



IARTEM *e-Journal*

Volume 3 No 1

Volume 3 Number 1

Reading normalised knowledge production from a feminist perspective: A case study

Siv Fahlgren and Anders Johansson

Mid Sweden University

Abstract

This article presents a feminist reading of the introductory part of a Swedish university textbook from the field of social work. We show how a textbook like this, whose aim is to represent the “normal” state of a discipline, is conditioned by discursive circumstances beyond the control of individual authors, such as the normalisation of what is seen as central and what is seen as less important within the discipline, and how these circumstances reproduce patterns that still challenge feminist standpoints. Although pluralism and tolerance are the explicit aims of the editors, a seemingly neutral narrator voice, and the consequent way of presenting different research methods and theories as perspectives open for choice, come to hide existing hierarchies of power within the discipline. Pluralism and discrimination can thus actually coexist.

Keywords: Text book, Academic, Gender, Normalisation, Social Work,

—

Introduction

This article presents, as a case study, a feminist reading of part one in a Swedish university textbook, *Socialt arbete: En grundbok* (Social Work: A basic textbook; Meeuwisse et al., 2006). In our reading we want to emphasise how a textbook like this one, whose aim, according to fundamental conventions of genre, is to represent the “normal” state of a discipline, is conditioned by discursive circumstances beyond the control of individual authors; circumstances so fundamental that they can be difficult to distinguish from what is often called “facts” or regarded as “common sense”, for example in terms of shared academic understandings of knowledge, objectivity and neutrality, meritocracy and university hierarchy. From its broad range, this kind of critical reading may have a more general interest, not only to social work, but in the academic field of text book research.

There already exists broad research on textbooks, but fewer studies apply a gender perspective. In the 1980s and 1990’s research in the USA criticised the content of introductory sociology textbooks from a feminist perspective (Hall 1988, Ferree and Hall 1990, Hall 2000). A conceptual analysis of an introductory textbook in couple and family therapy training demonstrated that the examples used to a great extent supported sexist and antifeminist beliefs, such as ‘mother blaming’, negative labelling of women, and neglect of gender inequalities (Stone Carlson et. al., 2006).

In Sweden, some sociology university departments were subject to analysis in the 1990s to find gender patterns among employees and in education content. This research demonstrated gender patterns of inequality and a lack of gender perspective in the discipline (e.g. Bossedal & Johanson 1998). Since then, the Swedish parliament as well as government have passed laws and guidelines, and as a result, all public institutions must actively work for gender equality (Skr 2002/03:140, SFS 2001:1286), and all activities within the welfare sector must be developed from a gender perspective (Socialdepartementet 1997: 269).

Nevertheless, general examinations of textbooks at Swedish universities, made by student organisations and researchers demonstrate that gender perspectives are still absent from the perspective of how gender relations are reproduced or made invisible, how structures of power remain unexplored (Eriksson and Burman 2006, Fahlgren and Edvall 2006, Martinsson 2009, Sohl 2000, Stridsberg and Westerstrand 2007, Wiktorsson 2007, Österlund 2006).

It is our intention to proceed beyond the mere statement that discrimination appears in the texts. In the introduction to *Socialt arbete: En grundbok* (Meeuwisse et al., 2006) the editors, Anna Meeuwisse and Hans Swärd, refer to the German social worker and theorist Gisela Konopka who points out that social work must be characterised by broad knowledge from the social sciences, also including disciplines such as philosophy (2006:17). It is out of respect for such an open, critically reflexive attitude that we in this article apply modes of reading from comparative literature and philosophy to discuss the textbook in relation to the discourse which forms the Swedish discipline of social work today. We claim that it is possible to investigate the institutional practice which constitutes the frame of the present textbook through careful readings of how texts function, since reading is a concretisation of structural

norms and conventions. Therefore, our main objective is to explore how “the normal” is constructed – with its inherent blind spots and silences – and out of that analysis discuss how the negative aspects of normalisation could be challenged. Discursive readings might destabilise normalisation processes and allow for alternative readings (Hearn 1998: 808). The questions we will put to the texts in our discourse analysis concern *what* is normalised, *how* normalisation is performed, *which* conditions that normalisation is based upon, and the possible *outcomes* of the normalisation process (Fahlgren 1999, Rätzel 2007).

We will, both of us, apply this reading from a feminist point of view, but our disciplinary lenses will also enable us to read from a double perspective – inside and outside the discipline itself. One of us works in comparative literature and may, we hope, with the naivety of disciplinary ignorance look at the discipline with new eyes. The other belongs to the discipline of social work, with the delimitations and opportunities that the disciplinary base offers (Daudi 1990). The balance created by such double reading will, we expect, also appear in and through a wish for dialogue. Thus, the readings do not primarily aim at statements about what is wrong and what is missing – in most respects the book is a good textbook; they rather invite conversations about the significance that certain discursive formations have and how their negative aspects can be challenged.

Theoretical assumptions

A more general theoretical background to the function of normalisation as a reproduction of orders of power in science is provided by Jacques Derrida, Gayatri Spivak and Michel Foucault. In common for their ways of thought is the admission of the inevitable and productive in the creation of normalising interpretative communities, at the same time that they challenge the blindnesses, exclusions and orders of power which are always the consequences of each such interpretative community (Derrida 1988). One of the points Derrida makes is that values, which are structurally given, always already are included in the prerequisites for scientific work, and hence cannot be excluded pragmatically or methodologically (Derrida 1988, above all 131 ff.). Spivak has developed a similar understanding of the inevitability of values in essentialising and normalising identity processes in the academy (Spivak 1993). By insisting that values always have importance also for methodological and pragmatic choices, *but* at the same time disallowing that values are reduced to something which originates in, or equals, normalisation processes, Derrida and Spivak open up opportunities for *critique* of prevailing discursive orders, that is, opportunities to investigate the presumptions and the conditions for the possibility of both discursive orders and individual choices. Foucault also confirms that structures speak through the self and that knowledge always includes power and knowledge at the same time (Foucault 1974, 1977). Besides such theoretical presumptions we always bring from those thinkers the hope that critical thinking can open interpretative communities and normalising discourses for the meeting with others, for understanding and new opportunities to think.

The genre

In reference to a genre like the textbook it is inevitable that certain basic ontological, epistemological and ethical assumptions have importance for how the textbooks are written, and that certain pedagogical/communicative conceptions govern both how the book is written and how it is read. There are strong genre requirements in relation to what counts as knowledge and how communication is perceived.

The book we examine is an anthology written by 28 social work researchers in Sweden (21 men and 7 women). 16 of the authors are full professors (13 men and 3 women), which constitutes about half the number of the Swedish professors in social work at that time. The field of social work in Sweden is a field strongly dominated by women, but the university hierarchy and senior positions in social work are dominated by men. Thus the gender representation of the authors of the book is quite representative of the gendered power structure of this discipline in the academy. To write a basic book in a discipline also indicates claims to catch what is "normal" in the discipline. This objective to be representative is inevitable in an introductory basic textbook, and it implies that the book can be looked upon as an important part of the formation of disciplinary identity. Thereby it can be claimed that a reading of it is relevant not only in reference to the individual book itself but also to the discipline as such. The knowledge which is reproduced in the comprehensive format of the book provides, and should provide, the reader with a certain perception of social work. It is to be assumed that the book conveys the knowledge worth acquiring (cf Sohl 2000).

Furthermore, the textbook is written in a scientific discourse which, when it, in the form of a basic textbook, is transformed to a pedagogical discourse, has the aim to turn theoretical ideas into practical action. In this sense a basic textbook is always normative and a part of a normalisation process which also extends beyond the academic context and which can have consequences for practical social work.

As has been stated, the inevitable genre norms are always related to a value system. In the introduction the editors demonstrate that they are aware of this when they write that social workers must have good knowledge of *different* and *contradictory* theories of social work not to serve as instruments for oppression. With the book they therefore rather want to show the diversity and complexity of social work than provide the answer to what social work really is (Meeuwisse et al., 2006: 17-18). In accordance with this conception of value, pluralism and tolerance permeate the book, from explicit theoretical stands to chapter divisions, which means that the normative aspects of the handbook are softened. Nevertheless, as we will attempt to demonstrate, this pluralism is double-edged. It also functions in a way which hides the normativity of the normal and its representation. Our claim is that the capacity to *join* normativity and a certain kind of pluralism is one of the most important organisational principles within the contemporary academic field.

The genre conventions in this basic textbook imply, we argue, a number of inevitable delimitations of pluralistic freedom, and a number of values. First, a basic textbook should be restricted to present the "normal", the relevant, the important and the representative. It is a tendency that all these concepts appear free from values, but they are not. Second, as a genre the basic textbook is related to a view of

communication as the transfer of facts, and this is true also when the authors are problematising, since students read according to such a communication model. Together, these two genre conventions, of which the latter points to the broad range of contextual connections on which each textbook is dependent, lead to a situation where questions about value and power are mystified and put aside in relation to what stands out as the disciplinary core: the normal establishments of facts. Pluralism appears as a code word for normality.

Pluralism and normalisation

The art of making the “right” choice

We have here, above all, chosen to analyse part 1 of the book, “Presumptions in social science”. According to the authors, this part deals with the subjects which “have constituted the prerequisites and bases for the Swedish Bachelor of Science Programme in Social Work” (2006: 20). The description lends this part of the textbook a great weight and that is why we have chosen it for our analysis. It could be seen as symptomatic that the chapter on gender and social work has not been given a place in this section but rather a more marginalised position in the part called “Perspectives on social work”. The insights given in that chapter are thus taken as something not belonging to the central concerns of the discipline, to what it really *is, essentially*. Part 1 consists of an introductory chapter, “What is social work?”, and four chapters which are about psychological and social theory, law and social policy, in relation to social work.

The first chapter in the book is consequently devoted to definitions of social work. Under the section title “Concluding reflections” it is stated that “our inquiries did not provide any clear-cut and unambiguous answers to the question [about what social work is].” Definitions are many, and must be many, the authors declare and conclude by a survey of an understanding of social work as different activities and organisations at different levels (2006: 68 ff.).

Before they reach such empirically pragmatic determinations, the authors have looked for essential definitions (2006: 28-32), historically described previous definitions (2006: 33-44) and analysed, in relation to the history of ideas, various modes of constructing the historical understanding of the phenomenon of social work (2006: 44-65). Thus a traditionally positivist view of history is placed alongside hermeneutic and structural problematisations of history. What is true is reduced to a matter of choices: “Quite simply it depends on which perspective you adopt and what you choose to see” (2006: 69). Eclecticism is also something which characterises the book on the whole and which underlines the disciplinary openness to different perspectives and different research traditions. This can be looked upon as strength, but still you can put questions about how it is possible to keep such a quite contradictory disciplinary discourse together, if it may have a price, and even perhaps if it really is so harmonious and filled with consensus as it appears.

What makes it possible that a disciplinary discourse can house diametrically opposed ontological perceptions? It is as if paradigm shifts are no longer needed. Instead, competing perceptions are incorporated into the present system in the name of

pluralism. But the inclusion of diversity does not mean that hierarchies and values cease to matter. Of course social work is ruled by a situation where certain modes of doing research or practical work in the area are looked upon as more correct than others. Eclecticism may, however, lead to a state where such modes are not discerned; it can make invisible how some exclusions and marginalisations of “incorrect” perspectives come about, whereas others are normalised. Opposite to a state where differences or contradictions about values, ontological assumptions and epistemological presumptions are made clear to enable conversations, this eclecticism implies that certain perspectives are marginalised out of references to what is “dominating”, “most frequent”, “most important”, that is, “normal”:

It is, however, *important* to underline that *in the great majority of more influential international networks* there are pronounced wishes that systematic reproducibility and goal orientation should characterise the practice of social work. [...]

Demands for result orientation and efficiency in social work *have increased* in the 1990s. (2006: 170) [our emphases]

Because it is presented as a *historical development*, in which the “*normal*” way of looking at methods has become more and more dominant, the impression one has is that this is a process disengaged from contextual presumptions in the forms of approaches to knowledge, ideology, values and power. Thereby values can be reproduced under the pretext of an eclectic freedom of valuation, just by referring to the condition that this is what counts in the area. Relativism and diversity provide an opportunity *not* to account or argue for one’s own presumptions, but only state that *most people choose* the one or the other perspective. Through this normalisation, pluralism and discrimination can coexist and depend on each other.

The neutral narrator voice

Another consequence of this short-circuit of the epistemological problematic by reducing it to a choice between different perspectives is the case when a description is *not* presented as a perspective and thereby normalised as given and unproblematic. The narrator voice no longer claims some objective truth, at the same time that it continues to imply selective inclusion and exclusion (cf Kumashiro 2009: 14). This is the case in for instance the already mentioned introductory text about what social work is. When the different history perspectives have been presented, the authors ask themselves, under the section headline “Concluding reflections”:

Could the questions about social work perhaps be approached from another direction? Yes, we think that it could be meaningful to analytically distinguish some different presumptions and modes of expression which we have touched upon in this chapter and which will be enlarged in other chapters of this book. (2006: 69)

Pluralism hands over to what appears to be solely pragmatic decisions – “could be meaningful”, “analytically distinguish”, “some different” – in the matter of deciding what is important in reference to social work. The “prerequisites and modes of expression” which are referred to here are not described as eligible perspectives, and thereby they stand out as more fundamental than they would have been if they had

been described in those terms. Phenomena which are provided that kind of status are the following: social work as a type of activities, the different ways to organise such activities, the distribution of responsibility, the practitioners of social work, social problems and the different levels of social work (2006: 69 ff). We do not believe that the authors mean that these phenomena could be independent of the history problematic presented in reference to the different perspectives, but we would like to point out how the perspectivist relativism always brings its own shadow: what is more or less given. If some phenomena are defined as perspectives, there is a great risk that others, which are not explicitly described as perspectives, will stand out as normal, given or directly observable. That the third part of the book, which deals with ethics, power, gender, culture and ethnicity, has the title "Perspectives on social work" therefore implies that these areas are additions, less central and eligible. Thus pluralism has consequences which depend on its discursive embeddedness. It cannot stipulate value neutrality, since valuations always slip in, irrespective of author or editor intentions.

It is true that pluralism and tolerance are not valuing words in the same way as "truth" or "justice". But, as we have tried to argue above, no basic textbook can be value neutral. From its assumed neutrality pluralism valuations and power relations can therefore hide, rather than promote, real dialogic diversity. The discursive function of the neutral narrator voice becomes a matter of *not* problematising the question of representation. The identity of the discipline, the way it is presented in this textbook is based upon the normalised picture of what is common, important and valuable, as if thereby representing something simple and directly observable. Through this phenomenalisation of what are actually complex textual processes of differentiation and hierarchisation in conceptual and institutional practices, the assumptions of the normal are entirely hidden. The critique which above all science theorists and feminists have aimed at the positivist science may appear disarmed when neutral methodological pluralism replaces neutral objectivity. Since it, from a critically theoretical perspective, however, is just the neutrality of the methods which is questioned, would this not mean that it is a way to avoid critique? Empirical diversity does not in itself mean some questioning of centred and discriminatory discourses, since it can depend on the same non-problematising view of identity, discrimination and signification processes as these discourses themselves. What is required instead is a structural critique of the discursive forms of representation. Jacques Derrida underlined the importance of this difference when he, in reference to the deconstructional manner of breaking up structural unity, warned that this should not be perceived in terms of solely empirical diversity (Derrida 1978).

Normalisation of men

Men as an invisible centre

In chapter 3, "Social theory and social work", the aim is to give examples of the relevance of sociological theory to social work and different social achievements within the welfare state, typical to Nordic countries (2006: 94). The authors want to show what kind of understanding sociological theory can help to contribute to in relation to social work (2006: 95). What is very obvious is that the social theories presented here are, to a very large extent, with a few exceptions, produced by men

(mentioned are Zygmunt Bauman, Robert Merton, Max Weber, Erving Goffman and more than fifteen other men but very few women, 2006: 95-108). This is not very surprising. The same results are retrieved in most gender examinations of course reading from various university programmes (e. g. Hall 1988, Sohl 2000, Stridsberg and Westerstrand 2007, Österlund 2006). But also when some theorists, who are assessed as central for the future, are mentioned, they are men only (e. g. Anthony Giddens, Pierre Bourdieu, 2006: 108). This is also the case when the theorising of the way inequality is established and reproduced is mentioned (Charles Tilly, 2006: 108). In a very short part of the text a feminist critic is presented, a part we will return to in the analysis below.

This implicit centring of men is also the case in the textbook chapter “Psychology and social work”. The aim presented for this chapter is to give examples of the relevance of psychological theory to social work (2006: 75) with a focus on social psychology. Different theoretical directions in psychology, like behaviourism, gestalt psychology, psychoanalysis, connection theory, are presented as if mainly created by men (e. g. John B. Watson, Sigmund Freud, Otto Rank, Erik Homburger Erikson, and more than ten other men, 2006: 76-90).

Only a few internationally important female theorists are mentioned in the psychology section, for example Margaret Mahler, who is presented as one of the representatives of the psychology of me, who introduced the development of psychoanalysis to a general developmental psychology (2006: 79). Emmy Werner’s, Ruth Smith’s and Michael Rutter’s research about children’s vulnerability and power of resistance is declared to have had great importance for theory development in the area (2006: 87). In the train of the work at Skå, the Swedish children’s village, founded by Gustav Jonsson, it is described how what came to be called psychosocial work in Sweden was developed in a number of Swedish books (2006:82, 3 men and 3 women are mentioned).

It thus appears that most influential theorists are men, even if some examples of women are mentioned as followers. Here one can of course argue that this in fact provides a representative picture of how the conditions in the theoretical field really have been and still are. It is well known that what has been regarded as classical social theory has mostly been created by men (Hearn 1998), and, to be more specific, you could even add, as Connell calls them in her book *Southern Theory* (2007: 14), men of the metropolitan liberal bourgeoisie. Women have not gained access, and the canon in most academic disciplines is a product of the condition that a certain group has had the power to define tradition and quality (cf Sohl 2000). The argument about historical tradition does not, however, provide an exemption from the responsibility to problematise just this, not least because a big part of gender and feminist studies has gained great acceptance in the theory both of social science and psychology, and not least because it has contributed to a critical rereading of the male classics here presented (Gergen and Davies 1997, Connell 2007).

The historical argument also demonstrates one of the great difficulties with basic textbooks. Their aspiration to represent the normal inevitably leads up to a reproduction of established power conditions. An author or an editor has to act in reference to this fact. It is not possible to exempt oneself from such responsibility by referring to statements indicating that you only describe, that you need to make

pragmatic decisions or that you, in spite of pluralism, will not have the space to include all. The fact that the individual editor still *must* describe the normal, *must* make pragmatic decisions and *cannot* include all does not reduce the responsibility; it only increases the dilemma. What is required is the allowance of this paradox and an active relation to it.

Men of no gender

One mode of allowing this paradox is to critically consider it. Representativity is never something innocent. The kind of directly observable statistical misrepresentations, which we presented in the previous section, cannot just be put aside with the argument that the representation quite simply reflects how it is or how it has been. Values matter, and clear, simple empirical material can be as important as more philosophical readings in order to deconstruct shortages in normalising or unreflected perceptions – like the one about the neutral textbook form of representation (Spivak 1999: 251). In the textbook we now analyse there are, however, examples of less obvious shortages: one is its non-reflection about the concept of men. While men are dominating as theorists, what is missing is *the theorising of men* (Hearn 1998: 782). The theorists are not explicitly presented as *men*; nor is the fact that most of them are men in any way problematised. This is being done by the discursive practices: men as men are absent and avoided, and the presentation of the theory frame is not in any way gendered. This implies that we here can listen for two types of silences: from the excluded and from the included. The former do not give voice, and the latter do not need it.

Åse Røthing (2009: 94) describes the silence of the included as a privilege to be allowed to be invisible as an allowance without declaration. Because what is in this sense silent is at the same time what it all the time is talked about, since it makes the assumption for the whole conversation. Are men not theorised because there is no need to theorise them, because they are not problematic? Jeff Hearn asks. That would be the case from the standpoint of those who are both super-ordinate and taken for granted, that is, from the standpoint of men. Hearn continues: “Not explicitly talking of men, not naming men as men, is a structured way of *not* beginning to talk of and question men’s power in relation to women, children, young people and indeed other men” (Hearn 1998: 786-88). Yes, even other men, because these men are so taken for granted that they are never problematised when it comes to sexuality, “race”/ethnicity or class. Power structures, like for instance gender relations, remain unexplored and made invisible. This normalisation practice will in that way, unintentionally, have the effect of reproducing dominant gendered, as well as racialised, power relations. Power relations that are made invisible will be legitimised (Rätzel 2007, Stone Carlson et. al 2006). An important gender strategy would therefore be to problematise the normalisation process that is making men invisible but still centred, to make the theorising of men more explicit.

To understand how this normalisation process is constructed, we must bring out the discursive connections in which knowledge is produced. This is about a textbook with the implicit assumption that it should transfer knowledge to the reader/the student. And what is the knowledge in this academic discourse? This knowledge is based upon established research in social work by a great number of established and well-qualified researchers, and it is in this way that the authors of the book are presented

above all (2006: 13-16). How the authors in this anthology have been selected is not described; nor is it explained from which positions they declare themselves. This neutral, implicit basis can be said to ground itself on a shared understanding of meritocracy and university hierarchies which legitimise the authors' respectability, reliability and knowledge. This is probably not unusual among Swedish university textbooks. It creates a scientific knowledge position as a voice from nowhere which, in spite of all talk about diversity, is based upon a shared scientific understanding of neutrality and is, in its extension, a remainder of objectivity. The form brings the implicit assumption that neutral facts free from valuation are rendered, in spite of the nowadays generally shared acceptance of the theoretical critique of this assumption. The non-neutral result of this neutrality is that it reproduces exclusion and discrimination as if it were objective.

It is interesting to notice, which we have already referred to, that the preservation of the positivist neutrality position no longer is based upon a belief in objectivity in the sense of safe, confirmed knowledge, but on the contrary on relativism, extended very far. It becomes apparent that pluralism and relativism go very well together with a continued status quo, in which the positivist neutrality concept can continue to work. "The normal", what is chosen, forms the epistemological basis for the organisation of the pluralist discourse. The critique from the theory of science aimed at positivist neutrality claims, because it was grounded on belief in an objective truth, can thereby be incorporated as one perspective among others, since the discipline confesses that there is no ultimate truth. The normal, what you just do, what appears to start by itself, cannot be criticised – if so, the critic would maintain a true, intolerant and non-pluralist position – one could argue out of a culture-relativist stand. Then the positivist voice from nowhere would not need to be based on something other than the pluralist normativity.

Against such a perception, which has a tendency to maintain status quo as much as traditional positivism, stands the post structural claim that critique is always possible, because no interpretative community (no culture, no paradigm) can ever be closed but will always be related to something else, always be included in a structural context which cannot be controlled (Derrida 1988: 34). Out of this we have in our reading emphasised, above all, how power aspects and values are always important *in* science, without being reduced to something which *originates in* the normalising processes of science. This doubleness of identity and difference makes impossible both the objective purity fallacy from should to is and the individual relativism fallacy from is to should. Instead the possibility opens that different perspectives, separate scientific traditions, can (mis)understand each other in unpredictable ways which will lead to change. This is how our reading attempts to (mis)understand.

Feminists" as objectified and marginalised

In a section of the chapter called "Social Theory and Social Work", social changes and social theory are dealt with (2006: 95-101). Here classical sociological theories of harmony and conflict are presented. In a short passage of ten lines, feminist critique by H. Hernes and J. Lewis of socio-political reforms are presented (2006: 98). This is the only place in the chapter where feminist research is mentioned. The authors write:

From feminist assumptions it has been stated that this welfare state in considerable parts became a patriarchal welfare state built upon the model of the male supporter (Hernes 1987b). It was in the first place a male, social citizenship which the social insurance system promoted in practice. To the extent that women did not participate in the labour market, they also disappeared from an analysis which did not realise that support in practice takes place through a combination of resources from family, salaried work and social contributions (Lewis 1992) (2006:98).

We have chosen to include the whole quotation in order not to replicate the invisibility of this feminist language in our own article, although we are not interested in discussing the feminist argument made in the quotation as such, but rather the discursive practice that is present here. By specifically indicating feminist assumptions, the authors provide the reader with knowledge about another approach, which can be called feminist, and this opens the text. At the same time the presentation demonstrates that this approach is special, different (cf Hall 1998, Sohl 2000). Since it is made in this demonstrative way and in one place only, this *feminist* assumption stands out as divergent and marginal. It implies valuations produced out of individual opinions rather than knowledge.

The discursive practice exercised here – to select something as a perspective in relation to a privileged practice – is to objectify "feminists" in relation to a supposedly neutral centre, and at the same time to marginalise "them". It becomes very obvious that "they/feminists" do not belong to the normalised "we", implicitly taken for granted, out of which the rest of the text is built. The un-theorised and silent men are still the subject at the centre of the discourse on knowledge, talking about "the other" (Hearn 1998: 787). To name a difference in this way does not, Kumashiro writes (2009: 17), "describe very much what the group is but prescribes how a group should be." Again, this can be said to take place in a paradox where scientific knowledge representing freedom from values cannot confess that by marginalising feminist assumptions in a normalisation process it implicitly advocates a belonging to certain values. In a book which is to represent scientific facts there is no place for such a paradoxical admission. Once again, the tolerant inclusion hides an inner exclusion.

A discursive absence of feminists, feminist and gender research

Even if what is important is to underline the discursive contexts which more or less concealed organise and reproduce marginalising and discriminatory structures, it is also always important to point out the explicit exclusion and the silence which in an empirical pluralism can always be motivated by the fact that "everything cannot be covered". The two theory chapters analysed here both have the ambition to give examples of theory, relevant to social work. Historically as well as currently, social work is a very strongly female-dominated field charged with norms concerning sex, gender, sexuality and reproduction. This often makes the problematisations of gender research particularly relevant. Furthermore, there is in Sweden a strong requirement that the gender perspective should be applied in all education. In Sweden, the parliament and the national government demand that all authorities should work actively for equality and that activities should be based on a well worked-out gender perspective (Skr 2002/03: 140). Because of this, there are surprisingly few questions that are gendered in the theory chapters. That is also the

case in “Jurisprudence and Social Work” (chapter 4) and “Social Policy and Social Work” (chapter 5), which present the institutional frames that the legal system and the social policy make up. A very strong discursive practice is active here: making invisible by absence.

This means that not only women and men as men are absent in the presentation of social theory but also feminist and gender research. Here extensive social theory formation in feminist and postcolonial theory is made invisible, theory which has produced a gendered understanding of how inequality is formed and reproduced in the welfare society. International names important to the field of social theory are absent (such as e.g. Donna Haraway, Elisabeth Grosz, Nancy Fraser, Gail Lewis), as well as Nordic names (such as Johanna Esseveld, Karen Davies, Diana Mulinari). The same goes for female feminists or gender theorists in psychology (with international names such as Nancy Chodorow, Jessica Benjamin and Jill Morawski), as well as Nordic names (such as Liv Mette Gulbrandsen and Harriet Holter (Magnusson 2003). Also men engaged in feminist and masculinity theory, such as Robert (today Raewyn) Connell and Michael Kimmel are absent and invisible here.

When certain knowledge is regulated, other knowledge is pushed aside. A gender-neutral presentation presupposes that women’s and men’s historical experiences are similar, and it does not look upon gender as related to the construction of society. This leads to a situation where many questions, important from a gender perspective or for women’s position in society, are made invisible or are treated cursorily (cf Österlund 2006). In this way the constructed norm is not exposed to self-examination (Martinsson 2009).

The same “neutral” attitude permeates the references to power relations like “race”/ethnicity and class. When they are treated, they are described one at a time and not put in relation to a power-related gender order which is shaped and changed within the frame of racial and other discriminatory social structures (de los Reyes and Mulinari 2005, Ferree and Hall 1990). By presenting more of the gender research, women’s and men’s experiences of domination and repression could have been theorised. This could enrich the self-understanding of science.

To summarise this section, we can note how the discursive practice which manifests itself in the handbook leads to a situation where men’s position becomes “normal” and evident. Men make up the theoretical references, at the same time that their position does not need to be stated as a perspective of its own, whereas women are marginalised and perspectivised. Our point is, nevertheless, that this does not depend on the authors’ and the editors’ ill will. Instead we want to emphasise how normalisation processes indeed constitute inevitable parts of the identity of a discipline or a handbook, *but* that the inevitability of those processes does *not* relieve authors and editors of the responsibility to problematise them critically. Normalisation processes are prescriptive. Also the arguments that the handbook only reflects actual conditions – the historical (it has always been this way) and the pragmatic (you cannot include all), arguments which are valid to a great extent – are based on the ways that normalisation processes both exclude and include, and therefore they should be theorised, criticised and deconstructed.

The normalisation of concepts and the silence of gendered power relations

The essentialising normalisation processes appear at many levels in the textbook. Another example demonstrates how there is a continuous absence of a problematisation and theorisation of the concepts which are used out of sex/gender, "race"/ethnicity and class. Concepts like the individual, clients, social problems, social control, social integration, conflict, consensus, order, chaos, family, care, etc., are all used as quite neutral concepts seen from the aspects of power; they are taken for granted and remain un-theorised. We will give the reader a few examples.

Social work is said to take place in the intersection of the individual and society (2006: 94) – but which individual is referred to? And which or whose society? It is for example theoretically described how symbolic interactionism observes the social interplay between the individual and her environment as a negotiation about roles and inter-human relations (2006: 105). The metaphor of negotiation implies non-gendered individuals, colourless, uncategorised units which meet and negotiate and act as if all had the same opportunities, or as if the individual has no gender, sexuality, ethnicity, age or class. This can be described as a phallogocentric strategy to let what could have been the representation of at least two gender collapse into one and the same category – called "the individual" – which, paradoxically, at the same time apparently constitutes the "normal" man (de Beauvoir 1953, Irigaray 1985). The negotiation is subsequently instanced by the patient's encounter with health care where it can be about diagnosis, treatment, the duration of the period for sick-leave and rehabilitation efforts (2006: 105). To a great extent, however, this kind of "negotiations" has turned out to be dependent on how this individual is categorised in terms of sex/gender, ethnicity, age and class (Hammarström 2004, Hovelius and Johansson 2004).

The same applies to the individual or citizen who is the topic of the chapter called "Jurisprudence and Social Work". Law enters social work when different kinds of conflicts of interest should be solved, when different norms and values are put against each other. Private relations can also become public law, like the prohibition of corporal punishment, prostitution, sexual harassment (2006: 113). Law and order, the authors claim, are then about impartial, non-discriminatory action and about civil insight and control (2006: 120). Without contradicting, it is for us obvious that problematisation out of gender, "race"/ethnicity and class is highly relevant here (cf. Granström 2004, Stridsberg and Westerstrand 2007).

The next question becomes: What society is referred to? As we have pointed out above, it is mentioned in one place how the patriarchal structure of the welfare state has been criticised out of feminist considerations. In another section (2006: 101) the sociologist Peter Leonard is mentioned, and he means that the large-scale welfare project, in spite of its claims, has hardly managed to prevent a marginalisation based on class, gender and ethnicity. A third instance which we have found with similar theorisations about how inequality originates and is maintained is at the presentation of Charles Tilly (2006: 108). Besides that, society and its social structure are in these descriptions rendered as something neutrally taken for granted. Speaking about society and its social structure without including the intersecting power relations which form racification, sexism and class oppression can lead to a situation where

these structures disappear from sight and are thereby legitimised (Rätzel 2007, Stone, Carlson et al. 2006, de los Reyes and Mulinari 2005).

It is true that we cannot problematise each concept every time we use it. We need to use concepts like individual and society, but we should be conscious of the fact that “normal” meanings of words are never neutral. In their everyday or normal scientific usage they carry a sedimented historical context characterised by values and power. To realise this does not mean that editors’ and researchers’ paradoxical relations to the normal can be overcome, but it may lead to a situation where changes take place, to the opening of new opportunities.

Social problems are another central concept in social work which also has a tendency to appear as neutral in these chapters. It is described as “situations which are problematic for individuals, groups or sometimes for society at large” (2006: 94). The question is from which position they are looked upon as problematic, and whose view it is which is considered legitimate to make that decision. When problems are described as “poverty, social isolation, inability to adapt to given roles in society, deviant behaviour like criminality” (2006: 96), it becomes obvious that what is defined as social problems is a power-related question which also includes relations like gender, “race”/ethnicity, age and class (de los Reyes and Mulinari 2005).

The authors of the chapter about social theory enter deeply into two processes which are considered central for the analysis and interpretation of social problems, namely social integration and social control with Émile Durkheim as a starting-point (2006: 99-101). This is accomplished without discussing his apparently non-gendered analysis of social solidarity to a great extent underpinned by a biologically given account of sex differences (Fahlgren 1999, Hearn 1998: 787). Durkheim, like many of the classical social theorists, took men for granted as the dominant gender, as the “individual”. This means that by using his concepts today – like collective consciousness, social solidarity and social control – without problematising them in relation to different social power relations, the effect might be a reproduction of the notion of sexuality, family building, power relations, etc., underlying these concepts. By a discursive practice that ignores gender relations patriarchal social relations are reproduced.

The concepts we use always bring a history, a sedimented layer of perceptions permeated by power relations. In social science this tends to be forgotten because of orientations towards clear definitions and methodological purity. What we have wanted to emphasise in this section is that every definition or non-definition of a concept has consequences – theoretical, ethical and political. As long as indulgent pluralism only consists of possibilities to choose between definitions and methods, and does not involve a broadening of the critical reflection on the prerequisites of those choices, their consequences and implications, it runs the risk of not leading to real dialogic diversity but to hiding what really is at stake.

Method and freedom of choice

So far, we have seen how pluralism connected to an individual freedom of choice has changed the neutrality and objectivity ideals of positivist science, without actually abandoning them or changing them in a more radical structural manner. What the

freedom of choice has reference to in the scientific society is the choice of method. The scientific method constitutes one of the most important nodes in the organisation of the scientific discourse. It is the interpretation of post structural theories as some kind of methods which, to a certain extent, has made the integration with empirically grounded science possible, in spite of their characteristic of being explicitly anti-methodological. For Derrida, to give an example, it is obvious that a methodological direction constitutes the core in the positivist thought – which the positivist would not find it difficult to agree with. The method is the node through which science is disengaged from structural connections and remains neutral. This is also what enables the researcher in our contemporary pluralism to imagine that the method can be pragmatically *chosen*, in relation to what is most suitable in order to investigate a given object (Derrida 1982: 322 ff, 1998: 31 ff). The illusory neutrality of the method depends on an empirical understanding of what an object is and how an investigator takes to this object. Critical thinking, on the other hand, claims that the understanding of an object is always connected to a structural whole which cannot be controlled by any method.

The thought about diversity has in many disciplines in the social sciences and the humanities reduced theory to a repertoire of methods to choose between, laid on the smorgasbord of theory courses. Because gender theory and post structural theory, which in their critique of positivist methodological understanding claim that decisive ontological and epistemological assumptions always are included in every mode of approach, are in this way reduced to method in a closer, more positivist sense, they lose their critical edge and risk becoming more than a pragmatically selected point of view from an individual researcher.

Claes Levin and Gunilla Lindén reproduce the pragmatically relativist position we criticise in no uncertain terms in their chapter about the importance of psychology in social work:

How should we look upon these different theories? Are they mutually equivalent or in some way equal? And if so, are they competing? An affirmative answer to that question would imply that there are theories which are truer than others. We know that it is not so; there are no true theories. In each theory, attention is paid to various aspects of human life and functions. But is it the same human being whom we observe – from the front, in left profile, etc.? In front of us we have a series of portraits. If priorities are made between the different theories, this is done out of “user interest”. (2006: 93)

According to critical feminism and poststructuralism we can *never* choose freely in the sense that we are independent of structural contexts (Derrida 1988: 36). From this perspective, the seemingly rational, individual choice, the pluralism and the method fetishism constitute an attempt to keep the scientific discourse together without a need for basic changes. A diverse individualisation of research perspectives of course allows a pragmatic starting-point which means that no research direction needs to consider any other, and consequently it can choose to ignore critique, since you are allowed to choose freely – between normal methods. Every interpretative community thereby turns immune to critique from the outside.

Once again questions about true or false, morally right or not, are pushed aside as something which is added after research's neutral choices of perspectives and methods, for the quotation continues: "*Here* is the great challenge for social work. Value aspects concerning attitudes to society and outlooks on mankind are burningly appropriate" [our italics], but not "here", *after* choices of aspect, perspective and method; it is rather that values *are always already* burning in every perspective. Every (research) activity is always already included in ways of being in the world, a social totality, a structure, and therefore the choices of approaching the objects of study are not free. The relativist tolerance provides a mode where science can continue an existence in seeming neutrality. The critical thinking is not relativist in a simple and individualist way (Derrida 1988: 137).

Examples like the ones above are not only intended to indicate how post structural and feminist perspectives would need more space or be added to a greater extent. Instead we want to use them to demonstrate quite simply how they are added as further perspectives, and that this in itself means that they are arranged in a discursive order which precludes their real importance. To look at them as possible perspectives in a relativist pluralism implies dissociation from their epistemological suppositions in a critical thinking and turns them into opinions. Post structural thought does not allow a "smorgasbord", since theories and methods are always already involved in a contextual coherence of practitioners which has ethical, political, social and practical consequences. And in reference to methodological pluralism one of the most important aspects is that science can maintain its autonomy by assimilating critique to render it innocuous via the principles of pluralism and individual choices, when positivist principles of objectivity and purity no longer apply.

Conclusions

The importance of listening

The discourses that present themselves in the textbook are full of silences, exclusions, inclusions, values, differences and manifest statements that all have consequences. When it comes to gender, the discursive arrangement tends to marginalise it. This is not due to any ill will by the authors, but it is a consequence of how the discipline of social work functions as a discourse. We do not want to criticise the individual authors of the texts, but rather point to the fact that any decision, whether editorial or pragmatic, always has consequences to be considered.

No matter how well-meaning an editor of a basic textbook is, she will nevertheless face the dilemma of the double bind which characterises every form of representation. The double bind which, on the one hand, implies the necessity to categorise and determine and, on the other, the understanding that each such drawing-up of boundaries brings some form of discrimination. From this perspective, pluralism is a solution only in the sense that it makes valuation invisible and allows it to appear as a neutral process which merely needs to be described as empirical diversity. Where formerly scientific disciplines were kept together by consensus concerning methods and objects, they are now ordered by a consensus that there is no such consensus.

Most exclusions can be legitimately motivated by pragmatic decisions like “we have to draw the line somewhere”. Nevertheless, that a decision is pragmatic does not mean that it cannot be criticised. Practice is a powerful way of forgetting that one is always discriminating. Pluralism, pragmatic motivations, and letting what is “normal” decide what is to be incorporated, may be unavoidable strategies for an editor of a textbook. But at the same time these strategies *do* exercise power, *do* discriminate and marginalise, like all conceptualisations and categorisations. We have wanted to elucidate the invisible-making, normalising processes which always at the same time create a “we” and exclude “others/other” in order to be able to open a dialogue.

Silences are important. As Hearn states, not explicitly talking of men as *men* is a way of *not* questioning the structured gender power relations so important from a feminist perspective (Hearn 1998). Pluralism’s complicity in this implicit centring of men is related to an unwillingness to see the other and open oneself to its gaze. A real encounter with the other always means both a risk and an opportunity to be challenged (Martinsson 2009). Such an encounter requires active listening. Perhaps we therefore must confess that there is a reason why certain voices are silenced; we may wish to hear only some; this is for instance Kumashiro’s view (2009). Different kinds of “perspectives” are accepted just as long as the inclusion of “the other” does not threaten one’s own position. In this way status quo is maintained.

Diversity in the empirically positivist meaning can only be maintained if you ignore that the different ways of understanding what social work is in fact deal with directly contradictory perceptions of the disciplinary core. But diversity and tolerance are good, are they not? There are two ways of looking at the question: if diversity is based on a mutual will to understand the other and open oneself to the other’s gaze, or if it is based on the possibility of not having to face the other’s gaze when you allow her to live in peace and mind her own business. In the latter case diversity is an avoidance of every encounter and a consolidation and confinement of one’s own identity.

The idea of pluralism as competition is based on a screening of the contextual presumptions. And this not only implies a disregard of power and other relations which influence the encounter of different views, but it also relieves oneself from the responsibility of trying to understand the other, what she assumes, why she thinks the way she does – it relieves oneself from the responsibility to listen attentively. Disciplination through pluralism and freedom implies that everyone may talk, but no one needs to listen. You can choose to do something else. Gender studies gains its place, but you need not try to understand it.

Against the methodological pluralism which only becomes a part of the academy’s culture-relativist way of isolating interpretative communities, and thereby allowing them not to listen to each other, because understanding is in fact not possible, we want to put the will to open boundaries which exists in Derrida’s concepts of hospitality and politics of friendship (Derrida 1977). Spivak has developed these thoughts about the possibilities to open oneself as listener to the other, not by searching for the repetition of the same and the normal within closed cultures, but by looking for unpredictable effects and unforeseeable collectivities (Spivak 2003: 31). This is what we have tried to achieve with our critical reading.

The most important aspect of “the normal” is that it is unavoidable in forming a community and therefore apparently neutral – and that at the same time it is discriminating, exercising power, and therefore always normative. This paradoxical outcome tends to be forgotten when “the normal” is used to ground and establish values and discriminations. Because of its close ties to the concept of the ordinary, its reliance on values, its normativity, is hidden by statistics and pragmatic definitions of what is normal. A feminist reading has to be aware of the fact that values and norms are always already part of the making of differences in the most basic sense. It is more primary than “the normal”. If we do not see this, we risk losing the ability to be structurally critical – since structures are always already there – and may end up with only individual challenges of the normal, which may seem free and unsituated.

One may answer the critique that we have launched above by saying: How could it be otherwise? But that is just how discourses function; besides making us see, they make us unable to see how it could be different. A critical reading, like the one we have practised here, may, however, open to possibilities previously unseen. By pointing to the fact that pluralism may function in direct opposition to the articulated aims of those who advocate it, one can hopefully make such an opening.

We have demonstrated how the normalised pluralism present at the academy – and which of course in many ways is something good – has obvious delimitations which are maintained by ideological perceptions of normalisation, free choices, relativism, pragmatism, and method fetishism. The consequence is that the present power order is reproduced and that it at the same time becomes immune to critique.

References

- Connell, Raewyn. (2007) *Southern Theory*, Polity Press, Cambridge.
- de Beauvoir, Simone. (1953) *The Second Sex*, Cape, London.
- Daudi, Philippe. (1990) Con-versing in management’s public place, *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, vol.6, no 4, pp. 285-307.
- de los Reyes, Paulina and Lena Martinsson, eds. (2005) *Olikhetens paradigm: intersektionella perspektiv på o(jäm)likhetsskapande* [The paradigm of difference: intersectional perspectives on the formaton of difference and inequality], Studentlitteratur, Lund.
- de los Reyes, Paulina and Diana Mulinari. (2005) *Intersektionalitet* [Intersectionality], Malmö, Liber.
- Derrida, Jacques. (1988) *Limited Inc*, Northwestern Univ. Press, Evanston.
- Derrida, Jacques. (1997) *The Politics of Friendship*, Verso, London.
- Derrida, Jacques. (1978) *Writing and Difference*, Routledge, London.
- Derrida, Jacques. (1982) *Margins of Philosophy*, Univ. of Chicago Press, Chicago.

- Eriksson, Emelie & Kerstin Burman. (2006) *Juris kandidatprogrammet ur ett genusperspektiv* [The Programme of Bachelor of Law from a gender perspective], Uppsala universitet, Studentkårens granskningsserie, Uppsala.
- Fahlgren, Siv. (1999) *Det sociala livets drama och dess manus. Diskursanalys, kön och sociala avvikelser* [The drama and script of social life. Discourse analysis, gender and social deviance], Department of social work, Umeå University nr 29, Umeå.
- Fahlgren, Siv & Helen Edvall. (2006) Kulturella könsdiskursers makt - ett exempel från en utbildningstext [The power of cultural gender discourses – an example from a basic course text], *Nordiskt socialt arbete* nr 1 2006, pp.62-73.
- Ferree, Myra Marx & Hall, Elaine J. (1990) Visual images of American society : gender and race in introductory sociology textbooks, *Gender & society* 4(1990):4, pp. 500-533.
- Foucault, Michel. (1974) *The archaeology of knowledge*, Tavistock, London.
- Foucault, Michel. (1979) *Discipline and punish. The birth of the prison*, Vintage Books, New York.
- Granström, Görel. (2004) *Den onda cirkeln. Om brottsoffer, genus och rätten* [The vicious circle: On crime victims, gender and the court of law], Uppsala Publishing House, Uppsala.
- Hall, Elaine J. (1988) One Week for Women? The Structure of Inclusion of Gender Issues in Introductory Textbooks, *Teaching Sociology*, Vol. 16, No. 4, pp. 431-442.
- Hall, Elaine J. (2000) Packaging Poverty as an Intersection of Class, Race, and Gender in Introductory Textbooks, *Teaching Sociology*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (Oct., 2000), pp. 299-315.
- Hammarström, Anne. (2004) Genusperspektiv på medicinen: två decenniers utveckling av medvetenheten om kön och genus inom medicinsk forskning och praktik Sverige [Gender perspectives on medicine: The development in two decades of the consciousness about sex and gender in medical research and practice in Sweden], Högskoleverket, Nationella sekretariatet för genusforskning, Stockholm.
- Hearn, Jeff. (1988) 'Theorizing men and men's theorizing: men's discursive practices in theorizing men', *Theory and Society*, Vol. 27(6), 1998, pp. 781-816.
- Hovellius, Birgitta & Eva E Johansson. (red.) (2004) *Kropp och genus i medicinen* [Body and gender in medicine], Studentlitteratur, Lund.
- Irigaray, Luce. (1985) *Speculum of the other woman*, Cornell University Press Ithaca, N.Y.

- Kumashiro, Kevin K. (2009) Postperspektiv på antidiskriminerande undervisning i engelska, matematik och samhälls- och naturorienterande ämnen [Post-perspectives on anti-discriminatory tuition in English, mathematics, civics and science], *Tidskrift för genusvetenskap*, 2009:1, pp. 11-34.
- Magnusson, Eva. (2003) *Genusforskning inom psykologin – bidrag till psykologisk teori och praktik* [Gender research in psychology – contributions to psychological theory and practice], Höskoleverket, Stockholm.
- Martinsson, Lena. (2009) Social mångfald? [Social diversity?], *Tidskrift för genusvetenskap*, 2009:1, pp. 43-60.
- Meeuwisse, Anna, Sune Sunesson och Hans Swärd. (red.) (2006) *Socialt arbete – en grundbok* [Social work – a basic textbook], Natur och Kultur, Stockholm.
- Österlund, Helena. (2006) *Praktisk filosofi A och B ur ett genusperspektiv* [Practical philosophy A and B from a gender perspective], Uppsala universitet, Uppsala studentkår, pp. 57-87, Uppsala.
- Rothing, Åse. (2009) "Vi har ikke noe imot de homofile". Heteroprivilegier i undervisning i homosexualitet i norsk skole ["We have nothing against homosexuals" Hetero privileges in the education about homosexuality in Norwegian schools], *Tidskrift för genusvetenskap* 2009:1, pp.89-103.
- Rätzel, Nora. (2007) 'Kön och rasism i diskurser', [Gender and racism in discourses], pp. 321-358 in Sandell, Kerstin & Mulinari Diana. (ed.) *Feministiska interventioner*, [Feminist interventions], Atlas Akademi, Stockholm.
- Sohl, Lena. (2000) *Litteraturvetenskap ur ett genusperspektiv* [Comparative literature from a gender perspective], Uppsala Universitet, Jämställdhetskommittén, Uppsala.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. (2003) *Death of a Discipline*, Columbia University Press, New York.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. (1993) *Outside in the Teaching Machine*, Routledge, London.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. (1999) *A critique of postcolonial reason. Toward a history of the vanishing present*, Harvard Univ. Press, Cambridge, Mass.
- Stone Carlson, Thomas et.al (2006) A feminist Conceptual Analysis of the Predominant Introductory Textbook in Couple and Family Therapy Training, *Journal of Feminist Family Therapy*, 17:2, pp.17-39.
- Stridsberg, Sara & Jenny Westerstrand. (2007) *Juristutbildningen ur ett genusperspektiv* [Law programmes from a gender perspective], Uppsala universitet, Uppsala.

Socialdepartementet (1997) *Genderprogrammet för social välfärd* [The Gender program for social welfare], Socialdepartementet [Ministry of Health and Social Affairs], Stockholm.

Skr 2002/03:140 *Jämt och ständigt. Regeringens jämställdhetspolitik och handlingsplan för mandatperioden*, [Always and Constant: The governmental gender equality and action plan for the term of office], Skrivelse, Näringsdepartementet, [Ministry of Enterprise, Energy and Communications], Stockholm. SFS 2001:1286.

Wiktorsson, P. (2007) *Vem får synas? SFS rapport om hur olika människor speglas i kurslitteratur*, [Who is allowed to be seen? SFS report on how different people are mirrored in course textbooks], SFS, Stockholm.

Biographical Notes

Dr. Siv Fahlgren
Department of social work
Mid Sweden University
S-831 25 Östersund
Sweden
Tel: +46 771-975 000
siv.fahlgren@min.se

Dr. Siv Fahlgren is a lecturer in social work and coordinator of Forum for Gender Studies at Mid Sweden University, Sweden. This article reflects research completed within the research programme “Challenging Gender”, one of three “Centres of Gender Excellence” financed by the Swedish Research Council. Siv is currently working within this project as the theme leader of the theme “Challenging Normalisation Processes”, which has its base at Mid Sweden University.

Dr. Anders Johansson
Department of Humanities
Mid Sweden University
S-871 88 Härnösand, Sweden
Tel: +46 771-975 000
anders.johansson@miun.se

Dr Anders Johansson is a lecturer in literary studies at the Mid Sweden University, Sweden. He is currently participating in the research programme “Challenging Gender” and writing about materiality and structure within contemporary poetry.