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**On the (Male) Fringes:
How Early Religious Women Remain “Subordinate” in World History Textbooks**

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Abstract

Second Wave feminist researchers identified male-dominated curriculum formats in late twentieth century curriculum materials. This study builds off their work and advances the conversation of women’s inclusion in current United States secondary world history textbook content via a feminist lens to determine the extent of women’s agency in the accounts of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The purpose was to determine if textbooks portrayed these patriarchal religions as exclusively male, thereby presenting inaccurate portrayals of the religions and the agents involved, which directly violates NCSS Standards. This study used critical discourse analysis to identify patterns of female marginalization and omission, finding that modern textbooks still contain male-dominated content. This article concludes with pertinent information about early female religious leaders to promote more gender-balanced religious agency discussions in the classroom.

Keywords: Women’s agency, textbooks, Judaism, Christianity, Islam

The United States’ Women’s Movement of the 1960s and 1970s marked a wide-scale attempt to advocate for women’s rights, reproductive liberation, and the reduction of overtly patriarchal tones embedded in America’s formal curriculum (Ashcraft, 1998; Broudy, 1987; Kane, 1970; Lerner, 1986; Marcus, 1963; Spring, 2007). Feminists believed a more gender-balanced curriculum would benefit all students, especially females. They conducted studies on existing educational materials and sought out government financial aid for projects related to curriculum revision concerning the omission of women (Bernard-Powers, 1997).

Four decades later, this study follows a similar line of inquiry by exploring the degree to which women are included in twenty-first century secondary world history textbooks’ discussions of the patriarchal religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam since the Women’s

Movement. This topic has not been previously studied despite acknowledgement of women's omission in social studies texts since the 1970s (Trecker, 1971). Judaism, Christianity, and Islam were founded as patriarchal religions; however, they were not *exclusively male* domains as women held considerable influence over others, including males (Lerner, 1986; Meyers, 1988). Textbooks that communicate a "male exclusive" message leave students with an inaccurate understanding of gendered contributions during the formation of these religions as well as an inaccurate understanding of patriarchy. Additionally, by perpetrating the inaccurate view of women as passive spectators rather than as active change agents, textbooks may hinder students' successful understanding of culture and religion as outlined by the National Council for the Social Studies Standards (NCSS, 2010).

The purpose of this article is to assist educators in providing their students with a more holistic perspective of religious actors by showcasing how women have acted as religious change agents to gain a deeper understanding of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. In the following article I first provide an overview of this study and its findings before advancing existing conversations about women's omission and marginalization in social studies textbooks. Because I found that textbooks amply discussed male religious agents, I conclude by providing pertinent information about prominent female religious agents that educators may draw on when facilitating religious agency discussions with their students as they study Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Women and Religion in Textbooks: The Odd Couple

The push for women's inclusion in United States history textbooks has fueled many studies since the start of the Women's Movement. In writing this literature review, I searched for peer-reviewed resources (e.g., journal articles) including previous textbook content analyses published with the timeframe of 1950 to 2013 in academic databases like JSTOR, EBSCO, ERIC, Google Scholar, Academic Search Complete, PantherCat, WorldCat, and Primo Central (Ex Libris) using combinations of the phrases "women's agency in textbooks," "female religious agency," "women in Judaism, Christianity, Islam," "religious leaders," and "world history textbooks". Using these search parameters, I identified approximately seventy-five potential resources, including twenty-three content analysis studies of United States secondary world history and/or United States history textbooks. Due to the scarcity of studies on the topic of women's religious agency in textbooks, I included four non-peer reviewed studies (Sewall, 1995; 2003; 2004; 2008) in the literature review to help contextualize this study within the existing conversations about religion in textbooks. Nineteen of the content analysis studies were especially pertinent to this study and the general criteria utilized in these analyses to determine the inclusion of women or of religions included: language; traditional roles or descriptions; and the page or line count afforded to the historical agent in these descriptions. To relate the findings in a succinct and meaningful manner, I began with the foundational work performed by Trecker (1971) concerning female representation and then reviewed the other studies in sequential decade format from the 1970s (Women's Movement) onward.

Concerning language, six studies conducted by four different authors reported results on female and/or male religious agency or religious representation in textbooks based on textual descriptions (Bellito, 1996; Douglass & Dunn, 2003; Jackson, 2011; Sewall, 1995; 2003; 2008).

These studies found that all of the textbooks included positive descriptions of the male religious leaders Abraham, Jesus, and Muhammad such as religious/divine founder, preacher, holy book interpreter, teacher, political leader, military leader, and/or prophet (Bellito, 1996; Douglass & Dunn, 2003; Jackson, 2011; Sewall, 1995; 2003; 2008). Only two of these studies mentioned women - Hagar and Khadija - and only in Islam's emergence account (Douglass & Dunn, 2003; Sewall, 2008). Neither of the two studies focused on women, per se, although Khadija was described as the "older, wealthy" (Douglass & Dunn, 2003, p. 62) woman Muhammad married while Hagar was identified in textbooks in a pro-male, Eurocentric manner (Commeyras & Alvermann, 1996; Trecker, 1971) as "the wife of Abraham" (Sewall, 2008). Researchers who have studied women's agency (outside discussions about religion) have found that textbooks' employment of negative female stereotypes are enhanced by pro-male Eurocentric curriculum (Commeyras & Alvermann, 1996; Trecker, 1971). Specifically, Commeyras and Alvermann (1996) noted that textbook authors use socially constructed terms that reflect negative connotations, such as "crafty," to depict women, yet did not employ this type of language when describing men. Additionally, Trecker (1971) found that some textbooks devoted more space to describing the ideal, traditional woman's attributes than to describing the historic contributions real women, especially "radical" women, have made to the world.

In this same vein, over half of the fifteen studies that focused on women's agency in some capacity found that textbooks largely discussed women solely in traditional, secondary roles and these were compacted into just a few lines or sentences (Arlow & Froschel, 1976; Commeyras & Alvermann, 1996; Greenberg, 1984; Osler, 1994; Sadker & Sadker, 1995; Sewall, 2003; Schoeman, 2009; Weinbaum, 1979). Commeyras and Alvermann (1996), for example, identified how textbooks legitimized women's historical contributions by describing the women as spouses or mothers to male historical agents. Three of the studies identified these descriptions as typically being comprised of one or two sentences (a small passage at most) and housed under gender-specific headings such as Women's Suffrage (Arlow & Froschel, 1976; Commeyras & Alvermann, 1996; Trecker, 1971). Additionally, multiple authors found that textbooks displayed women and their historic actions in contributionist boxes on textbook pages instead of embedding them in the main body text (Arlow & Froschel, 1976; Greenberg, 1984; Guhlanga, Chirimuuta, & Bhukuvhani, 2012; Osler, 1994; Sadker & Sadker, 1995; Sewall, 2003; 2004; Trecker, 1971; Weinbaum, 1979).

Contributionist theory, commonly referred to as fragmentation or the contributionist method, occurred frequently in textbooks to appease Women's Movement activists who advocated against gender-biased textbooks. This method attempts to incorporate women's agency in texts by inserting a picture, vignette, or textbox on a page, thereby isolating the information and suspending it in a "fragmented" form from the main body content (Sadker, Sadker, & Long, 1989; Sadker & Zittleman, 2007; Stalker, 1998; Trecker, 1971). The use of contributionist boxes allows textbook publishers to achieve the appearance of more balanced gender representation without actually including more women in the main text (Arlow & Froschl, 1976; Trecker, 1971; Weinbaum, 1979). This reflects a focus on the *quantity* of females in social studies textbooks rather than on the *quality or significance* of their actions (Woyshner, 2006). Trecker (1971) first documented this in her study where she noted, "[W]hen they are included, profiles and capsule biographies of women are often introduced in separate sections, apart from the body of the text. [...] ...it tends to reinforce the idea that women of note are, after all, optional and supplementary" (p. 251). Over two decades later, Osler's (1994) findings

echoed Trecker's (1971) work. Although Olser (1994) found that textbooks that have been published in more recent years have made "progress" in comparison to previous editions because they now had sections of women's history (p. 230), women's history was still being presented in a compartmentalized format. This type of format can ghettoize women's issues and only acknowledge women as "...a disadvantaged or subordinate group, and which also effectively denies gender as a dynamic of history" (p. 230-231).

Additionally, eleven of the fifteen studies that focused on women's agency in textbooks identified gender discrepancies in the textbook content (Arlow & Froschl 1976; Baldwin & Baldwin, 1993; Clark, Ayton, Frechette, & Keller, 2005; Commeyras & Alvermann, 1996; Greenberg, 1984; Guhlanga et al., 2012; Jackson, 2011; R. Lerner, Nagai, & Rothman, 1991; Osler, 1994; Sadker & Sadker, 1995; Sewall, 2003; 2004; Schoeman, 2009; Trecker, 1971; Weinbaum, 1979). The findings from these studies indicate that women are seemingly marginal or non-existent in textbook narratives. It is important to note here that out of all the content analysis studies found and reviewed, no study specifically addressed religious women's agency in secondary world history textbooks, indicating a literature void that the present study could help fill.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to determine and evaluate the extent of textbooks' discussion of the interwoven historical actions of women — specifically Sarah, Hagar, Mary, Mary Magdalene, Khadija, Fāṭima, and A'isha — and men (i.e., Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Paul, and Muhammad) that led to the rise of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. This research explored whether students could acquire a meaningful, multifaceted understanding of the male and female contributions involved in producing religion and constructing culture from the textbook, or if the textbook presented religious and cultural information as exclusively male domains. To make that determination, the following research questions guided this study: (1) What female-to-male text agency frequencies were evident?; (2) How were females qualitatively included and portrayed (i.e., full inclusivity, discussion/description extent of individuals, contribution box inserts) compared to males?; and (3) What types of gendered patterns regarding women's and men's religious roles emerged (i.e., "group" and "individual" descriptions and if agents were "passive" or "active")?

Methodology

Feminist research served as the theoretical lens for this study because it focuses on "women's issues, voices, and lived experiences" (Hesse-Biber, 2014, p. 3) and this paradigm was also used in eight content analysis studies reviewed in the literature (Arlow & Froschl 1976; Clark et al., 2005; Commeyras & Alvermann, 1996; Greenberg, 1984; Lerner et al., 1991; Osler, 1994; Trecker, 1971; Weinbaum, 1979). Second and third wave feminists share the goal of creating equality between the sexes through research and political transformations (Ashcraft, 1998; Evans, 1995; Hesse-Biber, 2014; Hoffman, 2001; Lerner, 1986; Mann & Huffman, 2005), so I decided to use feminist thought to ground this study. Offen (1988) provides a succinct and

relevant description of feminism, declaring that feminism serves as a method for analyzing the levels of cultural influence wielded by the sexes to determine where balance should be celebrated and where the presence of female societal subordination, due to male privilege, should be changed. Commeyras and Alvermann (1996) also used Offen's definition to ground their content analysis. Radical feminism further defines the scope of my study as it traditionally declares masculine society and patriarchal ideology as the origin of women's oppression (Ashcraft, 1998; Evans, 1995; Lerner, 1986; Meyers, 1988). Patriarchal ideology holds great relevance for this study as I am determining the extent of women's agency and contributions regarding the rise of religions traditionally perceived as exclusively male.

I used "agency" as an appropriate anthropological and feminist term that both anchored this study and connected it to previous applicable content analysis studies. From an anthropological perspective, agency consists of the study of why an individual choose to act in the manner they did, including what cultural influences might have contributed to the act(-ions) (Geertz, 1973). Feminist researchers Abu-Lughod (2008) and McNay (2000) define the term "agency" as an explanation of how gender identity is formed and potentially malleable in social contexts, especially concerning women's beliefs, actions, and contributions. In this feminist vein, I employed Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), specifically the work of Fairclough (2001), to identify gendered linguistic inferences regarding female and male agency and to determine if traditional patterns of female marginalization were present in the textbook sample. I purposefully chose to use Fairclough's work because it allowed me to analyze the data in relation to how linguistic inferences could resemble possible common-sense assumptions formulated by the reader (e.g., presentation of textual elements that could be interpreted as "exclusively male" by secondary students).

Design

In this study, I sampled nine nationally available textbooks (Appendix A) and included texts adopted by Texas and California, states which have historically exerted strong influence on which textbooks are made nationally available by publishers (Florida School Book Depository, 2014; Jobrack, 2012; Ravitch, 2003; Texas Education Agency, 2013). The sample did not include all available secondary world history textbooks. Because I conducted this study alone, I independently coded and analyzed my sample set, which is atypical for a content analysis study. As I explain below, I performed an *a priori* and a Cohen's kappa statistic to ensure inter-rater agreement.

For the *a priori*, I reviewed four United States world religions textbooks, marketed both in the United States and internationally, in order to establish benchmarks for the analysis of the three religions' emergence accounts in the sample (Appendix B). For the Cohen's Kappa statistic, I recruited three faculty members from a Midwestern university to serve as religious experts and participate in a coefficient coder reliability statistic to ensure that my interpretations accurately represented the extent the textbook content included religious female agents and how they were portrayed and described in comparison to male agents. The Cohen's kappa tests yielded 100%, 93%, and 100% inter-rater reliability statistics.

Data Collection and Analysis

To answer my researcher questions, I extracted quantitative and qualitative data from the following textbook components: the cover, table of contents, introduction pages, bibliographies and sections of the text where Judaism, Christianity, and Islam were discussed. Additionally, I coded corresponding chapter and/or section questions and any relevant pages discussing the religious historical agents in question according to gender and whether the agent was active or inactive. I established “active” and “inactive” criteria prior to the coding process. I coded a historical agent as “active” if s/he were engaged in activity (e.g., preaching, building, reading) and as “inactive” if not engaged. The agent was also “inactive” if: (1) the text referred to the agent in a possessive grammatical form (e.g., “son of,” “mother of,” “death of,” “birth of”); (2) the agent was a recipient or object rather than the subject of the action being performed (e.g., she “received” God’s message); and/or (3) an agent’s name appeared without supporting text to indicate engagement.

I created a gender comparative matrix to document my CDA coding and analysis process. I drew both quantitative and qualitative inferences from the data. Similar to the quantitative data Clark et al. (2005) collected, I calculated gender frequency counts by tallying the number of lines and pages upon which agents appeared, including text that accompanied imagery. I also employed qualitative microanalyses similar to those in the study by Commeyras and Alvermann (1996) to detect sexist language via CDA. Additionally, I determined whether each piece of data I reviewed supported the contributionist theory (Arlow & Froschl, 1976; Trecker, 1971; Weinbaum, 1979).

Findings: Still “a Man’s” Religion

Overall, the findings indicated that all of the textbooks I sampled maintained the traditional content structure as an unequal representation of female-to-male textual lines and the descriptive portrayal of female agents as mostly inactive (yet males as mostly active). Additionally, I found that the textbooks I sampled largely described female agents according to their reproductive/sexual status and/or familial connections to a prominent religious male yet described male agents in leadership roles and non-domestic/non-familial occupations.

Female-to-Male Agency Frequencies

The findings for research question one revealed three important conclusions regarding frequencies and frequency patterns. First, in *every* textbook, both Sarah and Hagar were absent in the emergence accounts of Judaism and Hagar was absent in the emergence accounts of Islam. Second, prominent males in the three religions received at least ten times more lines than prominent females and appeared on more pages than females in all textbooks. Third, the majority of textbooks portrayed women agents as overtly inactive and male agents as overtly active (Tables 1-2 and Appendix C).

Social Studies Education Review

Table 1. Text Cumulative Totals for Females

Female Historical Agent	Total Textual Lines <i>(all books)</i>	Total Pages <i>(all books)</i>	Total Active Text Descriptions (%)	Total Inactive Text Descriptions (%)
Sarah	0	0	*	*
Hagar	0	0	*	*
Virgin Mary	97	52	24%	76%
Mary Magdalene	9	2	88%	12%
Khadīja	22	16	72%	27%
Fāṭīma,	15	11	13%	87%
A'isha	5	4	80%	20%

* Indicates no information available

Table 2. Text Cumulative Totals for Males

Male Historical Agent	Total Textual Lines <i>(all books)</i>	Total Pages <i>(all books)</i>	Total Active Text Descriptions (%)	Total Inactive Text Descriptions (%)
Abraham	83	36	46%	54%
Moses	78	53	64%	36%
Jesus	630	227	48%	52%
Paul	116	34	82%	18%
Muhammad	819	225	60%	40%

Qualitative Portrayal of Females v. Males

None of the textbooks I selected for my sample included qualitative portrayals of Sarah and Hagar. In all nine textbooks' accounts of Christianity, the text referred to Mary as "the Virgin" and/or "mother of Jesus" and described her in one or both of these roles. Experientially, these words emphasized her reproductive/sexual status and connection to Jesus, a prominent male figure in Christianity. The texts did not use any other words to define her historical agency. Mary Magdalene, mentioned in only two textbooks, was portrayed as either one of the women

who witnessed the death of Jesus (observer role) or inaccurately portrayed as a prostitute seeking penance, thereby defining her based on sexual status. The results further indicated that prominent Muslim women were qualitatively portrayed according to sexual or marital status as well. Textbooks consistently defined Khadija and A'isha relationally as wives of Muhammad and Fāṭima as Ali's wife. Relationally, possessive grammatical features also consistently linked Fāṭima to Muhammad (i.e., "Muhammad's daughter"). Only Khadija received additional descriptors such as "widow" and "wealthy" repetitiously which further defined her according to marital status but also experientially via financial status. Overall, the textbooks housed approximately 32 percent of women's agency in contributionist boxes (Appendix C).

In contrast, all textbooks used possessive grammatical structures (i.e., expressive verbs, nouns, and adjectives) when referencing the role male leaders played in the three major world religions. In Judaism, textbooks qualitatively described Abraham as a prophet, divine intermediary, and "father" of the Hebrews. Moses drew similar depictions as texts portrayed him as a leader and intermediary. In sections of the textbooks where Christianity was discussed, the textbook emphasized prominent Christian males' religious and political qualities and used positive expressive and experiential words like teachers, preachers, prophets, and the son of God (for Jesus) to position them. In textbooks, Peter was a (chief) apostle, missionary, disciple, and the first bishop of Christianity and often referred to as "the rock" of Jesus' church. Texts also consistently identified Paul as Jesus's apostle and expounded upon his missionary actions. In Islam, textbooks portrayed Muhammad as a teacher, preacher, prophet, and Messenger of God whose piety legitimized his role as a religious visionary and powerful political leader. The use of such titles and words that conveyed positive connotations regarding patriarchal ideology in the rise of Islam and additional discussions of how Muhammad linked his religion to the Abrahamic accounts further strengthened this concept.

The textbooks never used descriptors reciprocal to those used for women (e.g., "son of," "husband of," "the virgin") when referencing men. Rather, the descriptions of male agents emphasized their religious and political roles while also legitimizing the patriarchal belief of male divinity and male authenticity in positions of religious authority. Overall, textbooks housed approximately seven percent of men's agency in contributionist boxes (Appendix C).

Gendered Patterns in Religious Roles

Individually, six textbooks portrayed the religious roles of women only in terms of their sexual and/or reproductive status (Beck, Black, Krieger, Naylor, & Shabaka, 2012; Craig, Graham, Kagan, Ozment, & Turner, 2011; Duiker & Spielvogel, 2013; Ellis & Esler, 2014; Judge & Langdon, 2012; Stearns, 2013). When textbooks acknowledged women by name, it was in relation to the woman's familial or reproductive connection to a male religious figure(s). In contrast, seven textbooks portrayed prominent men as having received the religious role of leader from a male deity (Beck et al., 2012; Duiker & Spielvogel, 2013; Ellis & Esler, 2014; Judge & Langdon, 2012; McKay, Hill, Buckler, Ebrey, Beck, Crowston, & Wiesner-Hanks, 2012; Stearns, 2013; Tignor, Adelman, Aron, Brown, Elman, Kotkin, Liu, Marchand, Pittman, Prakash, Shaw, & Tsin, 2011). Seven textbooks also utilized relational words and/or expressive grammatical features in their accounts about the emergence of Christianity and/or Islam that connected these religions to the Abrahamic accounts, thereby strengthening the authority of the male leaders (Craig et al., 2011; Duiker & Spielvogel, 2013; Ellis & Esler, 2014; Judge & Langdon, 2012; Smith, Van De Mieroop, & von Glahn, 2012; Stearns, 2013; Tignor et al., 2011).

Another pattern that surfaced in four of the textbooks was prominent religious men extending their religious message to women (Craig et al., 2011; McKay et al., 2012; Smith et al., 2012; Stearns, 2013).

Eight of the nine textbooks portrayed prominent religious women as more inactive than prominent religious men; *The Heritage of World Civilizations* (Craig et al., 2011) served as the lone exception (Appendix C). All nine of the textbooks portrayed the prominent males as active historical change agents who either constructed or transformed their respective religion. The two ways this pattern emerged was through the frequent use of positively charged terminology that emphasized a male's leadership skills and via positive character references. The portrayal of Jesus, Paul, and Muhammad as "influential preachers or teachers" (Beck et al., 2012; Craig et al., 2011; Ellis & Esler, 2014; Judge & Langdon, 2012; Smith et al., 2012; Tignor et al., 2011), for example, and referring to Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad via personality traits of "charismatic" men with strong "ethics" and "morals" (Duiker & Spielvogel, 2013; McKay et al., 2012; Smith et al., 2012; Stearns, 2013; Tignor et al., 2011).

As a collective whole, women's roles as a group were portrayed as subordinate to or under the direction of prominent religious men (Craig et al., 2011; Duiker & Spielvogel, 2013; Judge & Langdon, 2012; McKay et al., 2012; Smith et al., 2012; Stearns, 2013; Tignor et al., 2011). This pattern emerged regardless of whether the women were engaged in activity, such as missionary work or offering financial assistance to male leaders (Ellis & Esler, 2014; McKay et al., 2012; Smith et al., 2012), or passively obeying a male leader's instructions (Tignor et al., 2011). Additionally, these women were referenced as abstract nouns in the texts, such as "(early) female Christians" (Ellis & Esler, 2014; McKay et al., 2012; Stearns, 2013), "women" (Smith et al., 2012), or "wives" (Tignor et al., 2011) in lieu of other nouns like disciples, apostles, or converts; terms frequently used to describe men. No textbook referred to women as divine intermediaries, church mothers, or spiritual guides. For men as a collective whole, their roles in all three religions were communicated via specific titles that emphasized religious authority and authenticated their legitimacy in these positions (Beck et al., 2012; Craig et al., 2011; Duiker & Spielvogel, 2013; McKay et al., 2012; Stearns, 2013; Tignor et al., 2011). Textbooks used descriptors like "prophets," "church fathers," and/or "caliphs" as male-exclusive terms and this illustrates the purposeful blocking of female participation in religious events (Beck et al., 2012; Craig et al., 2011; McKay et al., 2012).

Discussion: The Call to (Finally) Move beyond "Subordinate"

The omission and marginalization of women's agency within the historical emergence accounts offered by textbooks leaves students unable to achieve proficient understandings of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam as well as the cultures related to those religions, all of which are part of important educational goals outlined in National Council for the Social Studies Standards (2010). Based on these findings, I encourage educators to reflect on how they are presenting religious history to their twenty-first century students, especially if students use textbooks regularly, since students may internalize the textbook as the "definitive" voice (hooks, 1989, p. 46) of "authoritative" knowledge (p. 48). In this vein and in consideration of this study's findings, history textbooks with traditional content structure might easily contribute to the emergence of stereotype threat regarding female students' self-concepts and their ability to

perform academically (Schmader & Johns, 2003; Steele & Aronson, 1995). The continual exclusion of women from religious history might also promote negative self-conceptualizations, encouraging students to “define or redefine” (Steele & Aronson, 1995, p. 797) themselves based on an identity framework void of religion and/or leadership. In the case of women’s omission and marginalization in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, for example, detrimental academic and psychological effects could include female students’ (continual) regard of women as religious spectators, thereby reinforcing negative gender and cultural stereotypes that current females could not serve as religious leaders or active change participants (Baldwin & Baldwin, 1993).

Evidence of such negative effects have already emerged. Skirboll (1998) noted that the unbalanced gender pattern has become so ingrained within Western cultures that “many students believe women have never had, and cannot attain, significant social status and respect in society” (p. 169). Some believe that the continued omission of women as important historical agents has already detrimentally influenced girls’ perceptions of themselves and their capabilities (Brown, 2011; Sadker et al., 1989). Additionally, male students, and students as a collective whole, may interpret the absence of religious women leaders as a means for validating men’s dominant occupation of the religious sphere and as historical confirmation for voiceless females (Seguino, 2011; Sleeter & Grant, 2011).

Implications for Practice: How to Advance “the Gender” Conversation in the Classroom

Rather than accepting textbook gender deficiencies, educators can expose students to non-stereotypic, mixed-gendered examples and integrate these into the curriculum to help repel the gender stereotypes found in traditional content (Good, Woodzicka, & Wingfield, 2010; Rios, Stewart, & Winter, 2010). Educators may also be able to help reduce gender stereotypes and prevent the possibility of stereotype threat and negative self-conceptualization by locating and using textbooks that showcase diverse role models (Rios et al., 2010). Presenting gender-balanced information affords students a more realistic perspective of the past and might even propel them to pursue positive self-identity searches and strengthen their self-esteem, especially for female and female-identifying students (Baldwin & Baldwin, 1993; Noddings, 1997).

In this study, for example, many of the actions and contributions of Sarah, Hagar, Mary, Mary Magdalene, Khadija, Fātima, and A’isha promoted the rapid and successful emergence of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Moreover, because of their pre-existing prestige and acknowledgement within their respective patriarchal religions today, incorporating the historical contributions of these women would not be a “subversive act” by educators, nor would it imply that educators are attempting to turn patriarchal religions into matriarchal ones. Rather, patriarchal religions do not, and should not, imply a “sans women” or “contributionist” message. The inclusion of women in the discussion of patriarchal religions - and specifically how they are continually situated within religious narratives - will more accurately portray diversified agency of women’s history in what Lerner (1975) describes as a “male-defined world” (p. 6). Their inclusion will also better foster students’ ability to conceptualize these religions and related religious events locally, nationally, and globally.

The results of this study evidenced that ample descriptions of male religious historical agents already exist in textbooks, therefore educators wishing to provide a

more holistic perspective for their students may use the following caveats on prominent religious women to initiate more gender-balanced discussions on the origins of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Such discussions should fulfill two purposes. They should serve as vehicles for teachers and students to collaboratively address how textbooks reinforce traditional (patriarchal) roles of women as “only” mothers or wives and help teachers and students advance their understanding of women as active historical change agents in *all* cultural aspects; thereby avoiding the “add women and stir” and “contributionist” pitfalls (Lerner, 1975; Schmeichel, 2014).

Prominent Women

Sarah and Hagar. Without Sarah and Hagar, neither Judaism nor Islam would exist since the action of the male divine occurred on behalf of females as well as males (Niditch, 1998). Sarah and Hagar represent the first women to convert to the monotheistic religion of Abraham in the Hebrew account; their narrative describes the domestic and religious splintering that occurred between the two women due to ancient Hebrew cultural practices, such as polygamy. Their account also indicates the importance of women’s reproductive abilities within the dynamics of ancient Hebrew culture and the family unit. Becoming a mother marked a woman’s foothold in maintaining her cultural honor and security, although the primary wife often took measures to ensure her domestic power was not usurped (Bird, 1974; Teubal, 1990; Tribble, 2003). In this account, God’s positive reinforcement of women’s domestic roles in Jewish society worked within the confines of the polygamous family dynamics to produce two mothers, both physically and religiously.

In the Jewish account, God affirmed the existing cultural framework for ancient Jewish women through the emphasis on Sarah’s role as primary wife and mother to the Hebrew/Jewish nation brought forth by Isaac’s descendants. Yet this (male) God also protected Hagar, who became mother to the Muslim nation rendered by Ishmael’s descendants, as a solution to the existing domestic competitiveness. Additionally, Hagar remains the first female to receive the divine promise of multiple descendants, a blessing typically reserved for patriarchs of Israel (Eskenazi & Weiss, 2008; Genesis 16:10; Tribble, 1984), and she was the first biblical character to name God (Genesis 16:13; Tribble, 1984).

Mary, daughter of Anne. Mary’s scriptural identifier as “the virgin mother” exemplified her acceptance of divine intervention (Luke 1:26-38, 46:55; Matthew 1:18-25; Qur’an 3:367, 14:1321), and while a strong emphasis on Jewish women’s sexual status did exist during Mary’s time, it should not be her definitive descriptor. Mary, “the daughter of Anne” (New Catholic Encyclopedia, 2003, p. 468-470), became the first Christian disciple via motherhood and maintained active roles as mother (Luke 2:44-48), convert (Luke 2:34-35), and disciple (John 19:25-26). Additionally, Mary was (and continues to be) a powerful religious icon. Her inclusion and actions supporting Christianity helped create the foundation for the religion itself and her status has swelled over the centuries to the point that many people consider Mary a demi-goddess (Anderson & Zinsser, 1998). Throughout history, she has served as a representative of motherhood, purity, victory, consolation, and protection, as well as a female intercessor to whom mortal women could relate (Anderson & Zinsser, 1988; McNamara, 1996; Rubin, 2009; Wiesner-Hanks, 2010; Young, 1993).

Mary Magdalene. Mary of Magdala served as a devoted disciple and “holy woman who ministered to Jesus...” (New Catholic Encyclopedia, 2003, p. 285). She was favored by Jesus

above all others (*The Gospel of Mary*, 2006) and was one of the women (Luke 24:1-11; Matthew 28:1-10) — or the first disciple (John 20:14-18; *Gospel of Mary*; Mark 16:9-11) — to see Jesus resurrected. Her actions as a disciple, teacher, and preacher solidified the foundations of Christianity as much as, if not more than, the male disciples who appear in textbooks. According to *The Gospel of Mary* (2006), her status as “beloved one” indicated that her actions as a female preacher, prophetess, teacher, and Christian leader attributed to her unwavering acceptance and understanding of Jesus’ teachings. Mary’s occupation in these religious roles led the way for other religious women leaders in preceding centuries who worked as instructors of faith grounded in Christian scripture.

Khadija. As a wealthy Arab widow who sought Muhammad out as a husband, Khadija became his first wife, confidant, and supportive pillar in his religious journey. These roles define her as the first female follower of Islam and Muhammad’s first convert. Economically speaking, Khadija’s initial wealth came from her first husband, although she increased this wealth on her own via shrewd business investments before she hired and later married Muhammad (Mernissi, 2004). The economic stability Khadija provided *allowed Muhammad* to immerse himself in his religious revelations. Because Khadija accepted Islam, she was the primary source of comfort, confidence, and encouragement for Muhammad and, as the first disciple and confidant, she bore a share of the burden he encountered when spearheading this fledgling religion (Ahmed, 1992; Hāshimī, 2005; Ibn Hisham & Guillame, 1967; Mernissi, 1993; 2004; Stowasser, 1994; Young, 1993).

Fāṭima. Fāṭima’s positions as Muhammad’s daughter, a Muslim, and, later, as Alī’s wife, vaulted her socio-cultural status to one of great importance in Islam since Shī’as believe Alī’s familial connections to Fāṭima helped justify his claim to the caliphate. More importantly, Shī’as refer to Fāṭima as “the first lady of Islam and its most edifying model of womanhood” (Mernissi, 2004, p. 108). The perception of Fāṭima as an exemplar of appropriate social and religious actions for Muslim women has persisted over the centuries (Hāshimī, 2005) and the belief of her influence on the development of Islamic practices remains strong (Young, 1993). Shī’a scripture refers to her as the “Lady of Light” and places her *in direct succession* after Muhammad, followed by her husband Alī (Yazdi & Ali, 1995). She reached the pinnacle of iconography in the tenth century when a Shī’i man, al-Mahdi al-Fatimi, declared Fāṭima’s status as that of semi-divine and established an alternative caliph dynasty dubbed “the Fāṭimids” (Mernissi, 1993).

A’isha. As a child bride and the youngest of Muhammad’s wives, A’isha became not only the highly favored wife of the Prophet but also a devoted follower of Islam (Ahmed, 1992). Scholars credit her with recording, firsthand, between one and two thousand Hadīth (Ahmed, 1992; Ascha, 1995; Hāshimī, 2005; Young, 1993), collections of Islamic teachings that shed light on topics not discussed in the Qur’an, and they represent integral cultural resources for followers to consult about Muslim traditions (Ahmed, 1992; Guillaume, 1966; Hassan, 1999; Musa, 2008; Young, 1993). Because of her pious example and immense involvement with the Hadīth, A’isha became the first *faqeeha* (female jurist) in Islam and Muslims of high status solicited her input on Islamic fundamentals and interpretations of the Qur’an (Hāshimī, 2005). Additionally, accounts indicate that A’isha may have advanced into a position of political leadership as some historical sources describe civil strife between the fourth (Sunnī) and fifth (Shī’a) caliphs during which she emerged as a Sunnī commander in the Battle of Camel (Ahmed, 1982; Ascha, 1995; Mernissi, 1993; 2004).

Final Thoughts

In conclusion, fifty years after the United States' Women's Movement, the inclusion of women in the religious accounts of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam remains suppressed via omission and marginalization. Modern secondary world history textbooks continue to promote traditional content descriptions of prominent religious males as active founders and leaders (Bellito, 1996; Douglass & Dunn, 2003; Jackson, 2011; Sewall, 1995; 2003; 2008) while assigning prominent religious women Eurocentric descriptions that support a male hierarchy (Commeyras & Alvermann, 1996; Trecker, 1971), such as "wife of" and "virgin," or omitting the women completely. This echoes the findings of studies conducted on history textbooks within the same century and in the century prior. The foundational work by Trecker (1971) indicated that, "...authors tend[ed] to depict women in a passive role and distress that their lives are determined by economic and political trends" (p. 251). That trend continued through the decades as Schoeman (2009) noted that, "[M]ales were portrayed as active, assertive and curious, whereas females were portrayed as dependable, conforming and obedient" (p. 552).

Unfortunately, this study yielded similar findings. Because of the grossly unbalanced male to female line frequencies, overtly positive qualitative descriptions and textual portrayals of males, and continued pattern of showcasing males as active religious agents while positioning females as inactive agents, at best, textbooks are still failing to communicate an interwoven religious narrative of the historical actions of people of both genders. This prevents students from acquiring a meaningful, multifaceted understanding of the contributions male and female actors have made to help produce world religions and construct cultures. It also continues to portray religion falsely as an exclusively male domain.

I encourage educators to revisit the textbooks they are currently using with their students and take steps to identify and dispel any inaccurate views of women as passive spectators rather than as active change agents. In doing so, educators can more readily support their students' successful understanding of culture and religion as outlined in the National Council for the Social Studies Standards (2010). Promoting a more gender-balanced perspective of religious history will also help repel the potential encroachment of stereotype threat and negative self-conceptualization upon students, especially those students who identify as female.

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Social Studies Education Review

APPENDIX A

Reference List of Secondary World History Textbook Sample

- *Beck, R., Black, L., Krieger, L., Naylor, P., & Shabaka, D. (2012). *World History: Patterns of Interaction*. Holt McDougal Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, FL: Orlando.
- Craig, A., Graham, W., Kagan, D., Ozment, S., & Turner, F. (2011). *The Heritage of World Civilizations*. Prentice Hall, Prentice Hall, NJ: Upper Saddle River.
- Duiker, W. & Spielvogel, J. (2013). *World History*. Wadsworth Cengage Learning, MA: Boston.
- Ellis, E. & Esler, A. (2014). *World History*. Prentice Hall, NJ: Upper Saddle River.
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- Smith, B.G., Van De Mieroop, M., & von Glahn, R. (2012). *Crossroads and Cultures: A History of the World's Peoples* (Vols. I & II). Boston, MA: Bedford, Freeman, & Worth.
- Stearns, P. N. (2013). *World History in Brief: Major Patterns of Change and Continuity, combined volume*. (8th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Tignor, R., Adelman, J., Aron, S., Brown, P., Elman, B., Kotkin, S., Liu, X., Marchand, S., Pittman, H., Prakash, G., Shaw, B., & Tsin, M. (2011). *Worlds Together, Worlds Apart*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company.
- * *Indicates Florida Adoption Board selection*
- ** *Indicates Texas Adoption Board selection*

APPENDIX B

Bibliography of World Religions Textbooks Reviewed for A priori & Information Gleaned

Hopfe, L.M. & Woodward, M.R. (2012). *Religions of the World* (12th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.

Matthews, W. (2013). *World Religions* (7th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.

Molloy, M. (2013). *Experiencing the World's Religions: Tradition, challenge, and Change* (6th ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill

Young, W.A. (2013). *The World's Religions: Worldviews and Contemporary Issues* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.

Social Studies Education Review

APPENDIX C

Cumulative Textual Quantitative Findings for Female & Male Agents in Judaism, Christianity, & Islam in Textbook Sample

Textbook (Author, Year Published)	Total Textual Lines	Total Lines in Contrib. Box	Total Content in Contrib. Box (%)	Total Textbook Pages	Total Active Descriptions (%)	Total Inactive Descriptions (%)
World History: Patterns of Interaction (Beck et al., 2012)	13	1	7%	8	38%	62%
	276	4	1%	87	56%	44%
The Heritage of World Civilizations (Craig et al., 2011)	43	28	65%	16	79%	21%
	338	34	10%	129	36%	64%
World History (Duiker & Spielvogel, 2013)	15	6	40%	10	13%	87%
	244	13	5%	95	61%	39%
World History (Ellis & Esler, 2014)	12	0	*	9	50%	50%
	250	35	14%	73	56%	44%
Connections: A World History (Judge & Langdon, 2012)	16	0	*	10	25%	75%
	313	33	10%	111	78%	22%
A History of World Societies (McKay et al., 2012)	16	0	*	12	37.5%	62.5%
	274	0	*	97	60%	40%
Crossroads and Cultures: A History of the World's Peoples (Smith et al., 2012)	39	19	48%	16	17%	83%
	184	15	8%	66	46%	54%
World History in Brief: Major Patterns of Change and Continuity (Stearns, 2010)	3	0	*	3	33%	67%
	113	29	25%	41	64%	36%

Social Studies Education Review

Worlds Together, Worlds Apart (Tignor et al., 2011)	7	0	*	4	57%	43%
	<i>171</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>2%</i>	<i>76</i>	<i>60%</i>	<i>40%</i>
TOTAL – ALL TEXTBOOKS	<i>164</i>	<i>54</i>	<i>32%</i>	<i>88</i>	<i>38%</i>	<i>62%</i>
	<i>2163</i>	<i>167</i>	<i>7%</i>	<i>775</i>	<i>57%</i>	<i>43%</i>

* Indicates no information available

Purple shading denotes cumulative female quantitative findings in text

Brown shading denotes cumulative male quantitative findings in text

Social Studies Education Review

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