

Socialisation, Gender Roles and Hidden Curriculum in the Textbooks – the Case from Poland

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Abstract

The paper aims to analyse the Solidarity movement's textbook narratives, focusing on women's representation in the history textbooks used in upper-secondary schools between 1991 and 2018. To explore the values and ideologies embedded in the textbook narratives of Solidarity, the study was guided by the qualitative approach and the critical discourse analysis of both verbal and visual texts. Women consequently remain outside the historical narrative of Solidarity as a marginalised group. The analysis reveals that women are ascribed to stereotypical gender roles. In that context underrepresentation of women through the hidden curriculum in history textbooks provides a distorted version of social reality.

School textbooks are perceived as a cultural, ideological, political, and socialisation tool. From this perspective they also socialise to gender roles. The growing evidence suggests that women remain consequently outside the history textbooks' narratives, or they are portrayed in stereotypical female roles, usually in the domestic environment.¹ Stereotypical images

1 See: Szymczak, Małgorzata. *Kobiety w Polskich Programach i Podręcznikach do Nauczania Historii dla Szkoły Średniej po Drugiej Wojnie Światowej*. Zielona Góra, 2011; Chmura-Rutkowska, Iwona/Głowacka-Sobiech, Ewyta/Skórzyńska Izabella. *Niegodne historii? O Nieobecności i Stereotypowych Wizerunkach Kobiet w Świecie podręcznikowej Narracji historycznej w Gimnazjum*. Poznań, 2015; Hildebrandt-Wypych, Dobrochna. *Religious Nation or National Religion: Poland's Heroes and the (Re) Con-*

and underrepresentation of women in history textbooks provide a distorted version of social reality and also reproduce and reinforce stereotypes and inequalities.

The paper analyses the representation of women during the Solidarity movement period in history school textbooks. Solidarity was a substantial civic movement and trade union organisation that gained almost 9 million members in the first year of activism, half of whom were potent women involved in the Solidarity activities.² From this perspective, it is astonishing that women are barely mentioned in the history textbooks.

The presented study is a part of the project concerning the issues of Solidarity narratives in history textbooks.³ The paper aims to analyse the Solidarity movement's textbook narratives, focusing on women's representation in the history textbooks used in upper-secondary schools between 1991–2018.

1. Hidden curriculum of the textbooks and gender socialisation

We understand a hidden curriculum as a set of values and beliefs that reinforce and reproduce the status quo in society, including the existing social inequalities and hierarchy.⁴ From this perspective, the school textbooks, through the hidden curricula, still transmit the patriarchal system or at least a stereotypical perception of gender roles. The growing body of studies confirms that schools play a significant role in the process of gen-

struction of National Identity in History Textbooks. In: J. Zajda et al. (eds.). Globalisation and Historiography of National Leaders. Symbolic Representations in School Textbooks. Dordrecht, 2017, pp. 103–121.

- 2 See: Ash, Timothy Garton. The Polish Revolution: Solidarity 1980–82. London 1983; Penn, Shana. Solidarity's Secret. The Women Who Defeated Communism in Poland. Michigan, 2005.
- 3 Hejwosz-Gromkowska, Daria/Hildebrandt-Wypych, Dobrochna. Solidarity Movement in the School History Textbooks in Poland – Selected Contexts of Gender, Religion and Politics. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14681366.2022.2142651>.
- 4 Booher-Jennings, Jennifer. Learning to label: Socialisation, gender, and the hidden curriculum of high-stakes testing. *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 29, 2008, pp. 149–152.

der socialisation. For instance, it has been proved that teachers display different attitudes and have different expectations of girls and boys.⁵ Yet it's not only that teachers can manifest the stereotypical approach to gender roles, as the textbooks also play a significant and complementary role in the process of gender socialisation. Since the late 1970s, researchers have studied the representation of women in history school textbooks and students' perceptions of gender.⁶ From this perspective, textbook representations of gender roles have had an impact on the perception of social order and relationships, in particularly suitable behaviours for boys and girls⁷ consistent with the classical studies of gender schema theory.⁸ It has also been revealed that the hidden curriculum of the textbooks transmits gender-specific norms, expectations, behaviours, and beliefs that reinforce and reproduce social inequalities.⁹ From the conflict theory perspective, school textbooks support society's existing social and power relations.

The studies also confirm that legitimate knowledge can be found both in curricula and textbooks, excluding the narratives of those who were not in power, e. g. ethnic minorities or/and women.¹⁰ It is a particular case of history textbooks where women are unquestionably marginalised or presented as powerless objects in the domestic environment. In that case, women and womanhood can be perceived as ›silent subject‹ or an ›inconvenient fact in the school's history. History, especially in a school system,

- 5 Leaper, Campbell/Friedman, Carly Kay. The Socialization of Gender. In: Grusec, Joan E., Hastings, Paul D. (eds.). *Handbook of socialization. Theory and Research*. New York 2007, pp. 561–566.
- 6 O'Kelly, Charlotte G. Gender role stereotypes in fine art: Content analysis of art history books. *Qualitative Sociology* 6 (2), 1983, pp. 136–148.
- 7 Earles, Jennifer. Reading Gender: A Feminist, Queer Approach to Children's Literature and Children's Discursive Agency. *Gender and Education* 29 (3), 2016, pp. 369–388, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2016.1156062>.
- 8 Martin, Carol Lynn/Halverson, Charles F. A Schematic Processing Model of Sex-Typing and Stereotyping in Children. *Child Development* 52 (4), 1981, pp. 1119–1132, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1129498>.
- 9 Hildebrandt-Wypych, Religious Nation; Taylor, Frank. Content analysis and gender stereotypes in children's books. *Teaching Sociology* 31 (3), 2003, pp. 300–311; Chmura-Rutkowska/Główacka-Sobiech/Skórzyńska, Niegodne historii?; Thorne, Barrie. *Gender play. Girls and boys in school*. New Brunswick, NJ, 2003.
- 10 Kereszty, Orsolya. Gender in textbooks. *Practice and Theory in Systems of Education* 4 (2), 2009, pp. 1–7, p. 3.

stands in line with historical and state policy; thus it is sanitised of inconvenient facts or the stories of subjugated groups to promote the victories, myths, and great ideas of the dominant group.¹¹ Panayota Gounari points out that the absence of inconvenient facts in official histories, such as gender inequalities, slavery, violence, and genocides, serves to the reproduction of the culture of the consensus, where »citizens passively and uncritically accept the fateful relationship of their country to the rest of the world«¹². History education, then, is meant to produce the type of civic identity necessary to reproduce the dominant culture and sustain political stability. One of the key representations of the aforementioned trend is textbook gender dynamics. The inclusion of men – especially in military and power contexts – acknowledges their dominant and privileged roles, while the exclusion of women or portraying them mainly in the traditionally feminine and domestic environments ›silences‹ their role as historical subjects.

2. Methodology

For this study¹³ we used both quantitative methods and qualitative analysis of the selected history textbooks published between 1991 and 2018 for general upper-secondary education schools. Quantitative methods in textbook research are used to measure aspects of the text in terms of frequency and space. The authors of the textbooks emphasise selected topics, events, or figures and make them significant to the readers. Some historical figures or groups are included while others are excluded or mar-

11 Gounari, Panayota, *Unlearning the official history: Agency and pedagogies of possibility*. In: Lilia I. Bartolomé (ed.) *Ideologies in education. Unmasking the trap of teaching neutrality*. New York, 2008, pp. 97–116, p. 99.

12 Gounari, *Unlearning the official history*, p. 99.

13 The results presented in the paper are part of the project about the Solidarity Movement in history textbooks: Hejwosz-Gromkowska/Hildebrandt-Wypych, Solidarity Movement; Hejwosz-Gromkowska Daria/Hildebrandt-Wypych Dobrochna, Under-represented and Excluded from the Public Sphere: Women of Solidarity in Polish History Textbooks. *Educational Studies Review* 42, 2023, pp. 9–26, <https://doi.org/10.12775/PBE.2023.013>.

ginalised; thus the textbooks will convey a message about what is seen as important and what is not.¹⁴ Thus, we set out to answer the questions: What figures are mentioned? Are women mentioned?

To explore the values and ideologies embedded in the textbook narratives of Solidarity, the study was guided by qualitative approaches and critical discourse analysis (CDA). Using CDA as a multidisciplinary approach to discourse¹⁵, the objective was to analyse how textbook language used in Solidarity narratives functions as a form of social practice that enacts power and reproduces dominance. In the critical investigation of the Solidarity discourse, the historical context is intrinsically linked to extra-linguistic factors: culture, society, and ideology.¹⁶ The textbooks were perceived as intentional spaces for ideas represented through language. Hence, we also posed the following questions: What language was used to demonstrate dominance, power struggle, and inequality between male and female figures? What specific vocabulary, metaphors, and parallels were used to describe women?

We analysed 22 textbooks in total, all of which were approved for use by the Ministry of Education as being compliant with the national curriculum. Our study cannot claim generalisability to all textbooks over the selected time. However, the textbooks were chosen to provide a diverse sample. We analysed that part of the material which covered the period from the August strikes of 1980 to the elections of June 1989.

3. Results

Our results stand in line with similar studies and indicate that women are marginalised or portrayed in stereotypical female roles within the domestic environment. Our data suggest that in most of the analysed textbooks

14 For more see: Pingel, Falk. UNESCO Guidebook on Textbook Research and Textbook Revision. Paris, 2010.

15 Wodak, Ruth. Pragmatics and Critical Discourse Analysis: Cross-Disciplinary Inquiries. *Pragmatics and Cognition* 15 (1), 2007, pp. 203–225, <https://doi.org/10.1075/pc.15.1.13wod>.

16 Fairclough, Norman/Wodak Ruth. Critical Discourse Analysis. In: T. van Dijk (ed.). Discourse as Social Interaction. London, 1997, pp. 258–284.

the number of female names mentioned in each is one or two, which gives about an 1–4 % frequency to all the names appearing in the given sample. In all the studied textbooks, women's names are mentioned 22 times. Strikingly, 7 out of 22 textbooks do not mention a single female name, marginalising the historically proven presence of women in the Solidarity civic movement completely. It is, however, difficult to indicate one particular woman's name which appeared most often, and it may suggest that the names were chosen accidentally. However, two female figures stand out – Anna Walentynowicz and Danuta Wałęsa.

Walentynowicz – the »Mother of the Polish Independence« as announced by the *Time Magazine* and chosen as one of 100 women of the 20th century – is usually situated next to Wałęsa as one of two people whose dismissal from the shipyard initiated the August 1980 strikes. An example of such a narrative is the passage from the early 1994 textbook: »On August 14, the work of the Gdańsk Shipyard was stopped, where demands were made to reinstate Anna Walentynowicz and Wałęsa, dismissed for trade union activities.«¹⁷ In earlier textbooks, the role of Walentynowicz is merely mentioned. It always is the context of the August 1980 strike at the Gdańsk Shipyard, e. g., »A wage increase and the demand for the reinstatement of Anna Walentynowicz, dismissed for her activity in Free Trade Unions, were raised.«¹⁸ Whereas Wałęsa reappears many times in the textbook narrative as an independent political actor, Walentynowicz – if she appears at all – is mentioned only in the above-said context. The influence of grammatical gender on the semantic processing of nouns plays a crucial role here, exposing the reader to masculine nouns only (*strajki robotników, masowe wystąpienia robotników*, where the noun »*robotnik*« is masculine). The analysed history textbook excerpts on Solidarity do not include a single reference to female workers including a feminine noun – *robotnice*.

In textbooks published after 2010, there is a visible shift in narrative pattern. Apart from the still clearly »uneven« representation of Walentynowicz compared to other heroes of the Solidarity movement, her textbook narrative visibly strengthens. Comparing six 2012 textbooks shows that

17 Radziwiłł, Anna/Roszkowski, Wojciech. *Historia 1945–1990*. Warszawa, 1994, p. 288.

18 Tusiewicz, Roman. *Historia 1944–1993*. Warszawa, 1999, p. 289.

Walentynowicz's role as a Solidarity heroine is ›forgotten‹ in two textbooks. Two other 2012 textbooks refer to her dissident activities in the conventional and over-simplistic manner outlined above. The last two 2012 textbooks (Nowa Era and Operon), however, change their narrative completely. In the 2012 Nowa Era textbook Walentynowicz no longer appears next to Wałęsa; her agency and activity as a union activist are referred to in a separate passage.¹⁹ The 2012 Operon textbook also presents Walentynowicz as first, before Wałęsa. Her portrait photograph and the caption below, indicating her commitment to defending workers' rights already in the early 70s, appear at the beginning of the chapter »The Birth of ›Solidarity«.²⁰

Danuta Wałęsa appears in the textbooks as Wałęsa's wife, and if her name has been mentioned – usually once – it is when she and her son were receiving the Nobel Prize on behalf of Lech Wałęsa. There is also an interesting case of Zofia Romaszewska. Together with her husband Zbigniew Romaszewski she founded Radio »Solidarność« in 1982. In the 1999 textbook²¹ they are both mentioned (Zofia Romaszewska and Zbigniew Romaszewski), whereas in the 2012 textbook²² they are mentioned as a married couple (*Romaszewscy*), and in the second 2012 textbook²³ only the name of the male figure – Romaszewski – is mentioned. In the same line, the figure of the poet Barbara Sadowska is portrayed. Despite her merits as an oppositionist, she is mentioned only once and only as the mother of the murdered teenage poet, Grzegorz Przemyk.²⁴ These examples show that women's role in the Solidarity movement was a behind-the-scenes role, and they remained silent subjects.

In only two textbooks the absence of individual women in the descriptive text is supplemented with a description of women's collective experience. In both cases, the reference to women as a ›collective entity‹ is reduced to their food-acquiring and household-managing roles. In the

19 Kłaczekow, Jarosław/Roszak, Stanisław. Poznać Przeszłość. Warszawa, 2012, p. 332.

20 Ustrzycki, Janusz. Historia. Ciekawi Świata. Gdynia, 2012, p. 331.

21 Tusiewicz, Historia, p. 290.

22 Brzozowski, Andrzej/Szczepański, Grzegorz. Historia. Ku współczesności. Warszawa, 2012, p. 246.

23 Kozłowska, Zofia/Unger, Irena/Zająć, Stanisław. Historia. Poznajemy Przeszłość. Toruń, 2012, p. 321.

24 Kozłowska/Unger/Zająć, *Historia*.

1994 textbook, there appears one significant sentence: »Particularly poor supplies in Łódź caused protests by desperate women, who bore the main burden of queuing for food, clothing, and hygiene products.«²⁵ In the 1999 textbook, there is no verbal text, and the word ›women‹ does not appear in the Solidarity movement narrative. Instead, there is a clear visual message: a huge, half-page photograph depicting a marching crowd of women, with the front row of them holding a banner with the inscription: »What to give to eat to our children – food rationing cards?« (Co damy jeść dziecku – kartki?) The description of the image is scarce: »Hunger March – Łódź, 30.07.1981«²⁶. On these two rare occasions, women of the Solidarity period are represented as a homogenous group of »gastronomic mothers«²⁷ reinforcing the stereotypes that women's role is reduced to the tasks and activities relating to home issues.

4. Conclusions and implications for teaching practice

Our study confirms that women consequently remain outside the historical narrative of Solidarity as a marginalised group. From the perspective of the process of gender socialisation through the hidden curricula, the representation of women reinforces the distorted vision of reality in which women have no significant role in social and political transformation. Even in later textbooks the shift from the stereotypical presentation of Walentynowicz and her recognition as a primary Solidarity heroine is only partially successful.

Simplifying history for students and selecting key narratives within a given historical event is intellectually appealing and politically useful. However, without diverse and often conflicting perspectives being recognised, students lack access to contrasting narratives and interpretations. Students' historical literacy should be based on openness to the marginalised groups' perspectives. Oversimplification of historical complexity

25 Radziwiłł/Roszkowski, *Historia*, p. 300.

26 Tusiewicz, *Historia*, p. 307.

27 Walczewska, Sławomira. *Damy, Rycerze i Feministki. Kobiecy Dyskurs emancypacyjny w Polsce*. Kraków, 1999, p. 165.

often comes with a cost, e.g. the reproduction of socioeconomic inequalities and gender stereotypes.

The teacher's practice can't simply refrain from stereotypical gender role modelling. However, having knowledge about the development of gender discrimination may reduce the reinforcement of social inequalities in the future. The hidden curriculum helps students to learn norms and follow the rules of the particular society. It is also believed that it forms the prospective institutional person living and participating in society. However, it still reinforces social inequalities and stereotypes, showing that men are more important than women. There is no ideal style of teaching or textbook that would include all divergent views and groups. However, teachers' awareness of stereotypical gender socialisation may help students to take part in the critically oriented debate about the role of men and women portrayed in the textbooks. All texts can be interpreted individually, and each individual has the power to give meaning to the narratives of the textbook. It may also be useful to give students a chance to complement the knowledge that is transmitted through the history textbooks and to allow them to (re)construct from multiple sources the historical knowledge in the field(s) where they recognise gender biases. Let us conclude with the words of Peter Gärdenfors stating that

*providing students with information or facts is a superficial form of education. Helping them to create knowledge by teaching them how to interpret and evaluate information is a much deeper form of education; however, it is one that results in the students' understanding the material they study. This is achieved by helping them to see patterns that they cannot discover on their own.*²⁸

28 Gärdenfors, Peter. *Understanding cultural patterns*. In: M. M. Suarez-Orozco (ed.). Learning in the global era. International perspectives on globalization and education. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 2007, pp. 67–84, p. 67.

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