various African kingdoms as well as the precarious position of early European settlements/trading posts. A specific example would include the struggles of the Portuguese to create hegemony in East Africa and their military defeats at the hands of native groups as well as earlier interlopers like the Arabs. This example has the benefit of drawing in the importance of Africa to the world as well as the relative strength of some African peoples. Conceptually, students could investigate, material permitting, similarities and differences
in kingdoms around the world and the societies. Postcolonial perspectives would include the subaltern while creating a narrative of the postcolonial people as not always being victims, but equals and superiors at times in some fields.

Years 7-9 uses the time frame ancient civilizations, prehistory to the present. In this case I will present the subheadings of this year group as well. The four chronological subheadings are: Ancient civilizations, from prehistory to around 1700, Industrialization; social change and leading ideas, about 1700-1900; and Imperialism and world wars, about 1800-1950; and finally Democratization, the post-war period and globalization from about 1900 to the present. In this part of the analysis I will look closer at more of the topics to be covered because chronologically and topically there are more specifics to the postcolonial world. From my current standpoint, I see a traditional metanarrative suggested or easily identifiable especially to teachers raised by using metanarratives to understand the world. There is a eurocentric slant and specific topics to explore are often European and, more specifically Swedish. The main concepts they wished to highlight were migration and cultural mixing mainly to show that people move and that is an important engine in understanding processes at work in history. There is little direction to seeing how migration can be positive and negative and the causes and effects of migration of peoples.

iv. ii Interview Analysis and Lgr 11

Both interviewees highlighted the role that the concepts of migration and cultural mixing played in the construction of Lgr. 11. This is apparent often in regards to Swedish history and the surrounding area. This does not mean that exchanges of people and ideas is meant to be engaged with with more modern history from the major decolonization period of the mid-20th century. As a matter of fact no examples were given that included the postcolonial world and Sweden during the interviews. Nordgren (2014) did point out that the policy is very Eurocentric. While the interviewees backgrounds are in Environmental History and Art History there was no lengthy discussion of postcolonialism and its impact on the world or Sweden. This silence is only slightly broken in the document Lgr. 11. Nordgren (2014) pointed out that teachers of grades 1-3 take less history courses so it made more sense to maintain the focus of those years on Swedish and regional histories. Another important observation made by Nordgren was that teachers have little education regarding the Americas, Africa and Asia. This shows that an approach to Lgr 11 that includes postcolonial perspectives and historiography will depend very much on individual teachers’ awareness and interest in their pupils’ backgrounds and/or an independent interest in postcolonial histories.
Both Eliasson and Nordgren pointed out that they were not allowed by Skolverket to prescribe methodology to be taught in Lgr 11. This means they could not suggest different types of historiography to be taught, including postcolonialism, nor how to approach specific topics like colonialism. This will link back to teacher school and what teaching candidates learn and focus on and/or students’ interest in a teacher’s classroom.

According to Nordgren (2014):

“Again, it isn’t the syllabus that is supposed to say which aspects are to be brought up, but there is room for the teacher to work independently. But again, you can look at Africa, Asia and America that have aspects that are important. You need to get an understanding. There is a historical, economic and political development that goes way back than before the European development that would show that there were parts of the world untouched by Europe, that affect and were affected by Europe. They should see an independent historical development, that later has a relation to European development.”

To be fair, a motivated teacher could bring these aspects to light and bring a better understanding or more nuanced narrative to a class of students. It cannot be assumed, however, that all teachers have that motivation or time or desire to do so. It is likely that those nuanced views will be lost. Ten of the bullet points clearly reference Europe and/or Sweden in what is to be covered. What role will the postcolonial world play in this narrative? More than a cameo is difficult to fathom. What role will the post-colonial people play in this story as they move from independent political roles to subjugation to independence of a sort again? If the narrative students tend to meet is focused on the development of Europe through upheaval such as revolutions, genocide and totalitarian regimes in the past to come out on the other side with a welfare state and European cooperation have they had time to consider the conditions in the rest of the world and the role these same “victorious” people may have played in creating relationships of varying inequality today?

Nordgren (2014) did express the difficulty they had in making the 7-9 syllabus seem less driven by content and more about embracing Europe’s confronting the rest of the world during this time period but it was difficult to express that when they were directed by Skolverket to avoid prescribing methodology and what perspectives were to be taught.

There is little to suggest that White’s postmodernist approach which highlights the enabling power of history is a part of Lgr. 11. The approach to history is conceptual but not postmodern. The lack of postcolonial histories and historiography in the interviews and policy means that teachers are not required to engage with those. Interpolation will occur at random in classrooms and postcolonial histories, including attempted histories of the subaltern will be sidelined or left in the dustbin of history.
The engagement with history in education that some American, British and Australian educators engaged with and were mentioned earlier does not seem to be of immediacy in Sweden as it is in the major colonial centers of the “West”. With the ubiquitousness of peoples from the postcolonial world in Swedish society it is strange that their histories are not.

iv. iii Textual Analysis of Lgr 11

Of most interest to representation of the postcolonial world are the first, third and fourth bullet points as they explicitly name the regions where postcolonial events and events leading up to postcolonialism could be addressed. However, the parameters or time given for the first bullet point (Comparisons between the emergence and development of some leading cultures up to the 18th-century, such as those in Africa, America and Asia) is from pre-history to 1700, for the third (What historical sources from some leading cultures, such as in Asia or America, can tell us about similarities and differences in the living conditions of children, women and men) and fourth (Increasing world trade between Europe, Asia, Africa and America) the time period is from 1700-1900 which will more likely lead to an examination of how the the regions of Africa, the Americas and Asia are exploited. In addition, one could argue that the sixth (Revolutions and the emergence of new ideas, new classes in society and political ideologies), eighth (European domination, imperialism and colonialism), ninth (Nationalism and different forms of democracy and dictatorships in Europe and in other parts of the world), tenth (Both world wars, their causes and consequences. Oppression, displacement of people and genocide. The Holocaust and the Gulag) and eleventh (Historical narratives from different parts of the world depicting people’s experiences of oppression, such as through colonialism, racism or totalitarian dictatorships and resistance to these) bullet points also could or should include the postcolonial world. The biggest problem and other may argue its strength is that there are no specific areas or figures or events prescribed. When talking about world trade is it to be viewed in a positive light? Negative? Both? It would be most beneficial to teachers and students to be told to find elements of both. This would help students and teachers to understand that these topics to cover will often lead to multiple understandings. Knowledge of the time period from 1700-1900 regarding Africa, Asia and the Americas tend to be a period of slavery, conquering of new territories, destruction of native peoples and economic domination by the Europeans. If not notified that there is resistance or even failure on Europeans’ part to be consistently successful, does that create the understanding that Europeans were a juggernaut force taking what they wanted and dictating agreements. Instead, students need to understand that African peoples, Native Americans and Asian peoples did not cower in the face of
European guns, germs and steel, but fought back from time to time successfully. This serves two purposes, it grays the binaries associated with the West and The Rest or North and white and South and black, etc as well as plants the understanding within one society that represents the current, dominant socio-economic force in the world that at some point change occurred that allowed for exploitation, slavery and European-dictated treaties and agreements. This concept of change and an awareness of previous “dark” civilizations and resistance creates a pause within some students and pride within others.

From a Swedish nation-state building perspective this is ideal and problematic. Proud citizens may make for effective citizens that vote and work. Recognition of a past that includes pride rather than a litany of humiliations and weakness could create a positive relationship with the Swedish state. Of course, the problem would be the unequal access to power that these postcolonial states wield on the international stage. Confrontation over this situation could certainly occur within schools.

This last problem could be addressed by the bullet point in Lgr 11 (2011), “Current conflicts in the world and historical perspectives on these”. Again, what conflicts a school chooses to engage with is left to the school. Guidance such as the role of global/international institutions like the IMF, NATO or the EU are not specified. One could focus on fresh water issues, access to oil, minority rights Afghanistan and avoid, knowingly or unknowingly the teacher, students’ and school’s role in these conflicts.

iv. iv The Role of the Teacher in Lgr 11

In the interviews, the creators of Lgr 11 admitted the text was quite Eurocentric as well as teachers having the freedom to consider the rest of the world including the postcolonial world through conceptual understandings. They saw the syllabus as allowing for freedom to consider a variety of perspectives and narratives. Migration during industrialization could allow for examining Swedes moving from the country to the city or Europeans moving to new colonies in Africa, for example. That is up to the teacher to decide. This freedom hinges to a great extent on the teacher and the teacher’s understanding of what it means to be a history teacher.

Teachers are human and that entails baggage. Teachers embrace ideologies, moral codes and often, over time, devote their free time to activities other than teaching. A teacher who leans towards a more right leaning perspective of the world may not look beyond depicting societies outside of the Swedish one in a positive light. Instead, the narratives that include corruption, civil wars, slavery
and general backwardness may simply be reinforced. A desire to look into the works of nationalist Vietnamese writers or Kwame Nkrumah may never be brought to light. The failure of the Europeans to explore and colonize inland Africa may be attributed to European instability in Europe rather than because of a variety of African kingdoms’ military and political strength. The failure of Europeans and Americans to hold on to their colonies after the Second World War may be seen as the result of the threat of communism rather than the ability of “darker” peoples to organize, lead and liberate. What then happens is another group of individuals may lead school with an extreme, rather than muddled view of the world.

This muddled view is important to studying history. Muddled because of the variety of perspectives to be found in historical records or absent from them. Working with history includes having an understanding of how societies work and what types of people are involved. There are elements of this understanding in Lgr 11, especially in regards to Sweden. The role of women, unions, class, gender, sex and national minorities should be explored at some point between years 7-9. By using a variety of sources, students and teachers should understand that people experience events differently. This is the same in the postcolonial world where amongst natives, there can be natives who benefit more than other natives during a period of colonialism. At the same time, focusing only on certain people, say political or military leaders may leave out the perspective of people of the opposite sex, different sexuality or gender identity, class, etc. This muddled view of history is beneficial in avoiding reaching extreme conclusions when thinking critically about which party or candidate to vote for, which product to buy, how to get to work, where to go to vacation etc for the citizen of the “West”. Hesitation and then decision with reservations may be the sign of the cosmopolitan citizen.

iv.v Lgr 11 and the Postcolonial World

What are the possible roles of the postcolonial world in Lgr 11’s narrative. Since there tends to be a time structure in Lgr. 11 we can postulate what the intentions are for the postcolonial world.

The postcolonial world is meant, in this paper, to refer to the regions that are colonized by Western European countries as well as the current United States from the late 15th century through the 19th century. This is a long period of time and does not necessarily have to include postcolonial literature and criticism. However, postmodernist approaches to history, in the style of Hayden White, feel that literature and history share characteristics of plot, character formation and climax and resolution. In a sense, a postmodernist could argue that much traditional history writing and studying has sought out and created these elements of narrative in order to make sense of events. The tendencies of
literature from around the world to have elements of a narrative like the ones stated above helps explain the attraction of working with history.

In order to identify a clear focus on constructing some type of history for the postcolonial world then it will be necessary to see a narrative skeleton being formed. Skeleton because Lgr 11 is a rather brief, open-ended document subject to interpretation. There is enough guidance to pick out a narrative that tends to sideline and/or give a disjointed representation of the postcolonial world.

The postcolonial world is important to Swedish education because in order to incorporate the citizens of Sweden into a unified force, pride in the country is necessary to persuade people to vote and participate in the democracy. Recognition of one’s immigrant experience will help mold Swedish identity by showing value in immigrants’ histories. Histories as narratives, as literature, can be seen to tell a story. These narratives could tell tales of success, facing and overcoming obstacles, of heroes and villains and should, in the end, offer examples of how to change the present for a more positive future.

Therefore, the postcolonial history will include colonialism and should even include events beforehand to inform students and teachers about narratives before Europeans. These pre-European histories are important, not in that there were utopian societies that existed before European arrival ruined it all, but to present different perspectives of civilization. For example, a history of Islam today in school, which should be a monumental undertaking, can simply focus on the religious duties of a Muslim and the origins of Islam with the consolidation of Muslim power in the Arabian peninsula. A more nuanced narrative would show the military capabilities of the early Muslim Arabs and their tolerant attitudes towards Christians and Jews that would continue for centuries including in the face of the rather intolerant Crusades. Case studies of Muslim Spain (a major tourist site for Swedes) and Sicily would provide students with an understanding of the importance of Islam to Western societies. Moving quickly along in the narrative the assumption of power of the Turks and Ottoman Empire, intruding onto the European mainland at times while maintaining military dominance and artistic relevance would remain a source of pride for some Swedes today, while giving pause to others who may tend to view the Muslim world as a weak culture. The collapse of the Ottoman Empire and settlements reached regarding the breakup of the Ottoman Empire into its current states of Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Palestine, Israel, Lebanon, etc under French and British direction would allow for an understanding of the European role in tension in the Middle East. The McMahon-Hussein correspondence, Sykes-Picot Agreement and Balfour Declaration are elements of the story that muddle the picture of the Middle East as inhabited by an unruly,
reactionary people. It at least adds the element of different actors affecting change for better or worse. In need of positive examples of change to help guide Swedish perspective of the Muslim Middle East would include figures like Nasser and Sadat, people who instilled pride and moderation at different times as well as the power of “common” people in the First Intifada and Palestinian ingenuity in finding ways to protest their treatment, represent their life and find ways around obstacles put in their paths.

This type of a narrative, if well done, by a motivated, aware teacher would naturally draw in other actors like Israel and the Jewish world as well as Europeans. It would show how many forces are at work in a given area, in this case an area of the world that has an impact on Sweden due to the sizable number of people with backgrounds in the Middle East.

That type of narrative with important events from an extended period of history perhaps extended a millennium or more is important to our use of postcolonial. Both negative and positive events, generally speaking, with some main characters and how obstacles faced by these figures and less famous people is important to postmodernist history according to Hayden White. It should serve a purpose and help people discover their own agency in enacting change. From a postcolonial standpoint it would allow for interpolation, writing back. This leads to how history is explored.

There are a variety of ways of working with history, called historiography. Good history studies will include a variety of these methods. Historical studies can look at diplomatic history, the role of important figures in changing history, microhistories, marxist history, Annales school of history with a focus on economic and demographic change is what really creates change, not the action of individuals amongst others. This engagement with a variety of historiography should empower individuals more as they become aware of a variety of historical perspectives which argue for how change is enacted by different agents. Some of these schools of thought bring focus to the power of unsung or obscure people.

A variety of perspectives from these schools of thought gives that muddled understanding of history again which empowers and liberates. It teaches teachers and students, or in this case Swedish society, that using the examples from above, tension in the Middle East is not because people from the Middle East are conservative reactionaries bent on combating modernity. Rather it should create a pause within the student and teacher and refer to a number of events and figures that grey that perspective and hopefully brings the student to question their role in tension in the world. As a member of a democracy, where they theoretically have a voice and a measure of power, with an understanding of perspectives and narratives can the student can create positive change or at the
very least have a nuanced view of the world that they pass on to their children, friends and others in their network.

**iv. vi Lgr 11’s Representation of the Postcolonial World’s Histories**

What is the role of the postcolonial world in the narrative of Lgr 11? Lgr 11’s focus is Eurocentric. That does not have to mean that it has to be a tale of progress. The stated claim of Lgr. 11’s (Skolverket, 2011, p.163) history syllabus is to give an understanding of the past to understand the future and hypothesize about where we are heading.

The chronological structure of Lgr 11 does not proceed until grade four. Before that students explore their local histories, Christianity, Nordic religion and other religions in the local area as well as Stone, Bronze and Iron Age humans, democracy, children’s rights, the use of money, gender, morality and how to behave in traffic amongst others.

The lens for these studies is often the local community. For a community located in a major Swedish city there could be excellent opportunities to engage with a variety of perspectives and narratives about life. A major Swedish city will have immigrants from around the postcolonial world as well as within Europe and North America. Meanwhile an attempt at Swedish identity creation is occurring as the role of Christianity in Swedish traditional identity is emphasized as well as the Nordic mythological past as well as the focus on individual rights and emphasis on safety.

On the other hand, a community that is mainly European or mainly older, Swedish families would engage with some of the other major monotheistic religion at all because of their absence in the local community. They would need to bring awareness to “some ceremonies, symbols and narratives of Christianity, Islam and Judaism.” Within that same directive, students are to be familiar with “Some narratives from the Bible and their meaning, and also some of the most common psalms.” While Islam, an important religion to some postcolonial peoples is mentioned, it along with Judaism, is more of an afterthought as more detail is given to the role of the Bible and psalms.

To be fair, children at this age may be more capable of handling general outlines of life and religion in order to give a general overview. On the other hand, the expectation that Nordic mythology and elements of Christianity are to be covered, seems to say that depth should be attained in a more Eurocentric manner, probably with the intention that elements of Swedishness are highlighted. Christianity is of importance to some peoples in the postcolonial world and the traditions of those
“Christianities” could be highlighted, but that may rely on the students or teacher’s awareness more than Lgr. 11’s directives.

The impressionable age of the students can also be beneficial for children of that age. They tend to be quite curious and less judgmental. One could argue that it would be a vital age to focus on the histories including similarities and differences of peoples within Sweden. Whether it would lay a stable foundation for an empathetic society is difficult to say with certainty as the rest of the history curriculum is to be addressed in the student’s school life as well as the narratives and perspectives the student will encounter in the media and personal life.

The next period for students is grades 4-6 with a focus on ancient to the Middle Ages circa 1500. The term “Middle Ages” signifies to the teacher that focus is on Europe. A teacher focusing on the Middle East or elements of African histories and certainly Asian histories would not see a Middle Ages between two periods of impressive intellectual expansion. Rather this time period encapsulates great intellectual expansion and arguable domination by the eventual postcolonial world. However, Lgr. 11 makes one reference to the continents that will make up part of the postcolonial world and that reference is focusing on economic relationships with Asia and Sweden. The document also states a focus on cultural exchange and travel should occur as well. The other topics to be covered are focused heavily on Sweden and the Nordic area. Economic, political and religious change is highlighted. The eventual postcolonial world, with many examples of achievement is left in virtual silence for three years of a child’s formative years as (s)he continues to develop an idea of Swedishness and the world.

A problem with this is that at some point a student, perhaps based on religion or skin color could be accused of or treated as not being Swedish. With the rise of right wing parties in Sweden this may reflect voters’ angst about foreignness which could mean a student of non-Christian and/or non-white background may face sustained attack upon their background. At some point they may toss aside the Swedish identity of Lgr 11 and be left with little knowledge of other identities they may embrace. Instead, current representations of their background which could depict their background as weak or corrupt or aggressive may come to the fore, when in fact a more nuanced historical view would include the intellectual, political and economic achievement of non-Swedish, non-European peoples would serve that person well. Is a person of Kurdish background willing to stand up and speak his or her mind politically or in class or in the street with the knowledge that his or her people are without a state? Or with the additional knowledge that a member of his or her people, Saladin, united part of the Arab world, drove most of the rather brusque Crusaders out and showed great
moderation and toleration that even Christian sources took note. Instead of being “just a Kurd” or “some Kurd”, he or she is “a Kurd” with all the trappings that come with it. However, in Lgr 11 this nuanced view on other peoples is lacking. The attempt at creating a Swedishness may instead lead to continued or great segregation.

Postcolonial peoples’ histories make their cameo appearance in grades 7-9 which takes a step back in the time structure to include ancient history until present times. These grades are also when postcolonial peoples’ histories are explicitly mentioned the most.

In brief:

- For the time period, *Ancient Civilizations, from prehistory to around 1700*, students should be able to make “comparisons between the emergence and development of some leading cultures up to the 18th century, such as those in Africa, America and Asia.”

- For the time period, *Industrialization, social change and leading ideas, about 1700-1900*, students will cover “increasing world trade between Europe, Asia, Africa and America.

- For the time period, *Imperialism and World Wars, about 1800-1950*, students cover “European dominance, imperialism and colonialism

(Skolverket, 2011, p. 166-167)

To be fair there are other areas that could allow for postcolonial peoples’ histories such as the

- “revolutions and emergence of new ideas” or

- effects of the world wars, or

- “the role of nationalism and different forms of democracy and dictatorship in Europe and other parts of the world”

- or “Historical narratives from different parts of the world depicting people’s experiences of oppression, such as through colonialism, racism or totalitarian dictatorships and resistance to those”

- “new power relationships in the world after the Cold War”

- “current conflicts in the world and historical perspectives on these”

(Skolverket, 2011, p. 166-167)

There is certainly opportunities for teachers to work with the postcolonial peoples’ experiences in the 7-9 year range. Whether that occurs is in question. If students and teachers have worked mainly
on Swedish topics, it is not obvious that they should change perspectives and effectively engage with histories from four continents in the space of three academic years while still maintaining significant focus on Sweden.

Regarding the three directives that address the continents that have postcolonial experiences, the first directive recommends leading cultures from places “such as” Africa, Asia and the Americas, but does not demand those cultures come from there. If the educator decides to consult the Commentary Material for the History Syllabus (Skolverket, 2011, p.27) that they are given examples of cultures to study within Central and South America, presumably the Mayan, Aztec and Incan. The guiding material notes that these cultures had a long past, but were at the mercy of their European conquerors. Since the time period for study ends at 1700, the possibility to note mixing, independence and political movements of natives may never be identified. Again, the postcolonial world’s representation is becoming that of a victim. While generally correct for the time period from 1500 to 1700, the rest of the story/stories may not be addressed. When discussing “High Culture” the commentary material does add that high cultures, admittedly a controversial term, should be studied as cultures in the Americas, Africa and Asia, in particular sub-Saharan Africa to illuminate the students’ understanding of cultural sharing especially with the upcoming colonization of these parts of the world by Europe.

The second one focuses on trade between continents and that could simply end up being a history of what goods are traded, who controlled what land, etc. Lack of written native sources could certainly lead to a one-sided understanding of this meeting of cultures. The commentary material (Skolverket, 2011) speaks more about the importance of economics in causing change and the importance of trade to Europeans as an explanation of their future world domination.

The third bullet point about colonialism, imperialism and European dominance could be a laundry list of European acquisitions and economic and political dominance. This type of information could simply reinforce binaries showing Native Americans as weak or uncivilized depending on the narrative given by the school. It is easier, with the amount of source work available to rehash the older narrative of Europeans pushed or pulled from their native lands to a land where they quickly and with little resistance, admirably carved out a colony and planted civilization. The commentary material (Skolverket, 2011) speaks about how colonization empowered the colonizing powers and caused economic disruption to the colonized peoples which will help students understand the issues of poverty and political instability that plagues the postcolonial world. It is noteworthy that the commentary material (Skolverket, 2011) brings to the teacher’s attention the role of European
colonization in causing upheaval in the postcolonial world. The curious teacher will seek out examples and evidence. Will the teacher and students reach the conclusion that the roots of this upheaval extend in the past or will they seek out neocolonial explanations of postcolonial trials and tribulations that tie in the action of everyday Swedes and Swedish government and business? Or are the roots seen as extending too far back to cause reflection? Again, the postcolonial world, is depicted in the commentary material (Skolverket, 2011) as being without agency. Resistance or alternative is not a term used nor suggested as occurring.

Nowadays, it is normal to abhor the forced removal and/or slaughter and racist policies of the imperialist power, but one could question, with fewer written sources from the perspective of the colonized, what voice and what actions that the colonized initiate will be available for students to see acts of resistance, collusion, independence, etc. It is easier for teachers to keep the natives voiceless, especially in earlier stages of colonialism or sources about the natives will still be from the perspective of the colonizer. The student must surmise, use their creative ability, which will include their own cultural expectation and mores to understand the colonized actions and recorded sayings.

This silence makes the subjugation of the colonized peoples seem almost inevitable. How can one who cannot speak, fight back? Or if they fight back with no recorded motivation, humans can find their motivation weak, lacking emotional appeal or logical planning. What then happens afterwards with the grafting of foreign institutions onto the colonized peoples can seem beneficial as it gives those surviving colonized peoples opportunities to speak in a manner that many Swedes can understand.

This is why an element of clear prescription is needed in Lgr 11 or any syllabus for that matter. A prescription of how a variety of perspectives needs to be addressed in a particular time frame for particular people. The prescription does not have to so narrow as to force every teacher and student to learn about colonization of French Indo-China and Ho Chi Minh but could say that colonization of a non-European people and their experiences as collaborators, resisters and bystanders should be covered from the beginning of colonization to their independence with focus on post-independence issues to today. Perspectives of these people must include primary, native sources from a variety of agents with a variety of backgrounds like sex, gender, class, occupation/livelihood, etc.

Instead the teacher and student working with History in the Swedish national curriculum will see a progressive development of history teaching with focus on conceptual learning and a degree of freedom in what is taught specifically. The issue is that the teacher is most likely a product of
previous history teaching with all its inherent Eurocentric foci. It will take the curious and/or knowledgeable teacher to guide students or allow postcolonial students to guide the teachers to topics that they may not have planned for. Otherwise, the contemporary Swedish teacher may be pleased to address gender issues, the development of the welfare state, the actions of peoples within the Baltic area as well as local conditions. With a more multicultural population in Sweden and the rise of extreme right wing political groups, it is of importance that the identities of these recent postcolonial immigrants with their range of experiences are recognized and understood as best as can be done in the allotted time.

If the Swedish government’s desire with the History curriculum is to help create and strengthen a Swedish identity then the Swedish identity needs to be seen to include elements of postcolonial peoples. These peoples have arrived in Sweden for a variety of reasons and have been absorbed into Swedish mainstream society to varying degrees. If elements of globalization like mixing of cultures is something to be investigated in the history curriculum then the histories of these societies should be presented in a more nuanced way. This, in turn, creates active citizens, how have the knowledge of their histories disseminated throughout Sweden. The history of a people’s triumphs, crimes committed and crimes committed against creates appreciation within the subject and audience. An attack upon a person’s background as being a member of a reactionary religion in a reactionary part of the world, say Lebanon, would be liable to point to the military successes of his/her people in fending off first class military powers like the United States and Israel and pointing to the impressive numbers of cultures attempting to coexist within a small geographic area created by European powers after World War I. Meanwhile, knowledge of the Crusades and Crusader attitudes towards Jews and Muslims as well as neocolonial attitudes towards that part of the world would explain the reactionary accusation and muddle the accuser’s understanding of that part of the world. If the accused was feeling particularly enthusiastic s/he could add the extensive network of Lebanese people around the world as a sign of cosmopolitanism rather than pure reactionary leanings only.

Of course the above confrontation would want to be avoided as much as possible due to knowledge of the everyday citizen, and so a stronger element of postcolonialism history is needed in Lgr. 11. There are opportunities in the syllabus to engage with these histories, but the likelihood of postcolonial histories being incorporated into Lgr 11 lays heavily on a variety of individual actors, teachers and students and their willingness to investigate and speak with each other. In some ways this potential interaction, while reliant on a variety of local, classroom factors like relationship
between the student and teachers, has potential to create an environment for postcolonial history investigation.

The risk with the above plan of prescribing a topic that includes postcolonial history is that it runs the risk of still keeping that history with its varieties of perspectives as an exotic history of an exotic people. This compartmentalization of a people runs the risk of removing Swedish and European connections with those people. Sweden’s formal colonial actions are limited compared to nations like England, Spain, France and Belgium. Sweden possessed a short-lived colony in North America, colonies in the Caribbean and Africa and slave forts as well as being active in the slave trade. So a history of say Vietnam, may be of little interest to the student beyond attaining a good grade and ensuring a place in a chosen high school. This is where an understanding of postcolonialism from a Communication for Development perspective as that would bring in the economic aspect, arguably including neocolonialism, which would bring in the role of Sweden as a Western, wealthy nation that has connections with former colonies.

iv. vii Lgr 11’s postmodern ability to give people power to act

For a white Swede, Lgr 11 does not threaten to change the a victorious, civilized perspective of themselves in history. The loss of Swedish empire at Poltava in 1709 can easily be seen as one of the key moments in the removal of one strong centralized voice in the form of the king to the events of the early 1900’s when a more left leaning, welfare state develops. The relative equality of women and people of different sexuality and gender in the eyes of the law gives the white Swede a chance to exult and feel they still are the moral voice of the world.

However, Sweden, as it has been to varying degrees is a country of immigrants. About 16% of Swedes are immigrants with people from Iraq, Iran, Somalia and Syria in the top 15 countries of foreign born immigrants. Forty percent of the 1.5 million immigrants come from the postcolonial continents of Africa and Asia (Statistiska Centralbyrån, 2013). What is new to immigration is the high number of immigrants who are clearly immigrants. They are visibly darker or different. The avoidance of their history in Lgr 11 threatens to leave that history in the hands of the media and the parade of images on TV depicting the “darker” peoples as victims. What is lacking are the triumphant histories that White expresses are needed for history to serve its purpose as a narrative with a purpose. There needs to be some prescription within Lgr 11 directing teachers to address decolonization as that is a triumph. Whether a teacher focuses on Vietnam or Ghana does give a
different narrative regarding the role of violence, but the immediate end of their decolonization is triumph and a victory over white colonizers. It removes the sword from the white hand and puts it in the darker hand, or for a moment the Vietnamese stands triumphant.

iv. viii. Importance of postcolonialism to Swedish History

A triumphant history, while serving a purpose if history is just a creative piece of writing, is not a fair history. Postcolonial historians and the focus on the subaltern would find fault with triumphant histories but applaud the understanding that perspectives abound in the field of history. For example, in Lgr 11, a teacher could focus on the Algerian War of Independence from 1954-1962 and students could come away knowing that “darker” Algerians defeated their colonial masters, the French, acquiring independence. The teacher could end that unit with viewing *The Battle of Algiers* and the scenes of rejoicing at the end.

The postcolonial history would bring into perspective the experiences of Algerians not involved in the war, killed in reprisals, those that fought for the French and were executed after the war, the Algerians that fled to avoid reprisal and the Algerians who struggled and still struggle for equality in France today. It would also include the changing role of some women. Some women were active in the resistance and did this believing that a change in their status would occur. It did not. In addition, the promise of the newly independent Algeria began to fall apart and this process would be examined in postcolonial history. Why did Algeria descend into civil war in the 1990’s. Why did the status of women not improve? What role do Europe and Sweden play in this story? How does the Swedish student and citizen’s consumer choices and voting affect other people? This postcolonial history brings the complexity of history as a discipline to the fore rather than relegating it to a literary piece.

A risk of working with postcolonialism could lay with the teacher in Sweden working in the more homogenous regions of Sweden, namely those that are predominantly white. Is there a risk that postcolonialism is too alien for that student. The white Swedish student in a major city like Stockholm, Göteborg or Malmö may be able to see a postcolonial figure every day at school or in the city. The student in the more rural areas may not. Why should postcolonialism matter. The competent teacher will focus on Sweden’s role in the international economic and political structures of today. However, if that history teacher would like to draw the student to care about postcolonial experiences then they will work with comparing and contrasting. Here is where Sweden’s history works with some elements of postcolonial historiography.
Subaltern studies are not aimed at European studies even though subaltern studies focus on people at a disadvantage due to class, sex, gender, etc. Subaltern studies was originally intended to focus on those people disadvantaged and living under a colonial system. Sweden and Swedishness is a construction that until relatively recently embraced people of different sexuality and gender as relative equals under the law. Further back during industrialization the struggle of workers and the urban and rural poor was a concern of people living in the geographic polity of Sweden. Even further back as Sweden came to be called Sweden there were a number of people who fought against the idea of being Swedish which entailed religious change and economic change. One of those key events involved the revolt of Nils Dacke in the southern Swedish province of Småland. Nils Dacke and his insurgents fought against the centralizing power of Gustav Vasa and his German mercenaries before eventually losing. Why they fought and what they thought has been lost to recorded history but they were, in a sense, fighting against a power that would speak for them. It is possible that they viewed Gustav Vasa, traditionally a positive figure in Swedish history as fighting the Danes and unifying Sweden, as an oppressor that would cause great upheaval in their lives.

Moving back forwards in time again, the plight of the Swedish worker or farmer in the 1800’s struggling to make a living and support his or her family in the face of a changing economic system with increased competition and lacking domestic support for their conditions could help put the postcolonial perspective of someone in Ghana in a more meaningful light. This type of Swedish history, taking elements of postcolonial historiography, allows for comparing and contrasting. The student could then consider the added element of colonialism on the postcolonial subaltern or even postcolonial subject to have a better perspective on his or her Swedishness and what that entails for better or worse. It allows for combatting the “cultural essentialism” that “has been used in dominant discourse primarily to maintain the ‘insider-outsider’ binary or “the alien wedge within”. (Tikly, 1999, p.612) The postcolonial studies that influence European studies would help combat the “‘single, contestable, objective and accurate’ representation of reality. (Tikly, 1999, p.614)

Postcolonial studies in Sweden, and arguably in the Western world, suffers from lacking true legitimacy. It is seen as an exotic addition to higher education according to Deepika Bahri (1997). Comparing and contrasting Sweden and the postcolonial experience of other peoples, including the time period before colonization with both positive and negative experiences does justice to the white and “dark” Swede. It legitimizes elements of postcolonial methodology through the studies of Swedish history and other regions that were affected by European colonization and neo-imperialism. It brings in debate and analysis or most importantly, muddles history further.
Taken together postmodernism of Hayden White with its interest in positive lessons and guidance and the braking effect of postcolonial historiography makes for engaging, informative history studying that teaches the teacher and student to refrain from making blanket statements and view history as teleological. This demands a lot of the teacher. The teacher needs to be curious, reflexive and informed. The people who work for the state need to have the same qualities.

iv. ix Criticism of Postmodernist Historiography

The competent history teacher will embrace the schools of history, including postmodernism and postcolonialism throughout the years of teaching so that students are aware of the concept of perspective while using a variety of methods of history studying. Postmodernist historiography has been beneficial to history as it has drawn the historian to consider his/her use of literary features and to continue to seek out other perspectives. In defense of the discipline of history, some historians such as Martin Stuart-Fox, Patrick Karl O’Brien and Trygve R. Tholfsen have noted that postmodernists simplify the work of historians. A competent historian is very active in assessing sources, is peer reviewed and makes use of a variety of sources. “Modern professional historians have been engaged in deconstructing texts contesting each others readings and interpretations of sources for as long as most can remember.” (O’Brien, 2001). O’Brien continues to criticize postmodernist criticisms by pointing out the role of microhistories in deflating the accusation that historians create metanarratives that create blanket statements about the past (2001).

Martin Stuart-Fox (2007) added to this argument by pointing out how science and history involve similar rigor and how scientific knowledge and historical knowledge are built off previous knowledge that is accepted by experts and tested against other hypotheses and historians’ work. “History, like the natural and biological sciences, seeks to understand, explain, makes sense of and impart interpretive meaning to certain aspects of that material world that we confront...” (Stuart-Fox, 2007, p.44.12).

Trygve Tholfsen (1999) remarked on the histories of postmodernists as focusing too much on 19th century historians rather than contemporary history and the rigor that serious historians work with. In addition, the language used, or the engaging text, does not mean it cannot be criticized.

So the historian and history students should not find postmodernism and postcolonialism to be a major shock to their understanding of history and historiography. Historical methodology includes elements of both postmodernism and postcolonialism. What is most demanding of the historian and
students will be interpolation, a term Ashcroft uses to mean, “writing back.” (2001, 102) To write back, the students will need to gain knowledge of the “other” that in many cases in Sweden is in the same room. The student will work with redirecting the power of Lgr 11 without rewriting it. The student and teacher will work within the confines of Lgr 11 to include postcolonial histories alongside the more traditional history that Lgr 11 seems to convey.

Because postcolonialism and postmodernism see literature as playing a role, this gives more ammunition to a teacher. He or she can make use of literature for critiquing history but also for understanding history. If we take into account postcolonial history to include what happens before and during colonization then a work like Chinua Achebe’s Things Fall Apart can be beneficial to the students of history. That literature allows for an examination of gender roles in a pre-colonial society, law, war, traditions, work ethic, holiday and traditions and can easily lead to comparing and contrasting with traditional Swedish values, but not being as dry as perhaps history textbooks can be. Another example could be Sembene Ousmane’s Gods Bits of Wood for the central role that women play in enacting change in French dominated Senegal. The importance of this work in nibbling at the edges of a metanarrative, in this case about Africa and Islam, is that the student would see women not subjugated by their religion; instead see women working for change when it seems the men cannot do it alone. The agency of women is brought to the fore and the discerning teacher and student will consider the role of the subaltern woman in other historical events and processes in the postcolonial world and even Sweden.

Lgr 11’s potential for allowing postcolonial interpolation is difficult to gauge. It relies on a number of factors, but perhaps most importantly that of the teacher. While perspectives are not prescribed by the creators nor document, it has the possibility to perpetuate the silence of the subaltern. Without identifying their perspectives as to be studied, will teachers and students notice them or consider them? They do not have to study the successes and failures of postcolonial peoples along with the collusion of the “West” in these histories that continue today.

To compound this issue and briefly revisit, Hayden White’s postmodernism, empowerment of postcolonial people through their histories will be negligible. Their histories are subordinated to the metanarrative of the development of Sweden and predominantly European events in history. The narrative of history, seemingly giving meaning through an easy-to-follow story. There will be no radical reconstruction of history.
V. Conclusion

It is easy to judge Lgr 11’s history syllabus as a document that is Eurocentric and regurgitates a metanarrative that highlights the civilizing role of the Swedish state and Swede. On the other hand, provided there is an engaged, history-minded teacher at the helm of a class to cruise around history making many stops and detours rather than going the quickest and easiest route, there are possibilities for postcolonial history to be addressed. Granted since the teacher is guided to work predominantly with local and Swedish history until grade 7 and then predominantly with European until grade 9, there is not going to be a major shift in focus, but there are chances for Ashcroft’s interpolation and a nibbling at the edges of this Eurocentric history.

But this relies to a great extent on the teacher to be inspired by the current demographic makeup of a multicultural Sweden and/or multicultural classroom in a globalized world. If this inspiration is lacking, then the state, if it is the moral compass of the world, needs to step in and ensure that postcolonial histories are taught and addressed. Since this is not the case, there is little expectation that great change in how history is taught and the perspectives leaned upon will vary. History for Swedes may continue to mainly legitimate white Sweden and run the risk of alienating the recent immigrants who find voice through literature and music of their own making before violence, remigration or continued immigration.

To add to the creators’ focus on concepts like mixing and cultural exchange, prescription is necessary to ensure that teachers and students are aware of the diversity of the world and the positive and negative effects of globalization. Accomplishment of the postcolonial peoples is not addressed explicitly in Lgr 11, the period of decolonization would most likely be covered very briefly, but the creators did highlight elements of globalization as areas to be explored. Here as well, postcolonial perspectives are important for Swedes. They need to understand their role as wielding hegemonic power in the market over the postcolonial world. For the Swede of postcolonial background, his or her identity needs reaffirming and the plethora of experiences as a postcolonial people needs to be addressed within the parameters of migration and cultural mixing. Both of those concepts demand an understanding of a variety of perspectives from the postcolonial world that highlights the variety of experiences of living with globalization and being affected by it. To what extent does hybridity occur? Resistance? Does the global North play a part in forcing migration? Enticing migration? Will the white Swede be able to see the muddled present, break down the “blocing” of the world into West, Africa, Asia, India, the US, Sweden? It is not so special to postcolonial historiography, but rather history done well.
The silence about tackling postcolonial histories in Lgr 11 and the unwillingness of Skolverket to allow them to prescribe methodology means there is not a great chance for Ashcroft’s interpolation. This in turn, makes it questionable whether history studies in the compulsory school in Sweden will provide the guidance that Hayden White identifies as the value of history studies. With no relevant history being taught to a significant minority of the population suggests that history will remain the domain of the elites and more likely to empower white Sweden.

As Hickling-Hudson concludes, “Neocolonial schools contribute to emotional anguish and low self-esteem by battering students with assaults on their self-image and identity” (2007, p.210). In Lgr 11, the postcolonial student may not encounter any attempt at representing themselves. It depends on the individual teacher to find in the interstices of the document a place for them. But if white Sweden continues to encounter the postcolonial world mainly through kebab shops; news reports of terrorists, natural disasters, child soldiers, corrupt leaders, mass raped women and civil war; secular televangelicals and aid commercials then the us vs. them binary petrifies and is applied to Swedes among Swedes.

v. i Further Studies

One of the key points in the interviews about the implementation of the history syllabus in Lgr 11 is that there is a high degree of flexibility for teachers to decide methodology and focus. Therefore, while the analysis of Lgr 11’s history syllabus is critical of the lack of postcolonial perspectives, there are opportunities for teachers to work with postcolonial perspectives. Per Eliasson is currently working with a focus group teachers who are working in this manner. Further studies could work with the manner in which teachers have interpreted Lgr 11’s history syllabus regarding postcolonial perspectives.

Another area for further studies would be investigating the teacher education program in Sweden and when teachers are studying to be history teachers what are they taught. A cursory look at some programs’ required readings does not show much postcolonial focus. Some programs do have focus on women’s rights. The textbook highlighted in one of the interviews as key to students is a tome of over 1000 pages covering world history. Again a cursory look at the contents in the index of the textbook, *En samtidig världshistoria* (Sjöberg and Cassell 2014), shows that there is little focus on the accomplishments and struggles of a variety of postcolonial areas such as Vietnam, Syria, Algeria and Lebanon.
Postcolonialism does include a strong literary element that goes well with White’s understanding of literature. Further inquiries into the subjects of Swedish and English could reveal a place for postcolonial people’s interpolation. In addition, other subjects like Geography could focus on demographics and economic relations that lead to focus on conditions and histories from the postcolonial world.

Naturally, the students are the ones who will take the lessons of Lgr 11 with them into life. A survey of what they learned and their perspectives would be ideal to further add nuance to this paper. Their perspective on what was taught and how it was taught could add more information for further educators and creators of syllabi. Since Lgr 11 is a rather recent creation and educators modify their work over time, there may be more postcolonial perspectives included over time, most likely by individual teachers, but teachers communicate with each other and communicate via teacher publications which could inspire change.
References


Core content

**Teaching in social study subjects should deal with the following core content in years 1–3**

**Living together**
- Depictions of life before and now in children’s literature, songs and films, such as those depicting family life and school. Narratives of the past by people currently living.
- Moving within a country and between countries. What the causes and consequences of this may be.
- Life issues of importance for pupils, such as good and evil, right and wrong, friendship, gender roles, gender equality and relationships.
- Norms and rules in pupils’ living environments, such as in school and sports contexts.
- Traffic rules and how to act safely in traffic.

**Living in the neighbourhood**
- Conditions in nature and the environment for population and settlements, covering land, water and climate.
- History of the local area. What places in the neighbourhood, buildings and daily objects can tell us about children’s, women’s and men’s living conditions during different periods.
- The role of Christianity in the school and in the local area in the past.
- Religions and places of worship in the local area.
- Key functions of society, such as healthcare, emergency services and schools.
- Occupations and activities in the local area.

**Living in the world**
- The globe. The location of continents and oceans on the globe. Names and location of continents, and also countries and places of importance for pupils.
- Man’s origins, migration, hunting and gathering, and the introduction of agriculture.
- Different ages, the Stone Age, Bronze Age, and Iron Age.
- How the past can be observed in our own time through relics in nature and language expressions.
- Narratives about gods and heroes in ancient and Nordic mythology and how these can be looked at from a contemporary perspective.
• Some ceremonies, symbols and narratives in Christianity, Islam and Judaism. Some narratives from the Bible and their meaning, and also some of the most common psalms.

• Environmental issues in relation to pupils’ everyday life, such as those involving traffic, energy and food.

• Basic human rights such as the equality of all people and also the rights of the child as laid down in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

• How meetings, such as class councils, are organised and carried out.

• Money, its use and value. Examples of different types of payment and what ordinary goods and services can cost.

• Current social questions in different media.

**Exploring reality**

• Methods of searching for information from different sources: interviews, observations and measurements. How sources and information can be assessed and processed.

• Spatial understanding, using mental and physical maps of e.g. the neighbouring area and routes to school. Size relations and points of the compass, spatial concepts, such as place, location and borders.

• Timelines and time concepts – the past, present and future.

**Teaching in history should deal with the following core content**

**In years 4–6**

*About ancient times and the Middle Ages, up to about 1500*

• Population of the Nordic area. The main characteristics of the Stone Age, the Bronze Age, and the Iron Age.

• Cultural interchange between the Nordic area and Europe and other parts of the world through increased trade and migration, such as the explorations of the Vikings and trading systems in the Middle Ages.

• The evolution of the Nordic countries.

• Introduction of Christianity in the Nordic area. The importance of religion for cultures and states in Sweden and the other Nordic countries, as well as the consequences of these changes for different people and groups.

• Some European voyages of discovery, their importance and consequences.

• What archaeological finds, such as coins and artefacts from other cultures can tell us about encounters between cultures, and about similarities and differences in the living conditions of children, women and men.

*The Nordic area and the Baltic Sea region, Sweden, about 1500–1700*

• Participation of the Nordic area and the Baltic Sea region in global exchange, such as trade in goods, language and culture.

• The emergence of the Swedish state and its organisation.
• Sweden’s Baltic Kingdom. Reasons for its occurrence and the impact on different people and groups around the Baltic Sea. Migration to and from and within Sweden.

• The Reformation and its consequences on Sweden and the rest of Europe.

• What historical sources, such as letters and other documents, can tell us about similarities and differences in the living conditions of children, women and men compared with today.

**Increased exchange and the transformation of agriculture, about 1700–1850**

• Economic and cultural global exchange between Sweden and the Nordic area through such forms as exports of iron and travel to Asia.

• Transformation of agriculture and its impact on people.

• Major increases in population, their causes and consequences for different people and groups.

• The emergence of parliamentarianism, the party system and new laws in Sweden.

• What historical sources, such as diaries and archives can tell us about Sweden’s history and about similarities and differences in living conditions for children, women and men.

**How history and historical concepts are used**

• Examples of how Antiquity, the Middle Ages, the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries can be viewed from the perspective of our own times through traditions, names, language expressions, buildings, towns and borders.

• How historical persons and events, such as Queen Kristina, Karl XII and the trials of witches, have been presented in different ways through different interpretations and different time periods.

• What the following concepts mean - change, similarities and differences, chronology, cause and consequence, sources and interpretation, and how they are used in historical contexts.

• Historical concepts of time: the Viking Age, the Middle Ages, Sweden as a great power and the Age of Liberty, and also different views on their importance.

**Teaching in history should deal with the following core content**

**In years 7–9**

**Ancient civilisations, from prehistory to around 1700**

• Comparisons between the emergence and development of some leading cultures up to the 18th-century, such as those in Africa, America and Asia.

• Antiquity, its characteristic features as an epoch and their importance in understanding our own age.

• What historical sources from some leading cultures, such as in Asia or America, can tell us about similarities and differences in the living conditions of children, women and men.
Industrialisation, social change and leading ideas, about 1700–1900

- Increasing world trade between Europe, Asia, Africa and America.
- Industrialisation in Europe and Sweden. Various historical explanations for industrialisation, as well as the implications for different social groups and people’s standards of living in Sweden, the Nordic area, Europe and some other parts of the world. Migration within and between countries.
- Revolutions and the emergence of new ideas, new classes in society and political ideologies.
- What historical sources can tell us about the efforts of people and groups to influence and improve their own living conditions and those of others, such as through inventions, the formation of trade unions and the struggle against slavery.

Imperialism and world wars, about 1800–1950

- European dominance, imperialism and colonialism.
- Nationalism and different forms of democracy and dictatorships in Europe and in other parts of the world.
- Both world wars, their causes and consequences. Oppression, displacement of people and genocide. The Holocaust and the Gulag.
- Historical narratives from different parts of the world depicting people’s experiences of oppression, such as through colonialism, racism or totalitarian dictatorships and resistance to these.

Democratisation, the post-war period and globalisation, from around 1900 to the present

- Democratisation in Sweden. The formation of political parties, new social movements, such as the women’s movement, and the struggle for universal suffrage for women and men. Continuity and change in views on gender, equality and sexuality.
- The emergence of the Swedish welfare state.
- Historical perspectives on indigenous Sami and the position of other national minorities in Sweden.
- Cold War conflicts, the disintegration of the Soviet Union and new power relationships in the world.
- The UN, Nordic cooperation and the emergence of the European Union (EU).
- Current conflicts in the world and historical perspectives on these.
- How historical sources and narratives about a family’s or relative’s history reflect overall changes in people’s living conditions.
Transcription of Interview with Kenneth Nordgren, one of the creators of the History syllabus for Lgr 11

Erik Ryberg. What is your background with history?

Kenneth Nordgren: I have a PhD in Pedagogic Work with a history didactic focus. Also lektor in history in art history.

E: When you created Lgr 11 did you guys feel that there was anything missing that you would have liked to have had added or felt was pretty necessary?

K: It was a couple years ago now. I don’t think that any of the material is missing. The problem with a syllabus like the one we have in history now is the advantage is that there is some content pointed out. There is always a problem when the syllabus is prescribing what the teachers should teach. I think one of the problems with the syllabus is that there is too much content, so many aspects that a teacher can interpret the syllabus as very content-focused. The bigger problem is not that a time period is missing, but rather that perspectives could be left out. One can say that the entire history content is still quite Eurocentric, the focus is on Swedish history. If you look at 7-9 grades, the focus is on Europe. One could wish for a broader international focus. But it was more about writing from perspectives which became a problem for us. We couldn’t write for teachers how they should work with the content though. We had many discussions about how to deal with perspective. The perspectives leads to methods and that was strictly forbidden by Skolverket. So we came up with migration and culture meetings as perspectives that could be followed through history. If you look at prehistoric to 1700, I am afraid that many teachers would interpret this as a traditional history from antiquity as West Civilization’s origins. Really we wanted to lay focus on European and outlying areas’ perspectives. How Europe met the rest of the world, but it is difficult to write that. To write a syllabus that clearly states that studies should be made of perspectives outside Europe and another perspective that highlights international migration movements, migration’s meaning to historical development, could be wished to be brought to the fore of Lgr 11 more clearly.

E: Why is there so much focus on migration?

K: There was one way of dealing with this. If you look at 4-6 you can see more culture meeting. Culture meeting and migration were the two concepts we used to allow teachers to have a more inter-cultural history course. It is easier to study history as a .... The sedentary person, situated geographically and homogenous, like Sumerians, in a geopolitical grouping. You Migrations and culture meetings were anomalies that do not go well with this idea. Instead you get a bad idea that people were like this, when they moved around and that is important to history. We wanted to lay focus on that, migration.

E: You said it, it is still pretty eurocentric, but there are a few bullet points where people should talk about life or situations in Asia, the Americas or Africa. What was the thought about what students should understand about those areas?

K: Again, it isn’t the syllabus that is supposed to say which aspects are to be brought up, but there is room for the teacher to work independently. But again, you can look at Africa, Asia and America that have aspects that are important. You need to get an understanding. There is a historical, economic and political development that goes way back than before the European development that would show that there were parts of the world untouched
by Europe, that affect and were affected by Europe. They should see an independent historical development, that later has a relation to European development.

E: How will different teachers be able to teach or have knowledge or understanding about these different aspects of Africa, the Americas or Asia. Is there any part of the teacher program or continuing education requirements for history teachers that requires they come into contact with elements or parts of civilizations?

K: You could say when we discuss grades 1-4, teachers read few points in history so we made the decision to concentrate those levels on Swedish and Nordic history so teachers could deepen their knowledge. Thought to focus on the geographic area closest to the children, the thought was that that would open up aspects of Swedish history and point out elements of migration, culture meetings and internationalism. Since Sweden is a part of the world, but focused on the nearby geographic area. From middle school, teachers study more history, so we had not checked what teachers study even though we have a pretty good knowledge of that. Generally, they have less knowledge of Africa, Americas and Asia than Europe’s history. On the other hand, within the syllabus one could focus on those areas. Teacher candidates and teacher knowledge was not a factor in what the content of the middle school syllabus contained.

E: So a student from Lebanon or Chile, it could be possible that maybe they don’t cover too much of elements of their culture, identity. It depends on what is decided by the teacher.

K: Yes. As I remember, we didn’t succeed in answering those types of questions because it draws from methodology. Because then we would prescribe how teachers should work with the content. We couldn’t say that it would be a good idea for the teachers to address the content towards where the pupils come from.

E: Your thought was teachers have the independence to decide what content to focus on and use the lens of migration and cultural migrations.

K: Yes those were the tools we could give them to use with the frame of the syllabus. Main content is eurocentric. Syllabus is not giving a theoretical perspective, it possibly does allow a teacher to have a postcolonial perspective or a liberal perspective if they do desire. We could not tell them what perspective to take in teaching.

E: I wonder if the teaching school doesn’t bring up postcolonialism or gender, then the teacher may teach for however many years and never cover that. I just wonder if students from different parts of the world or gender identities, if they miss out on elements of their identity or aspects they may choose as part of their identity are never covered if that has a negative effect on the student or if they feel that history doesn’t have so much meaning for them or they weren’t a part of history.

K: It could be possible to prescribe that the teacher should deal with the students’ life.

E: If you were to cover gender, women’s history or homosexual history at some point in the nine years of compulsory school in a way maybe that would touch on students who identify with those histories as well. I can understand how it would be impossible to cover a history of anyone.
K: Yes, that is impossible, but there is always the possibility to clearly put forward that the teacher should take the students’ values as a teaching point instead of writing and saying teachers must cover particular areas. Instead teachers could be told to cover values and experiences that the students have. We were not allowed to write that.

E: Is that what Skolverket said or more of an internal decision?

K: As I remember that was within Skolverket’s frame. There should not be any aspects of methodology.

E: You have, regarding Sweden anyway, there is one saying “continuity and change in views on gender equality and sexuality” were supposed to be covered so perhaps in a way even if its supposed to be focusing on the situation in Sweden regarding gender and sexuality there are chances there. I think it would depend on the teacher’s interpretation, “Do we compare and contrast with another area, another time, or…” So with methodology and Skolverket saying you cannot go to a museum and use archives or what did they mean with methodology?

K: There is a short distance between “what” and “how”. So it is not very clear cut where one thing does over the other. It can mean going to the archives as well as telling the teacher they need to cover a particular perspective. “You will work with students’ own historical background, like ancestry so students can see where they come from.” This would allow for covering migration within a classroom’s background and we couldn’t do that.

Erik: That’s up to the teacher.

Kenneth: It’s not possible to prescribe that.

E: How History can be used to create a sense of community such as in families, societies, organizations and companies. Why was companies added?

K: I am not 100% sure. I guess there was a friend with entrepreneurial learning. In the syllabus there were many perspectives that need to be melted together. There are aspects of genus, entrepreneurial learning and general learning that need to be in a syllabus. Perhaps this is one where entrepreneurial learning were addressed. You can also see there are families, societies and organizations so there is a logic there. The main thing here is the use of history. The use of history in here is how history is used to strengthen a sense of community. If you look into a business company, like Volvo for instance, you can see companies have logos, create a history about themselves, even big transnational companies build their own history and that’s actually an important aspect of what history is. There is some logic in that.