

Södertörn University - The teacher training program
Bachelor's Thesis 15 ECTS – Pedagogy - Autumn, 2008

Gender in schoolbooks

- A text analysis of Swedish schoolbooks on
religion

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Abstract

The intention of this essay is to critically analyze which perspective on gender that is conveyed in schoolbooks on religion in contemporary Sweden. The main question is: what gender perspective is conveyed in schoolbooks on religion? The sub questions are: what does the writer emphasize and what has the writer excluded from the text? Are the historical and discursive aspects of gender presented in the schoolbooks? What remains to be developed regarding the gender perspective in the schoolbooks?

Earlier research has shown that men are overrepresented in the schoolbooks and that women and men are shown in stereotypical ways. This study highlights whether two books, written for the A-course in the upper secondary school and printed in 2007 and 2008, have been influenced by the recent requirements on equality in teaching material.

The method used is a text analysis built on critical theory and Yvonne Hirdman's theory of the gender system. The analysis is based on gender theory.

The result shows that gender issues mainly are not regarded as important for religion in schoolbooks, when women are visible it is mostly their social role within religions that is represented and explained. The gender system of the religions is excluded from the text. The main conclusion from this study is that the schoolbooks need a more profound gender perspective, where masculinity and femininity are dealt with as human-created concepts.

Key words

Gender; Text analysis; Schoolbooks; Teaching material.

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Introduction

“Pupils should be able to identify and formulate their position on events and views which support or conflict with fundamental values in society.”

From the syllabus of The Swedish National Agency for Education¹

Background

Teaching experiences in schools often bring questions into the teachers mind. These questions may mostly have a pedagogical nature, but they also carry philosophical as well as ideological features.

My own experiences of teaching brought me to situations when pupils asked me questions which were, not only very interesting, but also important in relation to pupils' cognitive development and their general education. In conjunction to a series of history lessons, I recall, an 11-year old pupil, who told me “It is very strange that God or gods are always men. I don't like it.” Some other pupils told me once that they found things they have read in the Bible very unpleasant. Reflections like these are very rational, since the pupils are intelligent enough to reflect upon the information they receive in school.

My experience is that many school classes end up with the pupils' impressions, thoughts, reflections, as well as confusions or ambiguities, which are only an indispensable part of an educational process. On the other hand, pupils' questions regarding their problem with the subject are huge responsibilities for their teachers to meet. Many of these questions are crucial and deeply existential, which make up a great platform for teachers to use to stimulate their classes.

The question is if the educational system itself is equipped enough to guide these fresh minded young individuals concerning their reflections on gender. Are schools prepared to meet the pupils' needs and do they have relevant material to feed pupils' needs? Schoolbooks have an important role in giving pupils information and develop an understanding of different subjects. If the books themselves are lacking vital information

¹<http://www3.skolverket.se/ki03/front.aspx?sprak=EN&ar=0708&infotyp=5&skolform=21&id=3204&extrald>

or are missing important perspectives on social subjects, like history or religion, then they will be poor material for the pupils' development and reflection.

This essay is going to focus on teaching material in connection to their reflection on gender. Those reflections have the potential to address crucial and historically important issues that we, within an equal educational system, must deal with.

Understanding the educational system in conjunction to the gender system, demands a huge amount of research and analysis. There are so many different elements involved, that it is necessary to focus on one specific item at a time in order to solve this one smaller piece in the larger puzzle that makes up the entire educational system. Therefore this essay is going to be written, with a total focus on one subject: schoolbooks which are used when teaching religion.

Intention

The intention of this essay is to critically analyze which perspective on gender that is conveyed in schoolbooks on religion in contemporary Sweden. The starting point is to highlight whether contemporary schoolbooks have been influenced by the recent public requirements on equality in teaching material and the debate about the gender perspective. Finally, it aims at discovering what remains to be developed in the understanding of gender in the schoolbooks.

Question formulation

The main question of this essay is:

- What gender perspective is conveyed in schoolbooks on religion?

The sub questions are:

- What does the writer emphasize and what has the writer excluded from the text?
- Are the historical and discursive aspects of gender presented in the schoolbooks?
- What remains to be developed regarding the gender perspective in the schoolbooks?

Earlier studies on gender in schoolbooks in Sweden

Gender research is a relatively young human science. There are still many fields left to be investigated. Nevertheless, many people on different levels have been involved in gender research, of which many brilliantly written works are available today. The gender related works I have used are only a few, but there has been a veritable boom in this field of research and the academic interest among students is growing, which in a future perspective is quite promising.

When searching information about gender related studies in Swedish Academic Archive On-line one comes across thousands of academic essays related to gender. Studying this large amount of material is indeed a time consuming process, but it is interesting for anyone who wants to have a fresh understanding of the development of gender science in different fields.

Of course, I have to be more accurate, i.e. study gender analyses in relation to teaching material. There are many relevant studies and I had to choose a few, which are listed in the references. The writers of these nine chosen essays are mostly women and they are mainly written in the last two years. All these essays focus on equality between the sexes and on gender role representations in schoolbooks. They may for example count how many times males and females appear in the texts and images and how males and females are represented in the texts and images, e.g. as active/passive. The results from all, but one, of these studies are that a male norm and traditional gender roles are being reproduced in schoolbooks. The overall conclusion is that the schoolbooks do not comply with the national steering documents demands on equality between the sexes.

An early text analysis of gender in schoolbooks was conducted by von Wright in 1999. The Swedish National Agency for Education gave her the task to analyze schoolbooks on physics. Her result was that most schoolbooks in physics were neither gender sensitive, nor gender conscious and that they contributed to the reproduction of traditional and stereotype gender roles.

The results correspond with the result established by Tallberg Broman in 2002, which says that few researches have been made on gender perspectives in teaching materials.

The studies that Tallberg Broman refers to have been made within schoolbooks in natural sciences and have focused on whether the books turn towards boys or girls.

It also complies with the result of an analysis of teaching material published in 2006. In 2005 the government gave The Swedish National Agency for Education the task to examine teaching material from the secondary school and the upper secondary school regarding the prevalence of sex, ethnicity, religion or belief system, sexual identity and disabilities. The examination included 24 schoolbooks in biology/natural science, history, religion and civics. The task was to look at how the schoolbooks differ from the basic values in the curriculum. The result was that boys and men were overrepresented.²

In order to build on the earlier works introduced above, it would be interesting to focus this review on teaching material that has been produced after 2006, so that it will be possible to spot if the report from The Swedish National Agency for Education has had any impact on new teaching materials that have been produced.

Theory of gender

In this chapter I will first define gender before I go deeper into how gender and power are linked and work together practically.

Defining gender

“Recognizing the gender order is easy; understanding it is not.”

R. W. Connell³

Being a relatively young science, gender should be put into some clarification. The reason is simply to prepare and help the reader to a better understanding of the essence of the theory that is used in this essay. With this said, I will try to shed more light upon the concept of gender.

² Skolverket (2006): *I enlighet med skolans värdegrund. Rapport 285.*

³ Connell (2002) p.3.

Gender is about the construction of the social sex. It is not about the biological sex, in which the definition of being male or female is given within the evolutionary frame of nature. Once the human had developed, it became an intelligent being, as it is until today. From that point humans began to develop cultures. Within the frame of these wide spread cultures across the planet, we now have countless different lifestyles. The development of cultures includes the growing of different structural systems, within which one element is always present and unavoidable – namely power. With power in the frame of social life, different civilizations developed and changed into societies in which people were put, mainly by the acts of violence, in dissimilar groups i.e. unequal social classes within hierarchical systems.

Understanding that power is an important discourse in human history, helps us to comprehend that all cultures are shaped and reshaped under the influence of power, and sometimes in conjunction to violence, physical or verbal. Needless to say, being man or woman is also connected to the above mentioned condition, which also results in a hierarchal structure. The power and production relation used between men and women within that structure is the main reason for building a system which consists of different social roles between men and women. The idea of masculine and feminine is constructed when a hyphen is made between these social roles and the biological sexes of men and women. The idea of masculine or feminine is therefore not static with fixed forms, but always under construction and reconstruction. As R. W. Connell points out:

*“...gender must be understood as a social structure. It is not an expression of biology, nor a fixed dichotomy in human life or character. It is a pattern of our social arrangements, and in the everyday activities or practices which those arrangements govern.”*⁴

So, gender refers to the masculine/feminine social sex, not the biological sex of man and woman. There is always a complicated system of subordination and coercion behind gender, which results in the oppression of one by the other. Since the subordination of women through our history is an undeniable scientific fact by now, we could ask about

⁴ Connell (2002) p. 9.

the reasons for women's subordination, but we could also ask how man and woman are shaped or how the gender order is formed.

The theory of gender is today the main tool to answer the above mentioned questions. It is thus important to understand that: "...gender concerns the way human society deals with human bodies, and the many consequences of that 'dealing' in our personal lives and our collective fate".⁵

Gender and Power

"In the concept of hegemonic masculinity, 'hegemonic' means (as in Gramsci's analyses of class relations in Italy from which the term is borrowed) a social ascendancy achieved in a play of social forces that extends beyond contests of brute power into the organization of private life and cultural process. Ascendancy of one group of men over another achieved at the point of a gun, or by the threat of unemployment, is not hegemony. Ascendancy which is embedded in religious doctrine and practice, mass media content, wage structure, the design of housing, welfare/taxation policies and so forth, is."

R. W. Connell⁶

One of the most important achievements of gender as a science is that it provides rational analyses and investigations about the historical construction of masculinity/femininity as socially produced phenomenon. The construction of gender happens in a world which itself is economically, socially, and politically divided in dichotomies. The ideological and historical elements, and obviously the power relations, all have huge and important effects on the construction of masculinity and femininity. Therefore masculinity and femininity are variable concepts, just as social class and ethnicity.

The consequence of these dividing processes combined with a system of hierarchy is immense inequalities in the distribution of resources, which is reflected in the gender system. The deep structures of inequalities in power and resources have proven to be very, very hard to change. The universal domination of men over women have proven to be even more difficult, than other structures of power, to change and it is therefore said to be a structure that lies deeper than for example class or ethnicity.

⁵ Connell (2002) p.10.

⁶ Connell (1996) p.184.

Men's domination subordinates not only women, but also other men, namely men without or with less power. The focal key to understand this is 'hegemonic masculinity', which "*is always constructed in relation to various subordinated masculinities as well as in relation to women. The interplay between different forms of masculinity is an important part of how a patriarchal social order works.*"⁷

It is also important to understand that the power concentrated within masculine hegemony is used to address all the needs, and desires, of the hegemony upon the dominated parts of society. When those needs and desires are projected on women, they create 'emphasized femininity'⁸. This is one of the most important keys to an understanding of the building of women's role, not only in their relations with men, but also in their own building of identities and life-strategies, regardless if they comply with the gender system or struggle against it.

The gender role constructed for women has been the major reason for their subordination, but there have been struggles against the hegemony even if those struggles have been hidden from our conventional historiography. "*What is hidden from it*", as Connell puts it, "*is the experience of spinsters, lesbians, unionists, prostitutes, mad women, rebels and maiden aunts, manual workers, midwives and witches.*"⁹ Those experiences clearly demonstrate different strategies of which all include elements of resistance against the conventional gender norms and hegemonic masculinity.

⁷ Connell (1996) p.183.

⁸ For further reading on the subject see Connell (1996) p.183-188.

⁹ Connell (1996) p.188.

Method

Below follows an account of the selection of the chosen teaching material, a review of the scientific approach and the model used when reading the texts.

Selection and delimitation of teaching material

There are many books on religion circulating in the Swedish schools and it would be impossible to write about all of them in the frame of a bachelor thesis. The material used here is therefore limited according to four reasonable criteria.

My first concern is that this review should build on earlier research. Earlier research has already shown that men are overrepresented in the schoolbooks and that women and men are shown in stereotype ways. Therefore the first criterion is that the teaching material has been printed after The Swedish National Agency for Education's Report number 285 from 2006, i.e. it should have been printed in 2007 and 2008. The focus on freshly written material makes it possible to see if the knowledge of our time and the report number 285 has had any impact on new teaching materials that have been printed.

The second criterion is that the books must have been used in current teaching in Sweden. They should therefore be commonly occurring and widely spread across the country, and according to the librarians of Stockholm University (LHS) whom I spoke to, they are.

The third criterion is that the books should be used in the upper secondary school, since I am going to be a teacher in the upper secondary school.

The fourth criterion is that the books should concern regular pupils, therefore they should be used to teach pupils who read the core curriculum on the A-course in the upper secondary school.

Using these four criteria I have chosen two books to review and analyze:

Eriksson, Leif & Mattsson Flenegård, Malin (2007): *Söka svar*. Religionskunskap kurs A. Hungary, Liber AB.

Tidman, Nils-Åke & Wallin, Kerstin (2008): *Relief A – Livsvägar*. Religionskunskap för A-kursen. Hungary, Gleerups Utbildning AB.

My translation of the first Swedish title above is *Searching for an answer*.

I have translated the second book's title as *Relief A – Ways of life*.

From now on my translations will be used to refer to the books above.

Text analysis

“The question, famed of old, by which logicians were supposed to be driven into a corner,...is the question: What is truth?”
Immanuel Kant¹⁰

“Truth means the promise to attain a rational consensus”.
Jürgen Habermas¹¹

In order to meet the challenge highlighted by Kant above – understanding and unraveling the truth – I would like to give a theoretical background to text analysis here. A methodological aspect concerning my reading and understanding of the texts is about the way I use both critical theory and critical language study when thinking, interpreting and analyzing the text, as well as when putting it in a far larger discursive context.

Critical Hermeneutics

“Language is *also* a medium of domination and social force. It serves to legitimate relations of organized power. Insofar as the legitimations of power relations, whose institutionalisation they make possible, are not articulated, insofar as these only express themselves in the legitimations, language is *also* ideological.”
Jürgen Habermas¹²

Hermeneutics in general involves methodological principles in order to interpret texts. There has been a development of many different kinds of hermeneutics during its history, but the definite challenge was always interpreting a text systematically in order to understand its' meaning, i.e. the truth. It might seem unproblematic at first sight, but the complicity of language itself, and the hidden discourse of power implanted within the language, approves the opposite. That is the reason that I will imply usage of critical hermeneutics in my reading of the schoolbooks in this analysis.

¹⁰ Quoted from Zuidervaart (2004), p. 1.

¹¹ Quoted from Thompson (1981) p. 99.

¹² Ibid. p. 82.

Critical hermeneutics was developed in conjunction to ‘critical social theory’, and directly connected to the philosophy of social science. Its roots can be found in the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt usually known as “The Frankfurt School”. Currently, the works of German philosopher Jürgen Habermas is presenting the development of the theory, which is essentially originated in the tradition of philosophy that historically derivates from Kant, Hegel and most relevantly Marx, since the latter was himself in the forefront of critical thinking of his time.

One of the greatest approaches of this school is about human knowledge as a social product, constructed and mystified by the power or ideology. The theory emphasizes that the only way to conquer those mystifications is through critical reflections. The critical theory’s major aim is to reach pure rationality, which should be autonomous from all kind of ideological distortions.¹³

Most texts we read are enveloped by ideological power or interest. A convinced understanding of the textuality is then only possible when the text is put into a social/historical context in which the text has been created. The actual meaning, or the truth, is most of the time hidden within the ideological tendencies/distortions of the text, and can only be revealed to us when we connect the text to the circumstances in which it was written. To critically interpret a text then means to read and understand, not only the manuscript itself, but also the entire ideological, historical and social context of the text. It is only then we, in a critical manner, could be able to understand the construction of knowledge and the possible oppressive effects on human lives in society. The critical theory leads us to a modern kind of hermeneutics, with whose help we can develop a criticism towards our perception of language, no matter if speech or written text, which essentially leads us to a much deeper awareness of our knowledge and values. As Habermas puts it: “...*criticism is characterized by its ability to make unconscious elements conscious in a way which has practical consequences.*”¹⁴

¹³ For further reading on the subject see Thompson (1981)

¹⁴ Quoted from Thompson (1981) p.108.

Critical Language Study

“How do we recognize the shackles that tradition has placed upon us?
For if we can recognize them, we are also able to break them.”

Franz Boas ¹⁵

Norman Fairclough’s remarkable book “Language and Power” (2001) is an inspiration for my reading. The book provides an essential tool for thinking and rethinking about language and most importantly the hidden pattern of power discourse within the text. His work investigates in how the political and social structures affect and inflect language. The discourse here is language as social practice. It is determined by *orders of discourse*, which are formed ideologically and constitutionally by power relations. Discourse here involves both *social conditions of production*, and *social conditions of interpretation* in three different stages: the social situation, the social institution and the society as a whole. Fairclough formulizes this below:

“So, in seeing language as discourse and as social practice, one is committing oneself not just to analysing texts, nor just to analysing processes of production and interpretation, but to analysing the relationship between texts, processes, and their social conditions, both the immediate conditions of the situational context and the more remote conditions of institutional and social structures. Or ...the relationship between *texts, interactions, and contexts*.”¹⁶

This theory is a building block in Fairclough’s ‘Critical Language Study’, which provides not only a deeper understanding of language, but also the possibility of the emancipation of those who are oppressed and dominated in society. Fairclough says that it is crucial “*to help increase consciousness of how language contributes to the domination of some people by others, because consciousness is the first step towards emancipation*”¹⁷.

Since the discourse of power and ideology is an inseparable part of language, every kind of text should be analyzed critically. That is why I would imply the theory in my analysis, as I see a clear link between the above mentioned theory of gender and critical language study.

¹⁵ Quoted from Fairclough (2001) p.1.

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 21.

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 193.

A model for a gender reading of the texts

Earlier research

The following questions were used regarding gender when The Swedish National Agency for Education reviewed schoolbooks in 2005/6¹⁸:

- 1) *What do the texts/images explicitly say about sex? Which categories [e.g. man/woman] are presented? When, where, how and why do these categories [e.g. man/woman] appear? In which contexts or in which social relations do these categories [e.g. man/woman] appear?*
- 2) *What meanings do the texts/images give in relation to sex (in those categories that appear in the schoolbook)? How is sex presented/shaped/constructed? How are e.g. women and men represented in text and image? Are there examples of stereotypes? Which? Are there explicit expressions of discrimination, special treatment, insults? Does exclusion, making invisibility, occur? Which focus does the text have (normalcy or diversity)?*
- 3) *Are there examples of reasoning which tries to transcend stereotypes, etc. ('good examples')?*

The above questions are a good start, but I would like to be clearer about how to analyze the answers to them. Therefore I refer to them as a background, but I found the use of Hirdman's theory of the gender system more useful and precise.

Four ideal-types of gender perspectives drawn from Hirdman

“Ideologies of ‘natural difference’ have drawn much of their force from the traditional belief that gender never changes...Serious analysis begins with the recognition that exactly the opposite is true: *everything about gender is historical.*”

R. W. Connell¹⁹

The method used, as a tool for reading and analyzing the gender perspective of the text, is drawn from pioneering Swedish historian Yvonne Hirdman. Through several researches

¹⁸ Skolverket (2006): *I enlighet med skolans värdegrund. Rapport 285*, p. 14.

¹⁹ Connell (2002) p.68.

within history, Hirdman has emphasized the role of gender as a powerful structure that creates spaces for masculinity and femininity and divides men and women into different categories within a system of hierarchy. This division has resulted in the subordination of women and become so common in most communities throughout history that most people do not even pay attention to it, but identify it as a 'natural' pattern, 'a fact of life' or 'Gods' will'. In spite of major social changes and reforms aiming at more equality in the western countries, especially in Sweden, the elementary hierarchism of men and women continues. Women's subordination still remains.

Hirdman has in her book *Genus* (2001) developed a highly useful classification of how women appear within the structure of gender. The theory systematically examines the construction of gender. I have used her theory to create four ideal-types in order to analyze the relation between man and woman and how it becomes visible in the texts. Here is a brief presentation of those ideal-types (or dimensions):

1. Women are made invisible. They are not present at all in the context and the concept of masculinity/femininity is not viewed as relevant for the context. Hirdman uses her own formula "A – not A", i.e. "Man – not Man" where Woman is "not Man" rather than a woman.
2. Women are made visible through the question: what *social role* do women have? And *why* do women have that specific role? Nevertheless, the relation between men and women only becomes an adjunct to the subject, which according to Hirdman, creates an image of loosely hinged identities. Men and women play their gender role because it is functional. The result of this analysis is a hyphen between biological sex and gender role. This view integrates an implicit understanding of culture as something rather simple and relatively unproblematic. Two classic ways of answering the question "*why*" is:
 - a. Man is whole; woman is a half uncompleted man. Hirdman's formula A – a.
 - b. Man and woman are two completely different species and each other's opposite. Woman is different and can not be compared with man. The differences are emphasized. Hirdman's formula A – B.

3. The relations between the sexes are processed as a relation of power in order to answer the question: How is the order of power between men and women maintained? The theories of patriarchy as well as the power used for controlling means of production would help to answer this question.
4. Masculinity/femininity is processed as human-created concepts, which are dependent on each other. The relevant questions are then: How is masculinity/femininity created? What does the relation between the sexes look like? What is the role of the relation? How can we emancipate ourselves from sex as idea? These questions has moved away from divisions of work between the sexes (third point above) towards body, sexuality, identity, rhetoric and the construction of gender order. This is where Hirdman's theory of "gender system" breaks through, which emphasizes that there is a process which divides men and women into different positions of power. Even if women take power over the means of production (which still is a great goal to struggle for) there is still a power structure of sex left to fight against. This perspective gives sex/gender its own characteristic explanation. It is not just an adjunct to the subject.

Result of the text analysis

Here follows a review and an analysis of my reading through the dimensions of the four ideal-types, which were introduced above. The places in the chosen schoolbooks where gender is visible have been referred to with page references. In the rest of the text, gender is not visible or not dealt with as an issue. The reviews of the text is written and translated as closely as possible to the original and the analyses are written as clearly as possible in order for the reader to be able to criticize the analyses.

I will mention when women are visible and how gender roles are reproduced in the images, but there is no profound image analysis here. It is only used as a complement to the text analysis in order to see the text in its context.

Searching for an answer

Searching for an answer was published in 2007 and consists of 256 pages, which are divided into ten chapters.

The first chapter: Searching for a life-compass (p.6-23)

Chapter one is about concepts of faith and how different existential questions in life lead to different faiths as well as different conceptions of life. Men and women are evenly represented in the images and most of the images do not suggest gender roles. There are no examples of gender roles which are enlarged or contrasted to the stereotype.

Women are not visible in the text as a whole which puts this text in the first ideal-type, but in a few glimpses masculinity/femininity is mentioned. The text includes a few questions like:

'How was the world created and how long does it last? Is man god or bad? What is right and wrong? What is good and evil? What is driving the history and the development forward? Is there any difference between masculine and feminine?'
(p. 10)

The text says that, these questions are important when analyzing a faith and its consequences. They lead the reader to the main question: What is religion? Through describing a few external and internal factors of religions, the text follows on describing some important terminology within religions. The following page presents religion as a life-compass that helps people to live a good life. For the understanding of different religions, the text suggests that one compares them using some important questions which address the religions' view of the history and the world, their view of humans and their view of masculine and feminine, etc. The text aims at answering all these questions in conjunction to each religion.

Further the text introduces the use of symbols in religious texts and how important it is to understand them. A used example of a symbol is 'Father' which means *God* for Christians. The language used within the holy scripts of Judaism, Christianity and Islam contains, according to the text: '*...more masculine loaded symbols and images than feminine*' (p. 17).

The way masculinity/femininity is referred to in these pieces makes the expressions difficult to analyze. It does not say much. It just mentions the concepts. It may belong to ideal-type two, three or four depending on which questions are asked in the rest of the book. If these expressions belong in an ideal-type four context, the following questions in the book should be: How is masculinity/femininity created? What does the relation between the sexes look like? What is the role of the relation? If they belong to an ideal-type two context, the following questions will be: What social role do women have and why?

This first chapter continues by introducing some keys to the reading and understanding of a text. A model for analysis is presented. It consists of three stages: first) reading/seeing a text as a whole/unity, second) seeing the coherence of a text, third) understand the text and be able to interpret it. There is an example of a text analysis to make sure that the pupils understand how to imply the different stages of the model of analysis when reading a text. The example is 'A text analysis – the creation of human' and targets the first biblical myth of the creation of man (p. 20). In the first stage, when reading/seeing a text as a whole/unity, it explains that there are two versions of the creation of man in the Bible.

'It describes that the man is created by God, and as God's own image. First it says that the man is one and later on he is created as man and woman. There is no more detail about the process of creation itself. In the creation myth that appears in the following chapter, it describes however how God creates the woman with one of the man's ribs'. (p.21)

The schoolbook's text draws the conclusion that the myths are of different origin and therefore: *'They were not placed together from the beginning'* (p.21).

In the second stage pupils should see the text's coherence/situation which means, in this case, to understand the Genesis as a biblical source that explains how God created man.

'The text simply aims at explaining an important existential question'. (p.21)

'The message is that man shall increase in number' and subdue the earth. 'There is also one implicit message which is much more important; the text says that there is only one God, who moreover is also a creating God'. (p.21)

In the third stage, interpreting and understanding, it suggests that:

'We can first interpret the text inside the religion's tradition from which it originates. The starting-point must then be that the creation myth concerns the entire humanity and its history, regardless place and time.' (p.22)

Understanding the myth within its tradition means that:

'The man is especially chosen to be God's collaborator on earth, which causes enormous responsibility to conduct the creation in the best possible way.' (p.22)

There are however many kinds of inside perspectives. Here, the text, suggests a possible interpretation from Christian feminists, who read the text from an equality-perspective and therefore say, since God created *'both man and woman as his image, they should be equal'* (p.22). Nevertheless, the schoolbook suggests that, the text can be interpreted from an outside perspective as well, like when atheists for example read the text and imply it on human wishes like understanding and dominating the world.

In the above analysis of the creation myth in the Bible, the theme of man and woman and the relation between them is completely side-stepped and never brought up. It is the choice of analyzing only the first creation myth in the Bible and not at all dealing with the understanding of the second myth, where Eve is created from Adams rib, which is a way to make the thousands of years of submission of women invisible. This puts this text as a whole in the first ideal-type, where woman is made invisible.

Interestingly, the image next to the text from the first creation myth, shows the second creation myth, where Eve is created out of Adam's rib when he was asleep (p.20).

The second chapter: Ethics – a question of considering first (p.24-43)

This chapter is entirely about ethics. In the next 20 pages, the text brings up some issues that open discussions about ethics and moral matters in life.

Two of a total of three images are of women. The pictures are of women in action at work. The third picture is of animals. There are whatsoever only a few lines in the entire chapter which mention something in connection to gender. In conjunction to the ethically aspects of our view of human a question appears regarding how we think about masculine and feminine, and if it is shaped by inheritance or environment (p.27). There is however

no continuous discussion on the issue as the text jumps to the next section. Three pages later, there are a short section about the importance of inheritance and environment in which it says:

‘If you think that the genetic inheritance determines our sex roles, that which in different societies is called masculine and feminine, your view is probably different on the equality between the sexes, than when you think that the sex roles are a result of the upbringing.’ (p. 30)

The above piece opens up for a possibility to understand masculine/feminine as human-created concepts, but there are neither any further directions towards deeper discussions nor any continuity in the subject itself as the text opens a new ethical section immediately after this.

A further ethical questions made in the text emphasizes on a woman who is the mother of three children and needs blood transfusion for her survival. The woman is unconscious and her husband prohibits the doctor to give her blood because of religious reason. The question, which pupils are supposed to think about, is: what should the doctor do? (p. 37).

The text briefly mentions a debatable issue about a guy who takes economic advantage of a girl. There is also a line which reads: *‘We don’t often know how our closest friends react if we reveal that we have been unfaithful or we are homosexual’* (p. 32). Some other ethical questions here, linked to gender, include:

‘Should Ulla do an abortion in order to complete her studies?’ (p. 36)

‘Does sexual orientation have anything to do with the appropriateness of being a parent?’ (p. 43)

‘Should homosexuals be able to adopt children?’ (p. 43)

Most of the text in this chapter makes women invisible, but in some places the text opens up for a eligible possibility that masculinity/femininity are human-created concepts that are changeable, like in the last mentioned questions regarding homosexuality.

The third chapter: Religions in the east (p.44-47)

This is the shortest chapter in the book with only 4 pages. The point is to introduce the great religions in the east namely Hinduism and Buddhism. The text mentions briefly

some actions in humans' spiritual life like: when a Buddhist monk meditates to reach the same insight as Buddha or *'when a woman gives benevolently a bowl of rice to the same monk, the expectation is to escape from rebirth.'* (p. 45). Nothing else appears here on gender.

The forth chapter: Hinduism (p.48-75)

The chapter on Hinduism includes general information about Hinduism in order to cover some basic matters which are important for pupils' understanding of this, otherwise, fairly remote religion from the westerner's view.

There is one image more of men than of women. The pictures show traditional gender situations. After many pages of describing gods, myths and holy scripts, the text mentions a few problematic social matters, connected somewhat to gender, affected by Hinduism like the caste system which put humans in different groups and makes it impossible for people from different castes to marry each other. Even when praying, the higher castes have to follow special roles as they are more important whereas low castes and women don't have such roles (p. 59).

The view of man, expressed by caste system, is reflected through the moral of Hindus even in our days. A section is called *'Hindus moral in conflict with patriarchal traditions'* (p. 63). It says that:

'The idea about good deeds, as a way to reach a better rebirth, is overshadowed sometimes by traditions and point of views which totally oppose the basic Hindu principle. It is, for instance, a fact that Indian women's rights and freedoms do not at all match with the man, in spite of the new laws which give her both inheritance right as well as right to divorce. Young women "disappear" or are found deadly burned or murdered everyday because of the custom in which the bride's family have to pay dowry to the future husband's family. If the bride's family can not afford to pay the dowry, the shame is so great that they sometimes rather let her "disappear" or die. Almost every Hindu marriage is arranged which, consequently, results in a very high statistic of suicide among young women in India. A growing problem is also the cases when a man have been rejected by a woman and as revenge throw corrosive acid in her face to make

sure that nobody else is going to have her. Villages are often ruled by ancient traditions in which women are totally subordinated by men. There are old Hindu scripts that describe woman as less worthy, in need of apprehension and constant discipline, first by her father and later by her husband and sons. She shall view her husband like a God and obey him even though his command is unrighteous, and if she does not give birth to sons, then she is not to have better status. Unfortunately this view of woman does not belong completely to the past. But positively, more and more women get education, and many women's rights groups have been founded in India in recent years.' (p. 63-64)

After the above mentioned passage, the text continues to explain more details about Hinduism and later in a new section it says that:

'All living things contain the divine, so by hurting it one hurts God as well....The consequences of the bad deeds will come in the next life.' (p. 65)

In the end of the chapter there are some questions for pupils where one of them reads: *'For what reasons can one claim that the Hindu's traditional view of woman and the actual treatment of woman in reality are contradictive? Wherein are they contradictive? What are analogues to other traditions' view on woman?'* (p. 70).

The piece above makes the power relation between men and women visible, which puts this piece of text into the third ideal-type. The text also encourages the pupils to think about the views on women in different traditions.

The fifth chapter: Buddhism (p.76-107)

This chapter is dominated by detailed information about Buddha, his life and philosophy, the development of Buddhism, as well as different traditions in this religion.

There are two more images of men than of women. The images show women and men in very, very stereotype gender roles. There is almost no data here connected to gender, but a few lines where the text reads for instance that it is possible for both men and women to become monks and nuns, but in describing the process the emphasis is on becoming a monk and there is no information about how a woman becomes a nun (p. 97-98). There is

an image beside the text in which 34 monks are represented as well as two other pictures in the chapter which only show monks.

This text belongs to the ideal-type one, where women are made invisible.

The sixth chapter: Religions in the west (p. 108-135)

This chapter serves as an introduction to the monotheistic religions in the west namely Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The main ambition here is to show the common base for these religions in order to prepare the pupils for a larger understanding of them and their common history.

The images reproduce men and women evenly without any contrasting gender roles. Gender is mainly invisible in this chapter as the text is mostly engaged with explaining prophecies of different prophets. There is however an image here showing a mother's hand touching a child's foot with an image text that says:

'The closeness between a mother and a child. This timeless and human delight is as obvious to these Tuaregs (a Muslim nomadic people of Sahara) as it was for the mothers Sarah, Rachel and Maria, and the sons Isaac, Joseph and Jesus.'
(p.125)

In this chapter women are practically invisible. The common patriarchal base for these religions is not mentioned or discussed. The text belongs to ideal-type one.

The seventh chapter: Judaism (p. 136-161)

After the general information delivered in the previous part, this chapter of the book brings a lot more information about the foundation of Judaism and its traditions.

The images are almost evenly distributed among men and women, but they all show men and women in very stereotype roles. In almost all of the text women are not visible, i.e. the text belongs to ideal-type one.

There is an eminent example, though, concerning the roles of men and women and the equality between them called: *'Are men and women equal?'* The text reads:

'According to the Jewish view all the humans are equal. But in the creation myth of the Bible God commands Adam to reign over Eve. Many Jews say that the different role of woman and man is integrated within the creation itself. The man

shall be responsible for church service, Torah studies and breadwinning while the woman shall operate at home and take care of children. Judaism is, like Christianity and Islam, a patriarchal religion. The Old Testament was recorded by men for men and therefore there is not a lot about women in it. There are rules in Torah that both insults and defends woman, but today it is mainly her rights that are in focus.' (p. 149)

This piece talks partly of which social role women have and why, but also about the power relation. Therefore the text fits in to ideal-type three.

On the very last page a small wood engraving shows a woman with a veil. The image text, printed with very small letters, reads: *'There are several tales about strong and brave women in the Jewish history'* (p. 161). The text indicates that pupils can read about these women like Esther, Naomi and Ruth in the Old Testament. The text is however not a part of a pupil's task and there is no data about these women in the main text.

The eighth chapter: Christianity (p. 162-197)

This is the chapter about, as the text stresses the world largest religion, Christianity. It continues to build on the former chapter 'Religions in the west', and explains more elementary things about Jesus and the Christian traditions after him.

The images are as much of females as of males, but stereotype as in the earlier chapters. Women are not visible in the text, with very few exceptions. The text as a whole makes women invisible and fits into ideal-type one.

In a section called *'New questions and demands'* in which the text emphasizes new issues that the Christian world faces today. These questions include *'women priests, homosexuality and if catholic priests may have the possibility to marriage'*. Even if women in Sweden and within the protestant church are allowed to be priests in modern times, *'there are still a lot of men who criticize this right, often with reference to the Bible. This is an apparent sign of how the masculine domination within Christianity is still strong and viable'* (p.183). An even bigger problem is the ordination of sexually active homosexuals as they are excluded from many free churches. The text continues to

refer to the debate about homosexuality within the Swedish Church and uses the exhibition 'Ecce Homo' as an example (p. 183-184).

There is a section at the end of the chapter on the ethics of Jesus. The conclusion is that Christians have different standpoints on questions like abortion, homosexuality, contraceptive, divorce, etc. There are no discussions on these issues (p. 190).

In the above exception from the standard, the power relation and the use of the Bible in order to reproduce the gender system are referred to. The exception belongs to ideal-type three.

The ninth chapter: Islam (p. 198-229)

There is one more image of women than of men.

The first pages of this chapter describe a Muslim meeting in Sweden. The text gives some information about men and women. It says that the men have white caps while the women have their head covered. As they listen to the preaching by the imam, the women hugs the sleepy children in their bosoms. A woman nods thoughtful as the imam ends his preaching (p. 199-200). In the next page, there is a picture, showing a quite large group of women whom all are dressed so that no parts of their bodies are visible except their faces and hands. The image text under the picture says that '*The majority of the world's Muslims are in Southeast Asia. The woman's position is very strong in Indonesia and many of them are gainfully employed*' (p. 201).

The following pages are deeply engaged in describing Islam's foundation and its history from the beginning to our days. There is an ambition to present objective information in order to counteract the ordinary view of Islam in media which, as the text says, are often connected to terrorism and oppression of women.

There is an image which shows a woman who is entirely covered in a burka. In the background, a part of a mosque is visible. The image text is only about the background. There is no information about the woman in the picture. The text reads:

It is forbidden to form an image of God since it is impossible to describe his greatness. Instead, the mosques are decorated by artistic motives, collected from nature, God's creation' (p. 214).

Thoughts about gender appear in the section: *'The core of life is the family'* which says:

'Islam views the family as a unity and as the foundation of society. Within the family the members are kept together through mutual duties. Everyone has their fixed roles and their special areas of responsibility. Man and wife have equal authority but in different respects. The man is the family's supporter and defender. The woman, who according to Islam surpasses the man in the matter of love and care, brings up the children and takes care of the home. Nevertheless, this is not the general rule since in many situations, the woman helps along in maintaining and according to tradition Mohammed helped with the household work.' (p.218)

The text is also describing problems that traditional Muslim families have to deal with when living in today's Sweden. It says that:

'The woman's dignity as a wife and mother is disturbed since she often has to help with the economic support and therefore cannot be home with the children. She is probably not allowed to have her Muslim costume in the workplace. Double work affects most likely her possibilities to cook the food as careful as she wants to. Swedish values compete with her role as a role model. Even the man's dignity is subjected to trials. He can not take care of his children and his wife's rights and wellbeing in school respective in workplace or protect them from the authorities influence. Besides, it is difficult for both man and woman, to fulfill their responsibilities as Muslims in the secular society of Sweden.' (p. 218, 220)

This text qualifies into the second ideal-type, where the woman's social role is dealt with. It is a typical example of Hirdman's formula A-B, which means that man and woman are viewed as profoundly different.

The text emphasizes further on moral values as it says that *'There are many rules in the Quran that humans shall follow in order to live morally'* (p. 223). These rules include food, alcohol, drugs, games, gender roles, clothes, sexuality, etc.

In the pupil's tasks in the end of the chapter there is a question that says: *'Islam's view on equality is strong. Before God all humans are siblings in the same family... What consequences does this view of equality have on individual's moral?'* (p. 226).

There is also an above par exercise called: *'The Muslim woman.'* The text reads:

'The woman's condition in Muslim countries is often contradictive. In some cultures, she enjoys great freedom both in the private and official life while in other cultures, her freedom is limited. The patriarchal system in many Muslim countries is considerably older than Islam. In the beginning, Islam was called by many, the women's and the slaves' religion. Islam dramatically increased the women's status compared with before. The prophet Mohammed emphasized the importance of treating women well' and says 'that the best Muslim is the one who treats his wife well'. (p. 228)

The task continues to ask about the rules in the Quran concerning women's role, rights and responsibilities. It asks pupils to find out about the topics: clothes, daughters, wives, the woman and the paradise and rights, in specific places in the Quran which are indicated (p. 228).

In this chapter about Islam women are more visible than in the other chapters and it is clearly the social role of the woman which is most visible. This chapter classifies into the second ideal-type.

The tenth chapter: philosophies without God (p. 230-249)

The last chapter of this book is about different conceptions of life namely Existentialism, Feminism, Marxism and Ecosophy.

The images mainly represent women. One image shows women demonstrating, which is a contrast to the stereotype picture of a woman.

The section on feminism starts with many questions:

'How come that many teenage girls look themselves in the mirror anxiously and wonder: Do I look good? Am I good enough or am I too fat? What should I wear? Do I have to do my hair and put on make up to be appreciated? And how come that only about three percent of executives in the business world and six percent of professors at the universities are women? What does it mean to be a woman? Is it a biological fact or a question about culture and upbringing? (p. 235).

There is an image under the above mentioned text which shows a lot of pupils (mostly girls), attending a demonstration. Their banners say: *'Refuse to be called whore'* and *'Women's fight for justice'* (p. 235).

Next section is called *'Simone de Beauvoir – feminist and existentialist'* in which the text attempts to answer the last question about being a woman from the previous page, as it says that:

'The matter was limpid for Simone de Beauvoir. 'One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman'. That men and women have different roles is due to that they are brought up in different ways. Girls are taught to long for love, boys learn to be independent, girls learn to listen, boys learn to speak, girls learn empathy while boys are trained in self-realization and so on. It is not strange then that what we call femininity is different from what we call masculinity.' (p.236)

The concept of masculinity and femininity, as well as the subordination of women are, according to the text, connected to the above mentioned facts which are not about biology, but about culture. The text adds: *'One is born with a female sex, that is a biological fact, but one becomes a woman by assuming the female role'* (p.236).

The next page provides a very short section on feminist history. The following sections which are about Marxism and Ecosophy do not contain anything regarding gender.

In the pupil's tasks, four tasks out of 28 are about women and feminism, although feminism is one of four life concepts which are dealt with in this chapter.

The text on feminism belongs to ideal-type four, since it talks about masculinity/femininity as human-created concepts and briefly touches how we shall free ourselves from sex as an idea. The rest of the chapter belongs to ideal-type one though.

Concluding analysis of *Searching for an answer*

In most of this book women are made invisible, which puts the text as a whole into ideal-type one. The representations of women that appear generally belong to ideal-type two, i.e. the social role of women are presented and explained. There are also a few good examples when the power relation between men and women is brought up and in a small section on feminism masculinity/femininity is dealt with on a deeper level.

The general ambition of this schoolbook seems to be to update the presentation of religions in a way which could be more connected to modern life. In doing so, it mentions topics that concern gender in general and women in particular. The images are quite evenly distributed, with one more man, but they are mostly very stereotype. There are a few examples when the images of women and men contrast the stereotype.

Already in its first chapter masculinity and femininity are brought up, but it does not discuss how masculinity/femininity is created and how the power relation between men and women is maintained in conjunction to the religions. It just presents the different religion's view on men and women, which in the end means that the gender perspective is dealing with what women's social role is and its functionality.

It says, for instance, that the language used within the holy scripts of Judaism, Christianity and Islam contains more masculine loaded symbols than feminine, but it never introduces an analysis of how these symbols and this language produce and reproduce gender patterns. This means that the text do not ask the question: How is masculinity/femininity created?

The question '*Is there any difference between masculine and feminine?*' (p.10 in *Searching for an answer*) is confused. Masculine and feminine are dichotomies. The whole idea of these interdependent concepts is that they must be on the outer poles of one axis. It is like asking if there is a difference between good and evil, light and darkness. It would be more logical to ask: What is masculine and feminine? Or how are masculine and feminine created? This type of confusion about concepts reappears in the chapter about Hinduism.

Hindu's traditional view of woman and Indian customs are referred to as contradictive in the pupil's tasks. The earlier text says that: '*There are old Hindu scripts that describe woman as less worthy, in need of apprehension and constant discipline...*' etc, etc. There is no contradictive view on the woman in the text. There is a contradictive view on actions and consequences, but not of the woman herself. There is no contradiction in the Hindu belief that all living things have a smaller or greater part of divinity within them and that woman has less divinity in her than man. The result of the confusion is that this

text is inconsequential in what it says about the Hindu view of woman and how Hinduism reproduces the submission of women.

The entire matter, argued in the text, that the submission of women in India is due to elderly patriarchal traditions that are in conflict with Hindu moral, is confused. This conclusion shows that the writers have perhaps forgotten that Hinduism with its caste system is created within a patriarchal system and therefore are inseparable.

Concerning gender issues in Christianity, the text chooses to focus on women who want to be priests and have to face the masculine resistance within the church. This is a piece where the power relation is dealt with. The question is why there is no presentation on the different arguments on this subject. Quotes from the Bible, which are used when religious people argue against and pro women priests could be delivered. The authors could for instance cite the Bible when it reads:

“A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner.”

The Bible, 1 Timothy 2:11-14²⁰

This would clarify not only why some are against the idea of female priests, but also clarify Christianity's view on woman where the emphasis is on woman's submission under the man. This schoolbook, like many others, also stresses the importance of Martin Luther without bothering about his view of woman. He said for example that:

"A woman does not have complete mastery over herself. God created her body that she should be with a man and hear and raise children. The words of Genesis, Chapter 1, clearly state this, and the members of her body sufficiently show that God himself formed her for this purpose."

Martin Luther²¹

²⁰ http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?book_id=61&chapter=2&version=31

²¹ <http://www.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/History/teaching/protref/women/WR0911.htm>

This kind of quote or any other kind informative material on the submission of women are excluded from the text, with the result that the only way of understanding the gender system of religions is through using the text which is very short of source material.

Relief A – Ways of life

Relief A – Ways of life was published in 2008. It is 228 pages long and consists of nine chapters.

The preface

In the preface the authors explain their intention to introduce the big religions of the world in a short and clear way and as close to the pupils' everyday live as possible. Their idea is to show religion as something very human, and not so strange. A returning feature of the book is the interviews with people in Sweden, which should show religions' and conceptions of life's practical functions in people's life. There is also a section of ethics, where a number of cases should be analyzed by the pupil with the help of a key of ethics.

The first chapter: Why religion? (p.6-19)

In this chapter gender is practically not present in the continuing text although religion is said to, to a large extent deal with how humans shall live (p.10). Therefore this text as a whole falls under ideal-type number one, i.e. women are made invisible. They are not present in the context and the concept of masculinity/femininity is not viewed as relevant for the context.

The images represent women and men evenly and in different situations. Women are made visible, but there is nothing more in the images. This puts these images under the ideal-type two. It is unclear, though, if the images deal with what social role women have and why? Nevertheless, the relation between men and women is definitely adjunct to the subject, which according to Hirdman, creates an image of loosely hinged identities.

There is an eminent example, though, of the transcendence of stereotypes:

Under a small image of a wedding cake with two male figures at the top, the image text says that: *'Freedom of religion also means the right to a religion. The right of homosexuals to marriage is being discussed within the Swedish Church.'* (p.12)

There are no comments in the ordinary text, which makes this image text and image difficult to analyze. It is a text which indicates that religion, culture and gender is something complex. Masculinity/femininity is processed as human-created concepts, which would put these little lines in the fourth ideal-type. It deals with gender, sexuality and identity, but not the construction of the gender order. It gives the impression of being an attempt to include homosexuals by making them visible, rather than being a deeper consciousness of the gender system. A clear sign of this is that it never becomes anything more than an adjunct to the subject. It is in the margin and never affects the main text.

The second chapter: Judaism (p.20-43)

During most of these pages about Judaism women are not visible, which puts this text into ideal-type one. In a few attempts women's social role within Judaism is visible, but gender relation is not an issue in this chapter.

The images are of men in varying situations. There is one image of an adult daughter taking care of her old mother. Their backs are turned to the viewer. A very stereotype image of woman as caretaker. My analysis is that these images mainly belong to ideal-type one.

The presentation of the early patriarchal scripture tales with Abraham, Moses and the Ten Commandments do not deal with gender with certain exceptions. In the middle of a piece about criticism among prophets it says that:

'There were female prophets as well, like Esther and Ruth.' (p.27)

There are no more comments. Women are practically invisible here, except for this attempt to include them. The result is that relations between men and women seem uncomplicated in Judaism.

In an interview, the interviewer tells Jewish Amnon:

'When I tell [Amnon] about Jewish men, whom because of their strict religiosity refused to shake my [the interviewers] hand or look me in the eyes because I am a woman, Amnon says that he has had problems himself to look both males and females in the eyes.

- The eyes are the mirrors of the soul. To look someone in the eye is therefore tremendously challenging. This I was taught as a child. One should be nice and humble and avoid direct eye contact. (p.30)

There is no further discussion about different conditions and roles in Judaism for men and women. This text makes women visible through the interviewers comment, but hides them again through Amnon's general non-gendered explanation of the eyes as mirrors of the soul and politeness in general.

In connection to a piece on the Sabbath the text says that:

'The mother of the family opens the Sabbath by reading a prayer.' (p.35)

It further says that:

'The men wear a little cap, a kippa, when they are in the synagogue. In some synagogues the women sit on a gallery, separated from the men.' (p. 36)

This is an ideal-type two text, where women are made visible, but only through their social role which seems to be uncomplicated.

Regarding Easter (p.37), it says that part of the tradition is that father and a son reads together from the stories of how the people of Israel fled Egypt. Regarding circumcision (p.37), it says that the sign of Gods special relationship with Abraham's people is male circumcision. Boys are, said to, reach the age of majority at 13. This is when they are initiated to bar mitzvah, son of the Commandments. Girls become bat mitzvah, daughter of the Commandments, at 12 (p.38).

One of the pupils' tasks, in a section named 'Think further', where all the answers are possible to find by reading the chapter closely, there is a question which says:

'What is equality between man and woman like within Judaism?' (p.42)

But it is impossible to find a background to an answer in the text, since the power relations between man and woman within Judaism is invisible. The question itself might belong to ideal-type two.

The third chapter: Christianity (p.44-83)

Women are mainly invisible in the text of this chapter, except for in the interviews which do not touch aspects of femininity/masculinity. The gender system is not a theme anywhere in this chapter.

There is one image more of men than of women, but the images mainly represent traditionally formed gender roles.

The chapter starts with the story of Jesus and his life. Maria is mentioned as a model, above all for Catholics (p.48).

In one of the interviews, Catholic Stefan says:

- *'Abortion is horrible. It is not just that one kills a baby, but that young girls get injured for life.*

When it comes to the view on homosexuality Stefan says that it is wrong but nothing one can do about it. It has always been there. However, he does not think that homosexuals should be able to marry each other.' (p.58)

There is no further discussion on this matter.

During an interview with an Orthodox church porter, a father and a son come to perform a traditional father-son ceremony (p.61), but gender is not made into an issue.

A piece about marriage and priesthood (p.72) ends with the notion that:

'Women may become priests in the Swedish church and reverends in the free church order. In the Catholic and Orthodox and Eastern Churches the ministry is not open to women.'

Women are made visible here, but there is no explanation or comment on the relation between the sexes. This text falls under ideal-type two (although it would have been very easy to bring up the gender system here).

'Focal point Christianity'(p.80-81) deals with sex and moral. Men and women are not categories in the text, with one exception where it says that within Greek Hellenism:

'Sexuality belonged in relations with one passive and one active partner of different status. Most often this was a man and a woman and the woman was regarded to be of lower status.' (p.80)

This is the first time that the gender system is mentioned!

There is further talk on prostitution and homosexuality. Then the section ends with a conclusion that:

'Some of these antique ideas have passed on to our times and among other things led to the idea that masturbation would be dangerous'. (p.80)

There is no discussion if women's lower status was passed on to Christianity or to our days. The passage reminds of the interview with Jewish Amnon, where the gender system is revealed, then hidden again.

The piece continues to present the different views on contraceptive and further on homosexuality within the church (p.81). Women or men are not mentioned again in the text. The text says that homosexuals have been exposed to discrimination for a long time. An example is that:

'the Nazis sent many homosexuals to their death camps. In the beginning of year 2000 the HBT-movement for homo-, bi- and transsexuals has grown strong. Homosexuals and other sexual minorities demand equality, also from the churches....

The Swedish church has decided to introduce a blessing of partnership...But the church is strict about letting the word marriage stand for a relationship between a man and a woman. Other Christians...have reacted sharply to this. They cannot think of permitting homosexuality openly'. (p.81)

The text continues by giving the arguments that these opposing predecessors use in the Bible. Finally the piece ends with a question:

'Hannes and Anders wants to marry and become parents together. Do you think that they should have the right to do so? Discuss in the class'. (p.81)

In the very last page there is a 'Think further' question, which says:

'In what way is sex a hot debate subject among Christians today?' (p.83)

There is also an above par question about the photo exhibition *Ecce Homo* which showed Jesus among homosexuals and transsexuals. It stirred up a lot of debate. The pupil is asked to look *Ecce Homo* up on the internet and answer why some liked the exhibition and some disaffiliated from it.

In the discussing piece '*Focal point Christianity*' women and the gender system are made visible in tiny glimpses, but in the text as a whole women are invisible. The text focuses on sex, moral and homosexuality, but not on the power relations between men and women in the Bible and in Christian societies. The concept of masculinity/femininity is not viewed as relevant at all for the context or for the discussion on contraceptive or homosexuality. The pupils' question is referring to two male homosexuals, which strengthens the impression of the text as ignorant to the gender system. Again it seems as if the authors have included homo-, bi and transsexuals without any deeper understanding of the gender system itself.

The fourth chapter: Islam (p.84-117)

In this chapter women are more visible than in the earlier chapters. Two of totally three interviews are with women. The images are shared equally among men and women and the sexes are both represented as active and passive.

The text point out that egalitarianism is important within Islam:

'Muslims also emphasize that Allah is all humans God. Therefore all humans have the same value.' (p.87)

'During the pilgrimage all, men and women, are dressed in white. This marks unity and equality which are important concepts within Islam.' (p.90)

It is mentioned that: *'Men and women pray separately.'* (p.88)

It is not discussed why or how this effects those who pray.

In an interview with a young woman (p.99-101), the hidjab that she is using is emphasized several times in the text, but it is neither mentioned why she hides her hair, nor how Islam encourages her, as a woman, to live. Although we are told that:

'She takes part of lectures and sisterhood meetings with theme-weekends as for example 'Life after this' and 'The woman in Islam'.' (p.101)

'...the hidjab functions as a prodger to dig deeper and deeper into Islam.'
(p.100)

At the end of the interview is said that: *'Before God we are all equal. The only thing that separates people is their consciousness of God.'* (p.101)

Another interview is with Mohammad, a very conservative Muslim (p.102-104). He is soon getting married and he tells us about his and his family's wedding preparations. He chose between the required pilgrimage to Mecca and marriage with dowry. He chose wedding in order not to do something forbidden, i.e. have sex without being married. Mohammed describes how his mother and sister made contact with the girl and how his family visited the girl's family. The interviewer tells that:

'I was close to stretching out my hand when greeting [Mohammad] but pulled it back in the last minute.

Did I do the right thing?

- *You did completely right ...it is forbidden for a Muslim man to touch a woman who is a stranger... The only women I have been aloud to touch are my sister and my mother... I was not allowed to touch my girlfriend before we signed the contract of marriage at the imam. It is about respect.* (p.104)

Later Mohammad comes back to that, even if his girlfriend and him were engaged, they could not hold each others hands, they had to wait until they signed the contract.

The chapter continues with how it is to live like a Muslim with circumcision and marriage (p.108). The text points out:

'That humans shall live together as man and woman and enjoy love is emphasized in Islam.' (p.108)

The text continues to say that marriage is a judicial deal between two families and two persons which is sealed in a contract. A man may have up to four wives, but it is unusual. Polygamy, is explained, to have had a function once upon a time when the men were going on hunts or to war and the woman risked becoming a widow. It was rather a form of social security at a time with male shortage and when women could not manage on

their own. Modernists within Islam say that it is replaced by the welfare society today. Further the text says that polygamy is not legal in Sweden. (p.108)

Gender roles and equality have their own parts in the text (p.110-111). The starting point is:

'Studies show that many Swedes associate Islam with oppression of women. The foremost sign of this is hold to be the traditional clothes. According to Islam a woman who moves about outside the home should cover as much as possible of her body with clothes...According to traditional view a woman is first her father's property and then her husband's possession. But this is far from the only view of the woman's role among Muslims. The veil called hidjab, is worn by most Muslim women with pride.' (p.110)

This is a text who makes women visible by asking what role they have and why. Therefore it clearly belongs to ideal-type two.

The text continues:

'The Quran urges women to dress so that they do not raise sexual feelings when they meet strangers. Islam counts on sexuality as a permanent present force in the meeting between humans. The custom with the headcloth originates from Mohammed's lifestyle. The women in his home dressed like this when they met strangers. The headcloth and the veil were a sign of their high status.

Concerning gender roles many Muslims think that man and woman have the same worth but different tasks. Woman should take care of the home and the small children. The man lives in the public society and should provide for his family.' (p.111)

This piece is complimented with an image from May 2007 when Iran's foreign minister visited Sweden. The image text comments that: *'An interesting detail during the visit was that the Iranian minister did not want to shake the Swedish foreign minister Maud Olofsson's hand, since she was a woman.'* (p.110)

This text also explains the woman's social role, which qualifies it into the second ideal-type.

The piece on equality in the Quran follows. It starts off like this:

'Within Islam there are feminist movements which fight for women's right to work outside the home and to influence the society. The feminists of Islam point out that men have always interpreted the Quran and that they have interpreted it wrong. The feminists emphasize that the Quran has a consistent ideal of equality. Before God all humans, men and women, have the same worth.' (p.111)

We learn that, the feminists point at sura 49 when they claim that before God men and women are equal. This sura is cited:

'Humans! We have created you of a man and a woman, and We gathered you in people and tribes, so that you shall know each other. Before God the one of you whose fear of God is the deepest, is the best. God knows all, is informed about everything.' (p.111)

A person's value, we are told in the text, is not determined by her sex in Islam, but by her relation to God. It also says that, Islam's feminists stress how important the prophet's wives were to his development and to Islam's success. Khadija is especially emphasized. Without her Mohammed would not have developed into a prophet.

This is a classic ideal-type two text, which emphasizes that women and men have completely different roles. Hirdman's formula A-B.

In the pupil's basic tasks there is a question about what a hijab is. The tasks that require more thinking include one question about how the Quran supports equality, according to Muslim feminists. One question concerns how one can explain the custom of polygamy and how this custom is administered today. Finally, there is a question about what roles traditional Islam gives man and woman and how these roles influence the interviewee Mohammad's life.

In no other chapter are women as visible as in the chapter about Islam. The text discusses the woman's social role and the function of this social role a lot, which puts this text as a whole into ideal-type two. There are no discussions about the power relation between men and women and how femininity/masculinity are constructed and maintained.

The fifth chapter: Hinduism (p.118-141)

Women are overrepresented in the images and both men and women are shown in a variety of situations. Gender is not a theme in the text, though. There is one comment on gender, which is never followed up:

'The division into the four periods of life originally applied only to men from the elite of the society.' (p.124)

In an interview with a married woman, Laxmi (p.127), she tells about when her husband-to-be went back to India so that his family would choose a wife for him, as they have done immemorially. The choice fell on Laxmi because the grandmother, who was the eldest woman in the family and therefore had a lot to say, thought that Laxmi greeted her so nicely when she bowed to her feet. Laxmi did not get along in Sweden and she and her husband agreed that she would return to India after three months, but the families did not allow this. They forced her to return. Today they are proud parents of four highly educated daughters. Their goal has been that their daughters should paddle their own canoes and choose husbands by themselves. Laxmi is preparing her third daughters wedding in Goa, which among other things will include a dance only women dance, but which men now in the name of equality are insisting to participate in.

This is a text where woman is visible, but it concentrates on her social role, not on the power relations between men and women. It belongs to ideal-type two.

Further there is a text on how it is to live as a Hindu. Gender is not brought up, except in the lines: *'In the home it is the women who lead puja [the prayer]. In the temple is led by men with high status.'* (p.130)

Regarding the festivals (p.132), it is mentioned that especially women clear body and soul trough fasting before a religious festival. It is also mentioned that during Holi, a festival, boundaries between people such as sex, class and caste are exceeded. These comments are left without following up. Regarding marriage (p.135), it is being described how the groom gives the bride her sign of red color on the forehead to show that she is a married woman. The expensive wedding and the large dowry that the bride's family has to pay the grooms family as a compensation for their loss of a son, is described.

Next is a piece about ‘*million aborted girls*’ [sic! Not female fetuses]. We learn that because a girl results in higher costs for the family in the shape of dowry and expensive wedding, 500 000 Indian girl fetuses are aborted each year. The effect is that it goes 800 girls on 1000 boys today. The last 20 years 10 million girl fetuses have been aborted. Then a movement against the abortion of girls is mentioned. Regarding funerals it is mentioned that it is the eldest son who is to light the parents funeral pyre.

When the caste system is treated we are told that: ‘*The men belonging to the three upper-castes, who are supposed to be the elite of the society, undergo a special inaugural rite when they receive “the sacred thread”*’. (p.138)

‘*Focal point Hinduism*’ (p.139) discusses marriages of love and arranged marriages. In the end it is referred to an American study which showed that women choose husband according to his economy and men choose woman according to her looks. The question to the pupil is: ‘*Do you recognize this? If you do – is it something good?*’

One of the ‘*Think further*’ tasks (p.140) deals with how Laxmi prepares her daughters wedding.

There is nothing in this chapter that deals with power relations between men and women. Women are mainly not visible, when they are, as in the images and the above referred pieces, there is a focus on their social role. The development from ancient times within Hinduism is brought up without any mention of the patriarchal base in Hinduism.

The sixth chapter: Sikhism (p.142-151)

Men are overrepresented in the images. One image text says that the Sikhs stress that men and women are equal in their religion. It says that both men and women read from the sacred book of the Sikhs.

We learn that Sikhism do not differentiate between boys and girls first name. Gurpal, who is interviewed, says that this has to do with the Sikhism’s view on egalitarianism. Later we learn that all girls’ last name is Kaur, i.e. princess, and all boys’ last name is Singh, i.e. lion.

In the pupils’ ‘*Think further*’ tasks, a question asks how Sikhism views equality, according to Gurpal.

The seventh chapter: Buddhism (p.152-179)

The images are equally distributed between the sexes. Gender is not visible in the text.

In an interview (p.166), Nahn says that there is a great freedom and equality between women and men. We also learn that women are frequent visitors of the temples and monasteries (p.172). None of these comments are followed up or explained.

In a piece about festivals it is said that boys can enter the monastery for a few months in order to learn meditation. It is said that there are both monks and nuns within Buddhism, but that it is harder for women than for men to become consecrated to a monastery life.

Moreover, tradition gives women a subordinate role in religion, which is supported by a few statements by Buddha.

In the pupils' tasks 'Think further' there is a question about equality within Buddhism and what Nhan has to say about it.

The eighth chapter: Ethics (p.180-195)

There are no images. Gender is visible in stereotype examples, like the one on page 182 where the pupils are asked to imagine a woman who is receiving a beautiful jewelry from her husband on her birthday. Next week she finds out that the man has had an affair with another woman for years and it is her that he loves. He gave the jewelry to his wife in order for her to feel a false safety about his love. The pupils are asked about what value the gift has after the woman found out about all this?

The rest of this chapter contains cases which the pupils should analyze. The first case (p.184) is about infidelity in action versus in intention. The text describes Carina who, in front of her best girlfriend, continuously pities herself about her boyfriend's suspiciousness, which she thinks is morbid. Her friend has grown tired of listening to Carina. She accuses her of infidelity, certainly not in action, but in intention and that Carina probably mainly is troubled by her own bad conscience, maybe unconsciously. Moreover, Carina has been lying about what she has been doing. Carina herself thinks that she has been pushed by her boyfriend's jealousy. The following five pupil's questions deal with views on infidelity and Carina's lie. There are no questions regarding her boyfriend's controlling behavior.

The second case deals with a teacher who has discovered that Melvin, the school's 'tearaway' with an 'impressing crime record' and from a home of social misery, has been cheating on a test. The teacher's view is that Melvin for the first time has shown an interest in academic results and a future within society. The third case deals with a father of a sick girl, who is thinking of providing the girl with a sibling who can donate a kidney, so that the girl will be released from suffering. In the fourth case two male friends are discussing pro and against torture. In the fifth case a boy has been witnessing when his semi-friend (a boy) made racial graffiti on the school and he is struggling with whether he should tell. In the sixth case a mother is, out of motherly love, on her way to the police station to fetch her daughter, who is an animal rights activist and thinks that humans and animals are equal. The seventh case is pro and against euthanasia, where Sebastian is against after his experiences with his father becoming ill and dying. Anna is pro. In the last case Daniel and Ahmed is discussing the death penalty.

Six women and ten men participate in these eight dilemmas.

The chapter of themes (p.196-224)

The first theme is religion in China. Regarding yin and yang (p.199), it says that yang is the male power which stands for activity, light and warmth, while yin is the female power which stands for passivity, darkness and cold. This is explained in the text with the female activities dominating the homes during the winter. The summer was the man's time to work the fields.

Confucianism and the five relations with 'mutual duties' who 'unite the Chinese society' are presented without comments on relations of power and how they are maintained. One of the five relations is: 'the man's justice is confirmed in the woman's compliance'.

Another theme is when a child reaches the age of majority. Within Christianity confirmation is the rite when 'a boy or girl becomes religiously of age'. A rite for Catholics is said to be the first communion, then the girls wear 'nice white dresses'. In Sweden 'boys got their first suit in conjunction to the confirmation'. Jewish boys and girls are initiated as religiously of age by becoming the Commandments son or daughter. A description of how this comes about follows and it is said that 'the custom that Jewish

girls can be initiated in the same way is younger and appears mainly within reform Judaism. Then it is mentioned that Muslim boys and girls shall be able to read the Quran in the right way. Thereafter the text gets on to how Hindu boys are initiated when they are eight. Girls are not mentioned here. In the next piece it is mentioned 'boys once became adults when they had done military service'. An image text says that muster and military service functioned, up till very lately as a rite that were believed to transform mother's boys to grown up, brave men. Nowadays only a minority may do military service and a military carrier is also open to women, it says.

One theme is about new religions. Next is a theme about believing and knowing. Then there is a theme about reading and interpreting sacred scriptures. Gender is not visible in the text, except in a piece where female priests are discussed (p.222, 223). The opponents read the First Corinthians letter, which says "As in all the congregations of the saints, women should remain silent in the churches." Those who are pro female priests emphasize a cite from the Galatians, which says: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus". They claim that this idea of equality is more important in the Bible than the prohibition for women to act in public.

Concluding analysis of *Relief A – Ways of Life*

The authors of *Relief A – Ways of life* probably have been influenced by the report 285 from *The Swedish National Agency for Education*. In this teaching material an effort has obviously been made to make women more visible through the images and interviews. Of the 13 interviews seven are with women and six with men. The images represent a few more men than women. The cases represent more men than women. Most of the representations are stereotype, but there are good examples of men and women in the text and in images who are not stereotypes.

Generally, the representations of women belong to ideal-type two, since they show women's social role and try to explain the functionality of the gender roles, rather than contrast the traditional roles and deal with masculinity/femininity as human-created concepts. The patriarchal base of the presented religions is not dealt with and women's submission is only dealt with in a few, minor exceptions.

In the text as a whole, though, women are made invisible, which puts the book into ideal-type one. The issue of how the gender system is reproduced within the religions is missing. The main topic in *Relief A – Ways of life* is similarities between the religions. The common base for Judaism, Christianity and Islam is for example emphasized particularly clearly. Yet there is nothing about these religions common patriarchal base and the submission of women in relation to men included in them. It seems to be a God-given condition and is not mentioned or not recognized at all as submission. It is often concluded that before God man and woman have the same value, although they have different roles, and this is a proof of equality between man and woman in religions. One might as well say that man and slave are equal before God, which might also be a conclusion from the sacred texts. Man and slave just have different predetermined roles, but both roles have the same value.

Another example of how woman is made invisible is where the Ten Commandments in the Old Testament is quoted (p.25, *Relief A – Ways of life*). When it comes to the tenth Commandment, it is quoted without its precisions. The text reads: *‘You shall not covet your neighbor’s house’*, where the whole text from the Bible reads:

“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor”.

The Bible - Exodus 20:17²²

Reading the entire biblical text as shown above helps the reader to understand whom this Commandment was intended for and the power relations in the Bible in which woman along with house, slaves, ox and donkey, is the man’s property. The schoolbook excludes this clarification of the tenth Commandment.

As mentioned in the first chapter ‘Why religion?’, a big part of religion is to tell its followers how they should live. How the followers should live specifically as man and woman is a big part of this and a big part of the pupils’ everyday life, therefore it seems

²² The Holy Bible (1997): New Revised Standard Version.

logical to think that the teaching material on religion ought to deal with how religion structures and reproduces the gender roles and the gender system more fundamentally.

Final analysis

This chapter will start with answering the main question of this essay, then an analysis and a discussion of the answer from a wider gender theory follows. Finally, I will draw some conclusions of what remains to be developed regarding the gender perspective in the schoolbooks on religion.

Answer to the main question

The intention of this essay was to critically analyze which perspective on gender that was conveyed in schoolbooks on religion. The starting point was to highlight whether contemporary schoolbooks have been influenced by the recent public requirements on equality in teaching material and the debate about the gender perspective.

The main question of this essay was:

- What gender perspective is conveyed in schoolbooks on religion?

The sub questions were:

- What does the writer emphasize and what has the writer excluded from the text?
- Are the historical and discursive aspects of gender presented in the schoolbooks?
- What remains to be developed regarding the gender perspective in the schoolbooks?

What gender perspective is conveyed in schoolbooks on religion?

Two ideal-type gender perspectives are mostly visible in the schoolbooks on religion.

1. Gender issues are not regarded as important for religion in schoolbooks.

Above all, women are not visible in the text. Hirdman formulates this as 'Women are made invisible'. They are not present in the context and, as Hirdman emphasizes, this implies a view that the concept of masculinity/femininity is not relevant for the context.

Hirdman formula “A – not A”, i.e. “Man – not Man” where Woman is “not Man” rather than a woman.

2. Women’s social role within religions is represented and explained.

When women are made visible in the schoolbooks, it is almost always to describe their social role and the function of their specific role. Nevertheless, the relation between men and women only becomes an adjunct to the subject, which according to Hirdman, creates an image of loosely hinged identities. It seems as if men and women play their gender roles because it is functional. The result of this analysis, according to Hirdman, is a hyphen between biological sex and gender role. This view integrates an implicit understanding of culture as something rather simple and relatively unproblematic. There are two classic ways of answering the question “*why*” do women have this specific social role:

- a. Man is whole; woman is a half uncompleted man. Hirdman’s formula A – a. This view is e.g. represented in the biblical creational myth when Eve is created from Adam’s rib or in the Hindu idea that women have less divinity in them than men.
- b. Man and woman are two completely different species and each other’s opposite. Woman is different and can not be compared with man. The differences are emphasized. Hirdman’s formula A – B. Feminists who claim that man and woman are equal, of the same value, but have God-given or nature-given differences represent this view.

When equality between man and woman is dealt with, in the schoolbooks that this essay has reviewed, it is from this type of feminist view that regards women and men to be different, but equal. Other feminists do not regard this as equality. Unfortunately, other feminists are not well represented in the schoolbooks and are not allowed to criticize the religious difference feminism (described above under 2b), consequently it is the above definition of equality that is accepted in the schoolbooks.

Analysis of the conveyed gender perspective

Concerning the gender perspective, of the reviewed books, there are some logical problems, which can be summarized as:

The gender perspective in the schoolbooks is not well thought through.

Women are mainly made invisible in the schoolbooks. When they are visible it is their social role that is explained, a few times the power struggle between men and women is visible and discussed, and rarely masculinity/femininity is dealt with as human-created concepts.

The schoolbooks on religion in contemporary Sweden are written with somewhat more attention to gender than before, due to the gender discourse of our time. Discussions around gender have been an important issue during recent years in both academic environments, as well as among political authorities. It leaves many traces in the different institutions where new policies are worked out. Consequently, The Swedish National Agency for Education is also interested and involved in the question as it is reflected in their reports on gender issues. The new demands on equality between men and women in schools and its teaching material create new circumstances, which the authors of schoolbooks are conscious about and have to face.

Therefore women seem to be included here and there in the text and in the images. Things like patriarchy, woman's oppression, subordination, etc. are mentioned. The problem is that the texts rarely discuss the historical and social processes deeply, in which gender has been created. The impression is that the visibilities of woman and gender issues are included in the books in order to deal with the demands of our time, rather than because of an understanding of gender and equality issues. This becomes obvious as knowledge of gender is not affecting the main text itself and as gender issues are not discussed deeper within the text.

A shallow gender perspective

A problem in the reviewed texts is the way they often describe problematic gender matters, like inequality or subordination of women, without connecting these problems to the religions in a way that concerns the religions' gender system. They do not attempt to investigate into the historical and religious roots of inequality.

The authors may mention the problems of woman's subordination under the man in the religions. Yet, they neither struggle to analyze the problem, nor provide vital information that can be helpful for the pupils when making their own possible analysis. The text e.g. claims that: 'there are rules in the Torah that insults women', and then immediately concludes: 'but the situation is different today as the woman's right is in focus'.

This is the general pattern of the books every time it concerns a gender issue. The books view on critical issues like masculinity/femininity, equality between men and women or patriarchy are overshadowed by an ambition to show an overall consensus within religions.

The gender system is rather treated as a part of different traditions and cultures, which affect the religions from the outside, as if the subordination of women were not a part of the religions themselves. Separating patriarchy from religion does not solve the problems of inequality within religions. The stress on cultures and traditions as the main source of gender problems, results in a pattern in which women are made invisible when it comes down to the religions' view of woman.

From the moment that the writers formulize a sentence like: 'Hindu's moral in conflict with patriarchal traditions', they show inability to a deeper understanding of how the entire moral system of Hindus is built up within the historical structure of the very same patriarchal traditions. Hinduism, like the other great religions, does not stand outside the patriarchal traditions, but is created and structured by power relations that are building blocks for the foundation of patriarchy. Discrimination between man and woman and between different castes is a part of Hinduism, which the Hindu moral is based on. Hindu moral can not be reduced to 'strive for good deeds'. The pupils deserve to know a lot more about the creation of differences between men and women that is going on in religions. The shallowness of how these gender patterns are dealt with in schoolbooks

makes it impossible for the pupils to have a deeper understanding on gender issues of different religions.

Religious texts that reveal the gender system are excluded.

The reviewed schoolbooks do not supply the pupils with relevant references from the sacred texts, so that the pupils may practice ‘Critical Language Study’ and draw their own conclusions. It is not enough to mention that oppression of women within religion is connected to elderly patriarchal traditions or ‘wrong interpretations’ of religious rules. If the text mentions that the sacred texts have been interpreted wrongly, they also have a responsibility to show the pupils in what way.

In the Bible we may, for example, read that:

“Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.”

The Bible, Ephesians 5:22-24²³

The words of the Bible clearly reflect a very important view of woman, which is a part of the Christian Church. The quotes are a part of a gender system that historically is directly connected to the patriarchal traditions in which the entire religion has been developed. Similar religious ideas form barriers against women’s rights and freedom in all the great religions. The Christian’s history, for example, is loaded with saints and leaders that have expressed themselves aggressively against women. The founder of the protestant church Martin Luther, whom is emphasized in the schoolbooks but whose gender perspective is excluded, is not an exception as he said:

"Men have broad shoulders and narrow hips, and accordingly they possess intelligence. Women have narrow shoulders and broad hips. Women ought to stay at home; the way they were created indicates this, for they have broad hips and a wide fundament to sit upon."

Martin Luther²⁴

²³ http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?book_id=56&chapter=5&version=31

In not providing direct information from religious scripts and sources, the schoolbooks do not increase pupils' knowledge about the foundations of patriarchal religions and traditions.

Consequences of a shallow gender perspective

“The horizon in time where history appears is also the horizon of gender.”

“Above this horizon is the history of gender: the course of events that has produced the actual gender order we live in”.

R. W. Connell²⁵

Religions are created within the framework of complicated historical processes of human action. In these processes the power, and production, relations have tremendously important impacts on the forming of cultural elements, no matter if language or religion. The powers maintained by some groups have always been used to build hierarchical and masculine hegemonic systems, which lead to the domination of the powerful over the powerless. This domination is the main source of creation of different economical, political and cultural systems in which religions as well as gender systems are created. The religious principles that deal with the difference between man and woman originate from the power relations and hegemonic masculinity, described in the beginning of this essay.

Separating religion from culture, as the schoolbooks do, shows not only inability to have a deeper structural understanding of human history, but also a far larger weakness to localize, analyze and understand the real sources for women's subordination as an inseparable part from the religious language and doctrine. This inability leads to serious educational problems for pupils as they are never given a chance to learn about religions gender systems. Consequently, they never understand the role of religions on a critical issue like the subordination of women.

With a shallow gender perspective in the teaching material, the pupils will lack knowledge about the gender systems, in this case of religions. Without the crucial

²⁴ <http://www.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/History/teaching/protref/women/WR0911.htm>

²⁵ Connell (2002) p.69.

knowledge of the gender system, understanding religion, society and history is difficult for the pupils. That is a critical consequence of the schoolbooks, as they suffer from having a reduced perspective on the history of religions.

Without understanding of the gender system it is impossible for the pupils to free themselves from traditional gender roles and create equality. Thus the reviewed books contribute to the reproduction of the gender system, which is built on hierarchy and inequality.

Discussion of the conveyed gender perspective

The schoolbooks reviewed above are written in the 21st century, which should leave more visible traces from our entire scientific knowledge in a time when the access to that knowledge is almost unlimited. Using the available knowledge on the gender system would not only increase the quality of the books, but also make a much better platform, in which pupils are given a better ability to learn and know about human history.

Preparing this essay also meant browsing many schoolbooks on religion that are in use on different school levels in Sweden. All these books, but one, have provided uncritical information on different religions, sometimes so uncritical that the reader might conclude that the author of the book is deeply engaged in the described religion. In one book there was one page in the very end about Humanism. Critique against Humanism from religious people was a part of this page. Including critique in the presentations is a very good way to deal with a subject in a regular schoolbook. It would e.g. be clarifying for the reader if other representatives of feminists (like gender or equity feminists) would be able to criticize the equality that is offered by the difference feminists within the great religions. In *Relief A – Ways of life* only difference feminism is represented.

If the main task of education is to provide objective information, practice the pupils' ability to understand an argument, reason and reflect on reasoning, and through this learning become more aware of the consequences of a view or statement, then many of these books fail to fulfill the task. The two books examined in this essay are not an exception.

Using Critical Language Study in school

Unfortunately ‘Critical Language Study’ is not in use in today’s schools’ syllabuses. An education without ‘Critical Language Study’ is unconscious of how dominant cultural values are being transmitted. Fairclough claims that education:

“...by contrast, is not just passing things on (though it is partly that); it is developing the child’s critical consciousness of her environment and her critical self-consciousness, and her capacity to contribute to the shaping and reshaping of her social world. It is therefore no part of education to present to children any element of their humanly produced and humanly changeable social environment as if it were a part of natural environment over which they have no control.”²⁶

My own experience, from working in schools, is that most teachers do not work with their pupils in a critical manner, i.e. they do not introduce essential text analysis in the classroom and as a result do not increase the pupils’ language awareness.

A modern education’s aim should be to educate pupils in a way in which their knowledge and awareness may help them to shape their world. ‘Critical Language Study’ should be an obvious part of an equal curriculum used in school²⁷, since *“language use – discourse – is not just a matter of performing tasks, it is also a matter of expressing and constituting and reproducing social identities and social relations, including crucially relations of power”²⁸*.

A “good example”

As I mentioned I have browsed through many of the contemporary schoolbooks on religion and almost all of them have a comparable gender view as the two reviewed schoolbooks in this essay. I would like to highlight one exception from this pattern, which was a book for the B-course in the upper secondary school. It is:

²⁶ Ibid, p. 197-198.

²⁷ *“...though the content of existing language awareness programmes is generally by no means critical!”*
Ibid, p.198.

²⁸ Ibid, p. 196.

Appelros, Hornborg, Röcklingsberg, Jansson, Planck (2007): *Din tro eller min?*
Religionskunskap för gymnasiet. B-kurs. Värnamo, Bokförlaget Natur & Kultur.

In my translation the title reads 'Your belief or mine?' I did not analyze it, since it was for the B-course and not for the regular A-course, but browsing it is promising. The gender perspective is more profound and well thought through here. The four different ideal-types regarding gender perspectives seem to be put into a dialogue with each other.

Conclusion

This essay has shown that gender issues are mainly not regarded as important for religion in schoolbooks. When women are visible it is mostly their social role within religions that is represented and explained. A few times the power struggle between men and women is visible and discussed, and rarely is masculinity/femininity dealt with as human-created concepts.

The schoolbooks have logical problems connected to a shallow gender perspective, where the gender system of the religions is excluded from the text. This leads to a lack of knowledge among the pupils, knowledge that would help them understand the gender system of religions.

Excluding a gender perspective where masculinity/femininity is dealt with as human-created concepts from the schoolbooks results in the unconscious reproduction of the conventional gender system, not only by the pupils but also by the educational system that uses the books. Consequently, the inequalities of the gender system remain in the schools just as in a much larger context, namely the whole society.

What remains to be developed?

The last sub question of this essay was:

- What remains to be developed regarding the gender perspective in the schoolbooks?

The answer to this question and the main conclusion from this study is that:

The schoolbooks need a more profound gender perspective.

Deeper knowledge about the gender system would be highly usable in the writing of schoolbooks, since it is a basic foundation of the social structure of societies, history, culture, religion, view on science, etc, etc. Having a profound gender perspective when rethinking historical and cultural issues like religion, targets not only social roles of humans, but also the whole socioeconomic conditions in which the cultural process takes place. Practically, it means that the schoolbooks would deal with religion itself as a product of humans. In doing so, the authors of schoolbooks might imply a far more scientific point of view on religion. The perspective available in these schoolbooks is unfortunately miles away from a scientific view.

A more profound knowledge of the gender system is essential in an educational process. The power relation between men and women needs to be dealt with if the pupils are to understand how the gender system is maintained. Masculinity/femininity needs to be dealt with as human-created concepts, if the pupils should be able to analyze the differences between man and woman that are created in religions. This knowledge would make it possible for the pupils to emancipate themselves from the gender system and the inequalities produced by that system.

The gender system opposes a development towards a more democratic society.

The woman and the man must be freed from the shackles of the gender system.

This is crucial for the future development of the societies of our world.

Thank you for your attention, Nader Farahani

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