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Citation for the original published paper (version of record):

Åström Elmersjö, H. (2016)

Negotiating the Nation in History: The Swedish State Approval Scheme for Textbooks and Teaching Aids from 1945 to 1983.

Journal of Educational Media, Memory and Society, 8(2): 16-35

<https://doi.org/10.3167/jemms.2016.080202>

Access to the published version may require subscription.

N.B. When citing this work, cite the original published paper.

Permanent link to this version:

<http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:umu:diva-126780>

Negotiating the Nation in History

The Swedish State Approval Scheme for Textbooks and Teaching Aids from 1945 to 1983

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Abstract • This article explores the discussions concerning history textbooks that occurred within the Swedish State Approval Scheme for Textbooks (*Statens läroboksnämnd*) from 1945 to 1983. By focusing on the negotiation of nationhood and the process of textbook approval as an arena for the renegotiation of ways in which history was taught in schools, the article reveals that nationalistic sentiment associated with the historical discipline was challenged by intercultural and materialist discourses during the period under examination. However, much of the debate within the State Approval Scheme for Textbooks indicates that an ethnic nationalist discourse and competing discourses introduced in new syllabi for history education after 1945 tended to converge.

Keywords • education, history textbooks, nation, negotiation, textbook approval

Introduction

The construction of national historical narratives has long been considered coincident with the rise of nationalism, and the institutionalization of historical scholarship is at the heart of this construction.¹ It has also been asserted that national narratives survived for an extended time in schools, even after scholars had begun to question their validity.² Methodological nationalism—

the unreflective containment of scholarly inquiry within the borders of the nation—has been viewed as one of the main reproductive features of the nation as an entity, reconfiguring the nation rather than demolishing it in the age of globalization.³ Following the moral bankruptcy of ethnic nationalism in the wake of the Second World War, and the rise of education for democratic citizenship in most western European countries, history education in general and nationalistic history education in particular were questioned.⁴ The same doubts had arisen in the interwar period, but these were not maintained as they were after the Second World War.⁵

The topic of this article is the discussions regarding the nation and its history that occurred as components of debates about history textbooks under consideration for use in Swedish schools between the Second World War and the mid-1980s. These discussions will be related to notions about citizenship and identity found in curricula and syllabi for history teaching during this time period in an effort to investigate the negotiation of these concepts and to demonstrate the effects of the introduction of “new” discourses into the debate over education in general, and history education in particular.

The Swedish Textbook Approval Scheme for Textbooks and Teaching Aids (*Statens läroboksnämnd* and later *Läromedelsnämnden*) was introduced in 1938 as part of the centralization of education during the first part of the twentieth century. Central authorization of textbooks ceased in 1983, and the process of governmental examination of textbooks was completely abandoned in 1991, at least in part as a step toward decentralization. Between 1938 and 1974, the approval scheme reviewed all textbooks that were to be used in schools. From 1974, only textbooks in the social studies subjects (civics, geography, history, and religious studies) that were perceived as central for the teaching of these subjects were scrutinized. The approval scheme operated under its own authority between 1948 and 1974. Before 1948 and

after 1974 it operated under the authority of the Swedish National Board of Education (*Skolöverstyrelsen*). The approval board was mandated to review textbooks for possible approval, taking into account their objectivity, compliance with current curricula and syllabi, physical appearance, content outline, and price.⁶ After 1974, only objectivity and compliance with curricula and syllabi remained as criteria. Because the approval system coincided with the Cold War, and since Sweden was a neutral country, many of the discussions about international matters concerned the depictions of the Soviet Union and the United States.⁷

This system of approval was, of course, ideological and acted as a limitation on the free market. However, governmental control was limited to the final step of approval, and the textbooks were written and published under the auspices of private or state-owned publishing houses.⁸ The approval scheme was changed considerably in 1983; the board was moved to the State Institute for Textbook Information (*Statens institut för läromedelsinformation*) and the textbooks were no longer approved or rejected. Instead, the institute acted somewhat like a consumer service by reviewing textbooks with the aim of helping teachers to choose “well-adjusted” textbooks.⁹

Theoretical Framework

Debating the content of history textbooks in relation to syllabi, objectivity, and general narrative structure is a discursive activity. It includes negotiation and contestation about rival narratives and different conceptions of history, history teaching and learning. I invoke the term *negotiation* to highlight “a highly complex structure of positions and relations, which, in spite of its complexity, is moving, evolving, changing.”¹⁰ This means three things that are of importance here. First, negotiation implies a conflict, and relative positions in conflicts reflect power

relations. Second, multiple positions are possible, whereby negotiations are not necessarily bipolar. Third, positions are not fixed, but instead change and evolve as a consequence of negotiation.¹¹

There are several reasons to direct close attention to the concept of “nation” in the study of history. One can, for example, identify two starkly different ways of conceptualizing the nation in relation to its own history, and this has repercussions for how historical responsibility is ascribed. The nation can be viewed as a political community, and therefore as a political actor, with responsibility across generations.¹² However, when the nation is treated as a cultural community, it is not possible to extend responsibility beyond the ethnic group, and because ethnic groups are difficult to define, this is an undertaking that is permeated with ideology.¹³ Questions regarding who belongs to which group, and in what way the history of a group is also the history of its individual members, defy definitive answers. It is worth noting that “the people” (*folk*) is a problematic discursive construct in relation to the nation. “People” in this context can connote any one of a number of different types of collectives, including an ethnic group (*ethnos*), the (free) citizens of a state (*demos*), or even the extension of a socio-economic group. Especially in the Nordic countries, “people” has been used as an extended and inclusive class-based construction by which workers and/or farmers constitute the core of “the people.”¹⁴ The definition of the concept of “people” is also at the heart of different definitions of nations as either cultural communities (*ethnos*) or political ones (*demos*).¹⁵

In this article, the “history textbook arena” is considered to be an order of discourse, that is, “the ordered set of discursive practices associated with a particular social domain . . . and boundaries and relationships between them.”¹⁶ Hence, what it is possible to say in a textbook is limited by the order of discourse related to textbooks, which in turn relates to what is regarded as

common sense or *official knowledge*.¹⁷ Within the order of discourse, different sets of discourses are practiced. During the twentieth century, the domination of the nationalist discourse was challenged by other discourses, with the democratic discourse being most frequently studied.¹⁸ However, there were also challenges from materialistic, multiperspectivist, global, and intercultural discourses.¹⁹ The fundamental question addressed in this article is: how did the discourse of citizenship change between 1945 and 1983 in state approval discussions regarding history textbooks? The secondary question is: how did the introduction of “new” discourses, and the challenge they presented to old ways of conceiving history, change the relation of history education to the construct of the nation in these discussions?

With respect to methodology, this article is not primarily concerned with the interaction between the context of formulation (curricula) and the context of realization (the approval scheme) because both of these arenas are equally important and related to each other as part of the negotiation of citizenship and identity on a societal level. In other words, I am not interested in whether or not the discussions in one arena fitted the discussions in the other. I regard both arenas as a whole, in which different conceptions could influence discussions in different ways and lead to new official knowledge in relation to how pupils were to conceive of themselves and their place in society.

All textbook reviews commissioned by the state approval scheme between 1938 and 1991 are housed in the Swedish National Archives. Because the reviews of history textbooks are scattered throughout this archive, it has only been possible to examine some of them. I have inspected reviews from 1945 to 1961 (where reviews of history textbooks were extracted and easier to access), 1967, 1971, 1976, and 1982 to 1983. Because the reviews completed after 1961 are filed according to the dates of the meetings at which they were discussed, reviews sometimes

date from previous years. The years represented in this investigation were selected with reference to years in which new syllabi were adopted (1965, 1969, 1970, 1980, and 1981) and thus the possibility of new textbooks being reviewed in connection with these new guideline documents. In order to accommodate the need for a more even temporal distribution, the year 1976 was also included.

Citizenship and the Nation in Swedish History Curricula and Syllabi

The history syllabi in effect for Swedish secondary schools (*realskola* and *gymnasium*) and primary schools (*folkskola*) at the end of the Second World War state that “awakening love for one’s country” was among the primary aims of history education. A second objective, which should probably be regarded as part of the first, was to “lay the foundation for virtuous citizenship.” The means of reaching that goal was to make the history of the state the “backbone of the historical accounts” upon which teaching was based.²⁰ This also meant that history was to be taught by using the virtues of historical individuals as examples.²¹ A new trajectory for school in general was set forward by the major government inquiry (*1946 års skolkommision*) into how schools were to be organized after the war, which delivered its conclusions in 1948.²²

By the middle of the 1950s, the idea of nationhood as the direct aim of history education had disappeared from the syllabus for history and civics. In the lower secondary school (*realskola*) the clear notion of a collective remained, and the only logical inference was that it was the nation to which that collective referred, though this was not explicitly stated. The words “people,” “ancestral,” and “change” were the focal point of the description of the subject, as well as “everyone’s concerted efforts.”²³ Similar ideas were advanced in the new curricula, syllabi, and methodological instructions for primary school.²⁴ This also entailed weaker emphasis in

history education on achievements of individuals, and a reduction in the number of dates and names pupils were expected to learn.

In the syllabus for the upper secondary school, history was a subject whose aim was “broadening and deepening the pupils’ insights into matters of Swedish and general history, especially circumstances of great importance for the culture and social life in our own time.”²⁵ The intent of history education was also broadened to include aspects of what might be called historical thinking.²⁶ In 1956 a more comprehensive syllabus for teaching history in the upper secondary school was issued. Its aim was described as “making a substantial effort to foster citizens in a free and just society governed by the rule of law, and to contribute to international understanding.”²⁷ The foundations of European cultural development were also highlighted in the 1956 syllabus.²⁸

During the 1960s, two new syllabi were introduced for the new, nine-year primary compulsory school (*grundskola*), one in 1962 and another in 1969. Still, the main protagonist in history was described as “our people,” but this was no longer accompanied by other expressions of collective identity.²⁹ National rhetoric was toned down while the primary historical actor became a people, specifically the people who lived in what had become Sweden.

The upper secondary schools in Sweden were brought under the direction of a common organization in the mid-1960s. Its first history syllabus was issued in 1965, and the focus of that document was on understanding the world and international relations.³⁰ The syllabus presented with the new curriculum for the upper secondary schools in 1970 was a replica of that from 1965,³¹ and it took until 1981 before this rather rudimentary syllabus was expanded into a more comprehensive guide for teachers of history. Included in the new syllabus from 1981 was an acknowledgement that history is not free of values and that it is likely to be used as propaganda.

Furthermore, the conceptualization of history from the local, via the national and European, to the world scale was reversed. It was now supposed to be studied from the perspectives of the world, Europe, Scandinavia, and finally the local arena. The nation was actually excluded from this hierarchy of organization, but was then elaborated upon in the description of how history on different scales was to be approached. “Sweden’s, Scandinavia’s and Europe’s history must be fitted into global events as much as possible.”³² There was no mention of citizenship in the new syllabus for the 1980s. Instead it was pointed out that history education should focus on different cultures and that skills and abilities to understand history are more related to the different needs of individuals. “The pupil should . . . be given the opportunity to experience knowledge and skills [associated with history] as personally important when understanding the background to conditions experienced in the close proximity of the pupil and on a larger societal scale.”³³

The new curriculum and history syllabus for the nine-year compulsory school from 1980 no longer listed history as a separate subject. Instead, history was called “the time-perspective of human activity” and was to be taught as a component of social studies. Although solidarity, equality, understanding, and respect were vital concepts, it was nevertheless clear that social studies instruction was directed at augmenting pupils’ awareness of their places in time and space, by “understanding themselves within a larger context.”³⁴ While placing the self in a larger context might be considered a collective endeavor, the context of this exercise was not explicit, and there was no mention of understanding society within a larger perspective. It was, rather, clearly about the individual. The first item in the syllabus for “Human Activity—The Time Perspective” was “my own history.” “Our country” and “Sweden” were mentioned, but it was not the history of the nation that was in the foreground. It was, instead, the history of the individual, within society.³⁵

The changes in the aim of history education and its relation to citizenship and collectivity shifted from the national project of the interwar period to the era of the individual of the 1980s via an elaborate supranational or transnational history education focusing on the understanding of human differences. There was also a change from an education based in the virtues and accomplishments of individuals to one founded on the virtues, accomplishments, and everyday lives of “the people.” This was a rather rapid change of emphasis, and it is certainly questionable whether it was accompanied by corresponding changes in textbooks and, of greater relevance for this article, if corresponding discussions of textbooks occurred as they were brought up for approval by the State Approval Scheme for Textbooks and Teaching Aids.

Previous research on the negotiated features of the syllabi for history teaching in Sweden has shown that teachers were not always content with changes of direction after the Second World War, and teachers were, in a sense, obstacles to changing how history was taught. However, this research also shows that teachers took active roles not only in interpreting curricula and syllabi, but also in their construction, which underlines the negotiated features of maintaining and changing educational structures.³⁶

Negotiating the Nation in History Textbooks

For textbook authors and government textbook reviewers, the most important changes in ideas about history education after World War II were probably the focus on social and economic factors at the expense of traditional political history and the reduced emphasis on learning names and dates. A general observation regarding many textbook reviews was that their authors appear to have broadly interpreted the mandate under which they were working. Even if they were instructed where and how to direct their comments,³⁷ reviewers took considerable initiative in

reaching beyond the curricula and syllabi and employing their own knowledge and experience in regard to how history should be taught and—as a consequence—how history textbooks should be written.³⁸ This points to the negotiated nature of the approval scheme. Reviewers used their mandate as supervisors to ensure compliance with the approval board's directives, but they also invoked their mandate to advance their own notions of effective history teaching, which were sometimes in line with the directives, but based on their own conceptions of history as part of their interpretation of those directives.

From the History of Kings and Queens to Social History

Over the years Swedish textbook authors had created a canon of individuals and dates that were considered foundational to the study of both Swedish and general history. When the quantity of this sort of subject matter diminished in accordance with changes in the guiding documents, the question of who goes and who stays was naturally debated. This was the topic of many reviews in which reviewers struggled to acknowledge the choices made by textbook authors. During the 1940s and 1950s a related debate occurred among history teachers and scholars about the necessity of personalizing history by tying historical narratives to individuals, especially when teaching history to small children.³⁹ There seems to have been an agreement that history teaching that focused on individuals was problematic if it failed to elucidate structural causes of historical change, but this might nevertheless be the best way to teach history to younger children. Admiration for great human personalities was even viewed as a natural propensity of children.⁴⁰

While textbook reviewers often commented favorably on reducing the number of names pupils were expected to learn, they were seldom in agreement with the authors on which names should be excluded. Examination of these reviews reveals the difficulty textbook authors faced in attempting to resolve this dilemma, as complaints about omissions of purportedly important

names, along with admonitions about the excessive use of names overall, frequently appeared in the reviews.⁴¹ In some instances textbooks referred to individuals but not their names, which reviewers criticized as a misinterpretation of the directives in this regard. Instead of steering history education toward structural explanations, textbooks continued to focus on individuals, only without their explicit names being mentioned.⁴²

One way of minimizing the need for exact dates in general history taught in secondary school, which was favored by reviewers, was to juxtapose events in European history (and, more rarely, in Asian, African, and American history) to events in Swedish history with which pupils were presumed to be familiar.⁴³ This approach limited the number of particular dates and individuals pupils had to learn because they could compare historical events with other events without the need to specify precise dates. At a time when history was supposed to be seen as a global whole, this appeared to be a rational solution. However, this also meant that Swedish history was to occupy a certain amount of time and effort in the study of general, mostly European, but also global, history. It might also have contributed to the percolation of global history through a national filter, making the nation the conceptual frame of global events. The issue was still debated in reviews in the 1960s and 1970s.⁴⁴

In 1954 a new textbook for upper secondary history teaching was introduced.⁴⁵ It became one of the most widely used textbooks during the 1950s and 1960s and in 1957 it was in use in eighty-seven out of the 145 state grammar schools.⁴⁶ Instead of the usual lists of monarchs, the book ended with a few statistical tables dealing with demography and economics. This was in line with the new emphasis on economics and understanding of historical processes at the expense of dates, and the personality of kings and queens. However, when the book was reviewed within the state approval scheme, this change of emphasis was still questioned. “Why

not both?”⁴⁷ Regarding the more sparing invocation of precise dates and specific individuals, the reviewer advocated the inclusion of some names that were “usually” mentioned in textbooks. It was clearly not the names themselves that were at stake, but rather a traditional conception of Swedish history that was tied to these names. Changing who or what history was about was also about changing the nation.

Some of the reviewers were also teachers, who were accustomed to teaching history in a certain way, and they sometimes reviewed textbooks on the grounds of more personal preferences:

Why do we always see the development of society through the eyes of kings and the rulers? Couldn't you also see it through the eyes of the people? The social and economic consequences of the wars, as they were seen by farmers, are what this author is trying to explain. The labor issue and the major political antagonisms during the latter parts of the nineteenth century are dealt with in a commendable way.⁴⁸

This was, of course, in line with the new guiding documents, but it nevertheless appeared that the reviewer was not arguing with reference to the content of the syllabus but rather from a personal point of view. This review also highlighted the change in emphasis from kings and rulers to “the people.” Although the reviewer provided a substantial definition of “the people” (farmers and workers), not all reviewers did likewise. The debate over political history in relation to social history continued, but it did not appear as frequently in reviews during the 1960s and 1970s.⁴⁹

During the 1980s, textbook authors and reviewers seem to have been in agreement about the balance between political and social history.⁵⁰

If it remained possible during the 1950s and into the 1960s to get away with writing textbooks that did not heed syllabus directions by shifting focus away from kings and wars, such was not the case by the 1980s. The history syllabus for compulsory school from 1980 stated that history teaching should address “work and life, events and figures.”⁵¹ A textbook that focused excessively on the second part, events and figures, would attract criticism.⁵² However, a textbook that focused on traditional material while also challenging traditional interpretations and judgments associated with such subject matter did not satisfy reviewers. For instance, a much less nationalistic but individualistic history was rebuked by reviewers for not focusing on “the people.” One example includes a textbook for primary school, reviewed in the 1980s, that relentlessly questioned the heroic conception of Swedish kings and depicted wars with focus on their cruelty. The review did not affirm the anti-nationalistic sentiment or the questioning of the virtues of old Swedish war-kings, but instead criticized its person-oriented narrative.⁵³

The Nation in Nordic, European, and Global History

One challenge to amending the approaches of history textbooks, especially in the 1950s, was their intertextual connection to a textbook tradition. In many cases the same textbook had been used for decades, and the changes made between editions often consisted only of bringing the narrative “up to date” without changing anything in the depiction of older history.⁵⁴ Occasionally the reviewers pointed out to editors of newer editions of older textbooks of which the original author was deceased, that there had been more changes in the overall way of presenting historical events than was reflected in the alterations in those textbooks, especially regarding the expectations of incorporating multiple perspectives and transcending the nation as the primary

unit of analysis. By the 1950s it was, for instance, pointed out that it was problematic to invoke the notions of “our” Stone Age, or “the Swedish Stone Age,” when some of the regions of Sweden such as Jämtland and Härjedalen (Norwegian until 1645), Halland and Gotland (Danish until 1645), Bohuslän (Norwegian until 1658), and Skåne and Blekinge (Danish until 1658) had formerly been parts of other countries. However, the reviewers did not refute the idea of *any* nation during the Stone Age, but only that not all parts of contemporary Sweden could be considered to have experienced “the Swedish Stone Age.”⁵⁵ The reviewers advocated the inclusion of different perspectives on the history of these parts of Sweden, that is, a Danish or Norwegian perspective or, better still, a Nordic point of view designed to balance the Swedish one.

While the syllabus for history was made more international in the 1950s, with more emphasis being put on how the histories of different cultures were connected, the textbook authors could still get away with traditional writing. One reviewer writing about a textbook for primary school (for years four and five, or ten- and eleven-year-olds) claimed that “[t]he subject matter is arranged with Swedish and Nordic history of an era first, followed by a brief summary of general history in the same era.” This was also associated with “the traditional way of writing textbooks,”⁵⁶ and even though this was not entirely in accord with the syllabus, which directed incorporation of Swedish history into general history, it was nevertheless accepted by the reviewers. “This way of writing is nowadays widely accepted in history textbooks for primary school.”⁵⁷ By invoking the traditional way of writing textbooks, one of the intentions of the syllabus was partially circumvented. The reviewers apparently accepted this because they had difficulty conceiving of an alternative. “Any attempt to solve the problem [of writing a narrative

that incorporates Swedish history into a global frame] is associated with problems.”⁵⁸ By letting traditional textbooks set the standards, traditional history was conserved in schools.

The old, traditional history textbooks could thus get by on old merits, but as curricula and syllabi changed it became increasingly difficult for textbook reviewers to allow textbook authors’ archaic conceptions of history, and their outdated styles to continue. When the fifth printing of the thirty-second edition of the well-used “Odhner textbook,” originally written in 1869, was considered for approval almost one hundred years later,⁵⁹ the reviewer commented that it would have to be the final edition of this textbook, citing its antiquated way of conceptualizing the nation in relation to general history. However, his statements also made it clear that old textbooks, burdened with tradition, are difficult to let go of. “A history teacher who, like me, has had the joy of teaching with this textbook would be keen to give it a warm salute.”⁶⁰

Both authors and reviewers seemed to have trouble changing the history textbooks’ inclination to present Swedish history in the traditional way. Although syllabi and curricula called for the integration of all subject matter into either multiple stories told from multiple perspectives or to take an intercultural and global (in reality mostly European) approach to history, the ambiguity continued into the 1960s and 1970s. In 1967 one reviewer wrote, “It should be especially stressed that the subject matter about general history has been naturally fitted into our own people’s history in order to provide background and relief.”⁶¹ In this textbook, general history was to facilitate understanding of the national history and not the other way around—as the syllabus encouraged. Even when the focus was on the global perspective, the history of “our people” remained the centerpiece of history in textbooks, and reviewers for the state approval scheme often approved.

In 1969 the state approval scheme mandated that two historians examine textbooks for the new upper secondary school that was launched in the 1960s. Their results were reported in 1970 and demonstrate that the idea of a more integrated global perspective, which had been introduced in the syllabus of 1965, had not been represented in the textbooks in any substantial way. Instead, more than half of the subject matter on history after 1918 was classified as non-integrative in the sense that there was no evident effort to place the material in a global context. On the contrary, Swedish history was presented as nationally specific and in a context of its own.⁶² However, the textbook reviews might have had some effect. When one of the textbooks examined in 1969 was reissued, it had, according to one reviewer, dramatically increased the amount of integrated subject matter, setting historical events in a global context.⁶³ However, another reviewer, examining the second part of the same textbook, did not agree, stating that the textbook authors had failed to make the global perspective visible and only presented isolated events without links to the global level of analysis.⁶⁴

Materialist and Intercultural Challenges

The discursive challenge of shifting to a global perspective was accompanied by challenges from materialist and intercultural perspectives that might have engendered shifts away from the prior focus on wars and “colorful national fathers” and toward the centrality of “the people’s situation” and in particular the “life and work” of the people.⁶⁵ However, greater focus on democracy in education does not necessarily entail a reduction in nationalism, and it has been argued that nation and democracy go hand in hand, and perhaps this is especially so in the Nordic countries.⁶⁶

In textbooks for children of younger ages, the desire to narrate history in a way that includes the children themselves in the story became more prevalent, and this has been demonstrated in research.⁶⁷ This method has also been advanced by scholars of linguistics as one that enhances the readability of texts, especially for younger pupils, for whom connectivity—a narrative connection between the reader and the subject matter of the text—is essential in order to understand otherwise abstract material.⁶⁸ This connection between the pupil and the past, often achieved by projecting the modern nation onto history, was not considered problematic from the perspective of objectivity (which the state approval scheme had an obligation to value and ensure). For instance, in 1982 one reviewer observed that a textbook author had used the words “we” and “our country” to describe events that took place two or three thousand years ago. The reviewer criticized the use of the pronoun “we”—to mean “the Swedes”—in a specific context describing innovations such as the domestication of animals and the use of iron that were purportedly achieved on “our” own, without outside cultural influences. However, the reviewer did not object to the use of the words “we” and “our,” which indicated an ethnic connection between the reader (a child in the 1980s) and people who lived up to three thousand years ago. Instead it was the idea that these “Swedes” could be credited with advances independent of “help” from others (perhaps referring to other ethnic groups) that the reviewer found misleading.⁶⁹ Thus, this review also reified the notion of national or ethnic groups that were able to influence one another in an international setting, even during the Iron Age, clearly beyond the reach of the concept of “nation.” The challenge from the intercultural discourse was also incorporated into a national understanding of history, where the ethnic nation was a precondition for cultural exchange, and the pupils of Swedish schools were considered ethnic descendants of a particular “people.”

Coverage of the past two hundred years in the textbooks of the 1980s sometimes exhibited materialist sentiments that were detached from the notion of the ethnic nation. In these cases, the category of “the people” was, for example, described in terms of the labor movement.⁷⁰ However, letters to the state approval board also show that immigrant groups perceived themselves as effectively excluded from this “people,” and all popular movements were implicitly made up of one ethnic group,⁷¹ indirectly making democracy an ethnically distinctive struggle. The tendency to incorporate the history of “working people” or “ordinary people” into history syllabi and textbooks in the late twentieth century, without acknowledging the Marxist and/or feminist perspectives that produced the knowledge of this history, has been pointed out elsewhere.⁷² The failure to incorporate the theoretical implications associated with these perspectives might have facilitated the incorporation of these perspectives into the ethnic nationalistic discourse.

In one example from the 1980s a reviewer asks for a history of “the people” in her comments on the foreword of a textbook (where the authors state that they wished they could write a history without wars). “So why have [the authors] not cut back on the war stories and written more about the people’s lives?”⁷³ The history of “the people” seems not to have been about replacing the nationalistic narratives with other ones. It was not only about instilling new virtues that could be invoked in efforts toward peace education or the socialization of democratic citizens. Objections to the histories of kings and wars were also based on something more profound. The history of the state and its head was to be replaced by a history of a people. This people, when presented as the forebears of contemporary youth, was inescapably defined in ethnic terms as the Swedes. The head of a political community and his or her subjects—the

citizens of a state—were replaced as the protagonists of the narrative by a cultural community composed of the ancestors of, and virtuous role models for, modern children.

Some voices endeavored to limit the ethnification of the histories of peoples. In a review of a textbook from the 1970s, a reviewer employed Rurik's (c. 830–879) alleged involvement in the creation of “what eventually was called Russia” to make his point.⁷⁴ Rather than the textbook authors discussing Rurik himself (“strictly speaking, we don't even know if he really existed”⁷⁵), the reviewer would have preferred a focus on different peoples. However, he wanted to “tone down the role of the Swedes—or rather the Sweonas—in the founding of the Russian Empire.”⁷⁶ Even if the Sweonas were an ethnic group associated with the modern Swedes, this reviewer nevertheless favored efforts to create distance—rather than familiarity—between the school child of the 1970s and the people living in the ninth century by not calling those people Swedes.

Conclusions

Based on changes in the discussions of history textbooks among those involved in the Swedish approval scheme, one could argue that Swedish pupils have in fact been educated to participate in a more global citizenship. There are clear-cut examples of a less nationalistic tendency over time, with respect to the kind of citizens pupils should become.

However, there are also examples of lingering nationalistic sentiment revealed in the textbooks by reviewers, as well as reviewers who longed for the days when their national heroes had not been abandoned by textbook authors abiding by changes mandated by history syllabi. The negotiation of how history was to be presented, and what sort of citizenship was to be fostered, was complex. The approval scheme was not simply a matter of governmental authority ensuring adherence to what had already been decided. The negotiation process continued within

the textbook review process. Especially in the 1950s and 1960s, the traditional national narrative had a strong hold on the authors of textbooks and reviewers alike, and the changes made in curricula and syllabi were not readily incorporated into textbooks.

The new syllabi adopted after the Second World War also contained ambiguous descriptions of the relations between national and international history. While the latter was advocated, there were also tendencies to make citizenship more exclusive by introducing “the people” in a materialist and/or nationalistic sense in social and cultural histories. While the conceptualization of nationhood had been tied to individuals and their personalities, virtues, and heroics (mainly in association with war), social history now made way for a “people’s history.” While focusing on the state and the king might be called nationalistic, it carries the implication that a state is the primary protagonist, and not an ethnically defined national group. The narrative shift toward “the people”—a cultural community referred to with the pronoun “we”—was not only nationalistic, but also an expression of ethnic nationalism. What could be described as a materialist counter-narrative, or competing discourse, about the struggle of the people actually lent itself to an ethnic conception of the nation. This might not have been the point that each individual author or reviewer wished to make, but in the negotiation of the narrative of Swedish history education, the materialist approach can be conceived as having merged with its nationalistic counterpart. The same could also be said about the global and intercultural discourses advanced in guiding documents. In discussions about textbooks, these ideas seem to have been incorporated into a nationalistic discourse by making global history and intercultural exchange the “background and relief” for national history.

History education and citizen-based state nationalism must recognize the historical limitations of the “state” concept. There was no Swedish state during the Stone Age or the

Bronze Age, and Swedish states borders, once they came into existence, did not coincide with the borders of today until the nineteenth century. What is left of “Swedish history” is the history of “the people.” Moreover, as this article has shown, the state approval scheme and the textbooks that were scrutinized under it clearly opted to make history about an ethnicity rather than about the history of citizens in a state.

Teaching history is a group-making process, and the group that is made often comprises not citizens of a state but members of a perceived ethnic group that comes into possession of a nation-state. The shift toward the history of a people is easily turned into the history of an ethnic group, at least implicitly. In similar fashion to its German counterpart, as demonstrated in history textbooks there,⁷⁷ Swedish history education in the twentieth century implicitly advocates ethnic nationalism despite an outspoken foundation in constitutional state citizenship. The sense of belonging associated with history seems to have been made contingent on the perception of shared ethnicity.

Notes

1. See, for example, Georg Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century: From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1997), 23; Stefan Berger and Chris Lorenz, “Conclusion: Picking up the Threads,” in *The Contested Nation: Ethnicity, Class, Religion and Gender in National Histories*, ed. Stefan Berger and Chris Lorenz (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 531; Angelika Epple, “A Strained Relationship: Epistemology and Historiography in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Germany and Britain,” in *Nationalizing the Past: Historians as Nation Builders in Modern Europe*, ed. Stefan Berger and Chris Lorenz (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 86–106.

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2. See, for example, Yasemin Nuhoğlu Soysal and Hanna Schissler, “Teaching Beyond the National Narrative,” in *The Nation, Europe, and the World: Textbooks and Curricula in Transition*, ed. Yasemin Nuhoğlu Soysal and Hanna Schissler (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005), 2; Mario Carretero, *Constructing Patriotism: Teaching History and Memory in Global Worlds* (Charlotte, NC: IAP, 2011); Stuart Foster, “Re-Thinking History Textbooks in a Globalized World,” in *History Education and the Construction of National Identities*, ed. Mario Carretero, Mikel Asensio, and María Rodríguez-Moneo (Charlotte, NC: IAP, 2012), 51–52.
 3. Andreas Wimmer and Nina Glick Schiller, “Methodological Nationalism and Beyond: Nation-State Building, Migration and the Social Sciences,” *Global Networks* 2, no.4 (2002): 301–334. See also Peter Carrier, “Introduction,” in *School and Nation: Identity Politics and Educational Media in an Age of Diversity*, ed. Peter Carrier (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2013), 7–8.
 4. See, for example, Thomas Bender, ed., *Rethinking American History in a Global Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002). As for the Swedish condition, see Ulf Zander, “Från nationell till demokratisk överideologi eller berättelsen om samhällskunskapens uppgång och historieämnets fall” [From national to democratic ideology or the story about the rise of civics and the decline of history education], *Utbildning & Demokrati* 6, no. 2 (1997): 21–51.
 5. See, for example, Christophe Bechet, “La révision pacifiste des manuels scolaires: Les enjeux de la mémoire de la guerre 14–18 dans l’enseignement belge de l’Entre-deux-guerres,” *Cahier d’Histoire du Temps Présent* 20 (2008): 49–101; Ingela Nilsson, *Nationalism i fredens tjänst: Svenska skolornas fredsförening, fredsfostran och historieundervisning 1919–1939* [Nationalism in the service of peace: The Swedish School Peace League, peace education, and history teaching, 1919–1939] (Umeå: Umeå University, 2015).

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6. See the regulation of the approval scheme: SFS 1938:630, § 4; Anna Johnsson Harrie, *Staten och läromedlen: En studie av den svenska statliga förhandsgranskningen av läromedel 1938–1991* [The state and the textbook: The state approval scheme for textbooks and teaching aids in Sweden 1938–1991] (Linköping: Linköping University, 2009).
 7. Janne Holmén, *Den politiska läroboken: Bilden av USA och Sovjetunionen i norska, svenska och finländska läroböcker under Kalla kriget* [The political textbook: Images of the USA and the Soviet Union in Norwegian, Swedish, and Finnish textbooks during the Cold War] (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 2006).
 8. Harrie, *Staten och läromedlen*. Compare with Joanna Wojdon, “The System of Textbook Approval in Poland under Communist Rule (1944–1989) as a Tool of Power of the Regime,” *Paedagogica Historica* 51, nos. 1–2 (2015): 181–196.
 9. Harrie, *Staten och läromedlen*, 13.
 10. Helge Jordheim, “Negotiating Negotiations: Theorising a Concept—Conceptualising Theory,” in *Negotiating Pasts in the Nordic Countries: Interdisciplinary Studies in History and Memory*, ed. Anne Eriksen and Jón Viðar Sigurðsson (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2009), 15.
 11. *Ibid.*, 21.
 12. Janna Thompson, *Taking Responsibility for the Past: Reparation and Historical Justice* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002).
 13. Jan Löfström, “Historical Apologies as Acts of Symbolic Inclusion—and Exclusion? Reflections on Institutional Apologies as Politics of Cultural Citizenship,” *Citizenship Studies* 15, no. 1 (2011): 93–108; Rogers Brubaker, “Ethnicity without Groups,” *Archives Européennes de Sociologie* 43, no. 2 (2002): 163–189.

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14. See, for example, Øystein Sørensen and Bo Stråth, “Introduction: The Cultural Construction of Norden,” in *The Cultural Construction of Norden*, ed. Øystein Sørensen and Bo Stråth (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1997), 8.
15. See Lars Trägårdh, *The Concept of the People and the Construction of Popular Culture in Germany and Sweden* (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1996), 57.
16. Norman Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language* (London: Longman, 1995), 12. This definition is attributed to Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality* (London: Penguin, 1981).
17. Michael Apple, *Official Knowledge: Democratic Education in a Conservative Age* (London: Routledge, 2000).
18. See, for example, Zander, “Från nationell.”
19. See, for example, Sven Sødtring Jensen, *Historieundervisningsteori* [Theory of history teaching] (Copenhagen: Christian Ejlers’ forlag, 1978); William E. Marsden, *The School Textbook: Geography, History, and Social Studies* (London: Routledge, 2001); Thomas Nygren, *History in the Service of Mankind: International Guidelines and History Education in Upper Secondary Schools in Sweden, 1927–2002* (Umeå: Umeå University, 2011); Harry Haue, “Transformation of History Textbooks from National Monument to Global Agent,” *Nordidactica* 3, no. 1 (2013): 80–89.
20. *Metodiska anvisningar till undervisningsplanen för rikets allmänna läroverk* [Syllabi for the state grammar schools] (Stockholm: Skolöverstyrelsen, 1935), 108–109. All translations in this article are my own unless otherwise indicated.

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21. *Undervisningsplan för rikets folkskolor den 31 oktober 1919* [Curricula for primary school 1919] (Stockholm: Norstedts 1919), 106. See also Zander, “Från nationell.”
22. SOU 1948:27, *1946 års skolkommissions betänkande med förslag till riktlinjer för det svenska skolväsendets utveckling* [Report by the school commission of 1946, with suggestions for the development of the Swedish school system] (Stockholm: Ecklesiastikdepartementet, 1948); Waldemar Lendin, *Studieplan i historia för 7:e–9:e skolåren vid pedagogisk försöksverksamhet i överensstämmelse med beslut av 1950 års Riksdag* [Syllabus for history year 7–9 in trial schools as decided by parliament in 1950] (Stockholm: Hugo Gebers Förlag, 1952).
23. *Kursplaner och metodiska anvisningar för realskolan* [Syllabi and methodological instructions for lower secondary school (*Realskola*)] (Stockholm: Skolöverstyrelsen, 1955), 103.
24. *Undervisningsplan för rikets folkskolor den 22 januari 1955* [Curricula for primary school 1955] (Stockholm: Skolöverstyrelsen, 1955), 97.
25. “Kursplaner för gymnasiet i de allmänna läroverken: Historia med samhällslära” [Syllabi for the upper secondary school within the state grammar schools: History with civics], *Aktuellt från Skolöverstyrelsen* 7, no. 14 (1954): 173.
26. See, for example, Sam Wineburg, *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts: Charting the Future of Teaching the Past* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001); Stéphane Lévesque, *Thinking Historically: Educating Students for the Twenty-first Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008).
27. “Metodiska anvisningar för undervisningen i modersmålet och historia med samhällslära i gymnasiet” [Methodological instructions for teaching Swedish and History with civics in upper secondary school], *Aktuellt från Skolöverstyrelsen* 9, no. 19 (1956): 289. See also Göran Andolf,

Historien på gymnasiet: Undervisning och läroböcker 1820–1965 [History in upper secondary schools: Teaching and textbooks 1820–1965] (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1972), 91.

28. “Metodiska anvisningar för undervisningen i modersmålet och historia med samhällslära i gymnasiet,” 288. See also Thomas Nygren, “International Reformation of Swedish History Education, 1927–1961: The Complexity of Implementing International Understanding,” *Journal of World History* 22, no. 2 (2011): 342.

29. *Läroplan för grundskolan, Lgr 62* [Curriculum for compulsory school] (Stockholm: Skolöverstyrelsen, 1962), 252; *Läroplan för grundskolan: Allmän del, Lgr 69* [Curriculum for compulsory school: general part] (Stockholm: Skolöverstyrelsen, 1969), 184.

30. *Läroplan för gymnasiet Lgy 65* [Curriculum for upper secondary school] (Stockholm: Skolöverstyrelsen, 1965), 177–196.

31. “Historia” in Supplement II of *Läroplan för gymnasieskolan Lgy 70* [Curriculum for upper secondary school] (Stockholm: Skolöverstyrelsen, 1970), 287–299.

32. “Historia: Supplement II,” in *Läroplan för gymnasieskolan Lgy 70* [Curriculum for upper secondary school] (Stockholm: Skolöverstyrelsen, 1981), 11.

33. *Ibid.*, 6.

34. *Läroplan för grundskolan: Allmän del, Lgr 80* [Curriculum for compulsory school: general part] (Stockholm: Skolöverstyrelsen, 1980), 119–120.

35. *Ibid.*, 124–125.

36. Thomas Nygren, “The Contemporary Turn: Debate, Curricula, and Swedish Students’ History,” *Journal of Educational Media, Memory, and Society* 4, no. 1 (2012): 40–60.

37. Harrie, *Staten och läromedlen*, 137–142, 178–179.

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38. See, for example, reviews of Erlandson-Wichman, 7 May 1949 (Erik Nordell), 11 May 1949 (Allan Jansson), Statens läroboksnämnds arkiv [The Archives of the State Approval Scheme], EVI:5, Riksarkivet, Arninge [The Swedish National Archives] (hereafter cited as SLA); Lindberg-Tham-Thunell, 12 January 1955 (Allan Jansson); 17 February 1955 (Jonas Orring), SLA, EVI:8; Haage Wikberg, 11 February 1957 (Helge Rynnel), SLA, EVI:13; Hagnell-Olander, 19 November 1959 (Karl Larsson), SLA, EVI:13; Dannert-Lendin, 7 July 1961 (Karl Larsson), SLA, EVI:17; Borg-Nordell, 7 January 1967 (Arne Semb), SLA, FII:33.
39. See, for example, Karl Larsson, "Personskildring vid historieundervisningen" [Personal portrayals in history teaching], *Skola och samhälle* 24 (1943): 110–117; Hugo Valentin, "Det personliga i historieundervisningen [The personal in history teaching]," *Svensk tidskrift* 37 (1950): 359–363; Sven Ulric Palme, "Historia för folkskolan [History in primary school]," *Samtid och framtid: Tidskrift för idépolitik och kultur* 7, no. 9 (1950): 529–538; Hugo Valentin, "Historieundervisningen och de s.k. stora männen [History teaching and the so-called great men]," *Historielärarnas förenings årskrift* 14 (1956): 17–29.
40. Valentin, "Det personliga," 362.
41. See, for example, reviews of Dannert-Lendin, 20 April 1951 (Allan Jansson); Bäcklin-Holmberg-Lendin-Valentin, 7 June 1954 (Allan Jansson); SLA, EVI:4; Hultman-Sylvan, 26 May 1954 (John S. Ericsson); 24 August 1954; 24 May 1955 (Allan Jansson), SLA, EVI:6; Kahnberg-Lindeberg, 9 July 1952 (Allan Jansson); Kumlien, 13 January 1955 (Allan Jansson), SLA, EVI:7; Tham, 10 May 1961 (Erik Nordell), SLA, EVI:20; Dannert-Lendin-Petrén, 30 January 1971 (Erik Sandstedt), SLA, FII:73b.
42. Review of Erlandson-Wichman, 11 May 1949 (Allan Jansson), SLA, EVI:5, 2.

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43. For example, reviews of Hagnell-Olander, 28 September 1946 (Siri Leander), SLA, EVI:1, Bergström-Greiff, 30 April 1950 (John S. Ericsson), SLA, EVI:3, 1–2; Dannert-Lendin, 20 April 1951 (Allan Jansson), SLA, EVI:4, 2.
44. See, for example, reviews of Meurling-Wirsén, 20 February 1967 (Anna Greta Johansson), SLA, FII:34, 2; Parasoll-Historia 2, 12 June 1976 (Erik Sandstedt), Läromedelsnämnden, Skolöverstyrelsens arkiv [The Archives of the National Board of Education], FI:8, Riksarkivet, Arninge [The Swedish National Archives] (hereafter cited as LSÖ).
45. Martin Bäcklin, Erik Holmberg, Waldemar Lendin, and Hugo Valentin, *Allmän historia för gymnasiet* [General history for upper secondary school] (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1954).
46. Andolf, *Historien på gymnasiet*, 126.
47. Review of Bäcklin-Holmberg-Lendin-Valentin, 7 June 1954 (Allan Jansson), 1.
48. Review of Hagnell, Olander, 17 October 1952 (Karl Larsson), SLA, EVI:5, 2.
49. For one of few examples see, review of Dannert-Lendin-Petrén, 30 January 1971 (Erik Sandstedt), SLA, FII:73b, 1.
50. See, for example, reviews of Silvéen-Garnert-Svedelid, 2 November 1982 (Erik Sandstedt); 23 November 1982 (Bo Tjerneld); reviews of Samuelsson, 9 January 1983 (Lars Turner); 1 September 1983 (Göran Lindblom), LSÖ, FI:36.
51. Lgr 80, 124.
52. Review of Andolf-Bergman, 21 February 1983 (Stefan Ulriksson), LSÖ, FI:37.
53. Review of Bergman, 18 January 1982 (Maj Rune), LSÖ, FI:37.
54. See, for example, Andolf, *Historien på gymnasiet*, 256–257; Frances FitzGerald, *America Revised: History Schoolbooks in the Twentieth Century* (Boston: Atlantic, 1979); John Issitt,

“Reflection on the Study of Textbooks,” *History of Education* 33, no. 6 (2004): 688; Luigi Cajani, “Italian Textbooks on the Brink of the Twentieth Century,” in *School History Textbooks across Cultures: International Debates and Perspectives*, ed. Jason Nicholls (Oxford: Symposium Books, 2006).

55. See, for example, review of Grimberg-Wirsén-Svanström, 3 June 1950 (John Ericson), SLA, EVI:5, 1.

56. Review of Haage-Wikberg, 14 February 1956 (Helge Rynnel), SLA, EVI:5, 1. The same is said in review of Hagnell-Olander, 22 May 1956 (Berit Borell), SLA, EVI:5, 1.

57. Review of Hagnell-Olander, 22 May 1956 (Berit Borell), SLA, EVI:5, 1.

58. Ibid.

59. The textbook was based on Clas Theodor Odhner’s (1836–1904) textbook for secondary school from 1869, processed for primary school in 1871 and rewritten by K. Westman (1876–1944) for *realskola* in 1905.

60. Review of Odhner-Westman-Forsell, 14 December 1961 (Set Bergström), SLA, EVI:20.

61. Review of Meurling-Wirsén, 20 February 1967 (Anna Greta Johansson), SLA, FII:34, 2.

62. Stig Hadenius and Claes-Olof Olsson, *Historieböckerna i det nya gymnasiet: En undersökning av tiden efter 1918 utförd på uppdrag av Statens läroboksnämnd* [The history textbooks for the new upper secondary school: A survey of the history after 1918 commissioned by the State Approval Scheme for Textbooks and Teaching Aids] (s.n.: Statens läroboksnämnd, 1970), 14–17.

63. Review of Borg-Nordell-Gustafson-Johansson, 5, October 1970 (Lars Ternér), SLA, FII:72, 2.

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64. Review of Borg-Nordell-Gustafson-Johansson, 18 January 1971 (Sylvia Berglund), SLA, FII:72, 2.
65. Review of Eklund et al., 7 December 1975 (Bo Tjerneld), LSÖ, FI:6.
66. Niels Kayser Nielsen, “Demokrati og kulturel nationalism i Norden i mellemkrigstiden—en realpolitisk højredrejning?” [Nordic democracy and cultural nationalism in the interwar period—a pragmatic turn to the right?], *Historisk tidskrift* 124, no. 4 (2004): 581–603.
67. Niklas Ammert, “To Bridge Time: Historical Consciousness in Swedish History Textbooks,” *Journal of Educational Media, Memory, and Society* 2, no. 1 (2010): 19–20.
68. See, for example, Isabel L. Beck and Margaret McKewon, “Outcomes of History Instruction: Paste-up Accounts,” in *Cognitive and Instructional Processes in History and the Social Sciences*, ed. Mario Carretero and James Voss (Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1994), 237–256; Isabel L. Beck, Margaret McKeown, and Jo Worthy, “Giving a Text Voice Can Improve Students’ Understanding,” *Reading Research Quarterly* 30, no. 2 (1995): 225; Monica Reichenberg, *Röst och kausalitet i lärobokstexter: En studie av elevers förståelse av olika textversioner* [Voice and causality in textbooks: a study of pupil’s understanding of different texts] (Gothenburg: University of Gothenburg, 2000), 53–62.
69. Review of Bergman, 18 January 1982 (Maj Rune), LSÖ, FI:37.
70. See, for example, review of Studium 80, 13 July 1982 (Bo Clarin), LSÖ, FI:35, 2; review of Silvén-Garnert-Svedelid, 23 November 1982 (Bo Tjerneld), LSÖ, FI:36.
71. Letter from Carsten Friede to the State Approval Board, undated appendix for the meeting on 7 October 1982, LSÖ, FI:35.

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72. See, for example, Robert Parkes, "Teaching History as Historiography: Engaging Narrative Diversity in the Curriculum," *International Journal of Historical Learning and Research* 8, no. 2 (2009): 118–132.
73. Review of Andolf-Bergman, 24 January 1983 (Maj Rune), LSÖ, FI:37.
74. Review of Parasoll-Historia, 3 May 1976 (Erik Sandstedt), LSÖ, FI:8.
75. Ibid.
76. Ibid.
77. Compare with Peter Carrier, "Naming and Misnaming: Ambivalence and National Belonging in German Textbook Representations of the Holocaust," *School and Nation: Identity Politics and Educational Media in an Age of Diversity*, ed. Peter Carrier (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2013), 121–124.