

The influence of school textbooks on the configuration of gender identity: A study on the unequal representation of women and men in the school discourse during the Spanish democracy

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Abstract

This investigation examines the unequal representation of men and women in elementary textbooks used in Spain since the establishment of the country's democratic regime. We conduct a multiple-perspective Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) by combining different analytical models developed by various authors. The results indicate that said textbooks are biased in terms of gender, perpetuating discursive strategies that devalue and exclude women as social actors while maintaining male dominance. The research points to the consequences that this gender discrimination can have for students' construction of gender identity and urges teachers to adopt an egalitarian perspective in the selection of didactic materials.

Keywords: textbooks, elementary education, discourse analysis, gender discrimination, gender issues, equal education.

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1. Introduction

More than a century ago, the Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset wrote in *Meditaciones del Quijote* (1914) a phrase that would become popular: I am myself and my circumstance. In recent decades, across the humanities and the social sciences, the theory of social identity has placed an emphasis on the said *circumstance*, which seems to be decisive in assembling something so absolutely our own as our identity, who we are. Dispensing with essentialist conceptions that attempt to attribute a rigid, stable and homogeneous nature to personal identity, the *I* is better defined by its dialogical and distributive qualities, products of the situations with which it interacts (De Fina et al., 2006). Identity takes on the form of a *swarm of participations* (Bruner, 1995). Its dynamic nature means that it can change over time.

This Ortegian circumstance takes on a special relevance owing to the way the *I* is built upon the myriad social interactions in which it participates; it is forged through discourses, languages and meanings that are historically specific (Bruner, 1995; 2003). From these intersubjective encounters, which are produced in concrete historical situations, the *self* configures its own way of being and reacting to its surroundings. It does this in the form of a narration; the subject narrates itself the way in which it arrived at the present, conferring a meaning to this while at the same time projecting itself towards the future (Ricoeur, 1996). As Bruner (1995; 1990) has pointed out, this narrative constitutes a form of discourse and a way of organizing thoughts and experiences.

The narration may therefore be thought of as the instrument that makes possible the existence of a sustained, coherent *I*, albeit one that is constantly building and rebuilding itself as a result of its interactions with those around it and of the multiple and varied contexts in which it finds itself (Collin & Young, 2000; Gergen, 1999). What we have is a discursive construction mediated by semiotic instruments that the subject appropriates over the course of its life and by participation in different socio-cultural settings (Santamaría & Martínez, 2005). Said instruments are gleaned from the varied social discourses encountered by the individual (values, stereotypes, prejudices, gender roles...) and from the discourse of people the individual is close to, the *significant others* (De la Mata & Santamaría, 2010). The narratives of the *I* are nourished by the more or less implicit cultural models regarding what an individual should or should not be that are contained in these discourses, which ultimately provide a guide of sorts for the formation of one's personal identity. It is therefore crucial to identify the kinds of models that are being interiorized by the subject, as these models may favor the individual's personal development, emancipation and autonomy or, to the contrary, they may serve to restrict or even nullify such developments.

This theoretical framework helps in understanding the configuration of gender identity. From the moment of birth, a person establishes relationships with other human beings. This process of socialization involves coming into contact with the discourses of their temporal-spatial setting as well as their social and cultural context (Burr, 1995). The fact that men and women do not receive the same kind of socialization has led to the acknowledgement of a differential socialization depending on gender (Beauvoir, 1949). While gender becomes assimilated into a social context as a result of its repetition over time, its contents, as they pertain to men and women, change from one generation to the next (Butler, 1990). Performative in nature, gender is constructed socially and discursively through a process of continuous negotiation and modification. Gender is best understood as a *doing*, a ritual, a repetition by social actors of their social, political, cultural, and economic interactions with other members of society (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Gender performativity entrenches gender norms, and its performativity naturalizes the socially approved ways of being a male and a female in a specific society, forcing subjects to conform to normative, hegemonic, and heterosexual standards for identity (Butler, 1985).

Boys and girls project and attempt to adjust themselves to socially established patterns. Language plays a fundamental role in this process, given that the configuration of gender identity is closely linked to the representations, ideas and stereotypes conveyed in the discourses that reach the subject (Fernández, 2015; Litosseliti & Sunderland, 2002). School discourse, presented in school textbooks, is an indispensable element in the process of socialization and construction of gender identities, making it an excellent source of analysis (Burr, 1998; Wodak, 2001). Schoolbooks form the basis for a standardized learning and a shared culture, serving to transmit the knowledge that a society considers to be valid and worthy of being passed on to future generations (Guichot-Reina & De la Torre-Sierra, 2020a; Samadikhahl & Shahrokhi, 2015). But they also transmit a belief system, one that legitimizes

the status quo and the social order of the dominant groups that hold power (Apple & Christian-Smith, 1991; Subakir et al., 2012). Even in democratic Western societies that profess values of liberty, equality and social justice, the patriarchal system still enjoys considerable support and legitimizes gender inequalities.

The achievement of Gender Equality is one of the 2030 Agenda Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) (United Nations, 2015). Its actions and measures aim to denounce and eradicate all forms of discrimination against women and girls. Yet many textbooks continue to promote the construction of thought processes containing sexist elements that prove detrimental to the achievement of a more just society for all (Brugeilles, 2009; Michel, 1987). Previous studies on sexism in textbooks have revealed their ongoing inclusion of stereotypical visions of reality that marginalize not only women but also alternative models of masculinity that diverge from the traditional, hegemonical sort (Rothing, 2017).

From the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), prior research has revealed a biased representation of men and women in the discourse found in textbooks (Curaming & Curaming, 2020; Setyono, 2018). With regard to masculine representations, we find a disproportionate presence of males in their textual content (Ahmad & Shah, 2019; Lee, 2014; Lee, 2019; Sulaimani, 2017). Males tend to be shown engaging in demanding, productive and socially valued activities associated with wealth, achievement, wisdom and courage (Litosseliti & Sunderland, 2002); in addition to being the ones to initiate dialogs, they also show an enormous range of interests (Ghajarieh & Salami, 2016). Women's voices, on the other hand, are practically non-existent. Women appear in the background, as dependent complements to men (Hamid et al., 2008; Llorent & Cobano, 2014); given that their achievements and contributions to humanity are ignored, they cannot be portrayed as socially or symbolically representative figures (Fernández, 2017; Lee & Collins, 2008). They also tend to be committed to their reproductive role, taking care of the family or doing housework —jobs requiring skills

held in lesser social esteem than those associated with males— and invariably evidencing an emotional fragility (Cabrera & Martínez-Bello, 2014; Islam & Asadullah, 2018; Lee, 2014).

In the case of Spain, the majority of studies on sexism in textbooks have focused on the high school level (Blanco, 2000; López-Navajas, 2014; Luengo & Blázquez, 2004; Moreno, 1987; Peñalver, 2001; Ruíz-Cecilia et al, 2020; Subirats, 1993; Vila-Carneiro, 2020). At an international level, most of the studies to date in the realm of CDA have focused on textbooks of English as a Foreign Language (Ahmad & Shah, 2019; Ariyanto, 2018; Lee, 2019; Lee & Collins, 2008; Setyono, 2018; Sunderland, 2000), resulting in gaps of knowledge with respect to other subjects.

Therefore, our study focuses on textbooks from the elementary educational stage and the subjects of Language and Social Studies. As previously mentioned, elementary education students tend to develop their own gender schemes, choosing the role models that they need (Gómez-Carrasco & Gallego-Herrera, 2016). On the other hand, textbooks from said subjects have a powerful influence on the construction of gender identities. The content of these books, with which boys and girls learn about the history and culture of their country, conveys gender stereotypes that are prone to becoming fixed in the young students' minds (Cabrera & Martínez-Bello, 2014).

Our *main objective* is to determine if the relationships of dominance and the privilege of the masculine over the feminine are supported in the discourses of elementary school textbooks during the Spanish democracy, and to identify changes and continuities in the way social actors are represented in the periods studied. In a framework that stretches beyond the strictly Spanish case, we have three *specific objectives*: 1) to study androcentrism in school textbooks, using CDA as a tool for identifying dynamics of power, segregation, exclusion and gender inequalities; 2) to contribute to a reflection on the impact and the degree to which gender

stereotypes emanating from the discourse of school materials may affect boys and girls starting at an early age; and 3) to increase teachers' awareness of the importance of adopting an egalitarian perspective in the selection and use of didactic materials.

2. Materials and methods

School textbooks constitute one of the principal mechanisms for the discursive acquisition of gender identity by boys and girls through the way that these materials depict social actors. We have adopted an investigative approach based on CDA, an analytical technique that helps to reveal social norms and values (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; Van Dijk, 2016). CDA has an inherently qualitative nature that seeks to expose underlying ideologies, abuses of power, hidden dynamics of control, discrimination, hegemony, and dominance (Fairclough, 1989; Wodak, 2012). In treating discourse as a social practice and text as a social event (Fairclough, 1992), CDA takes social problems as a starting point for its analyses. For these reasons, CDA plays a prominent role in the study of gender identity, age, ethnicity and class (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006; Dolón & Todoli, 2008).

In this historical-educational study from a gender perspective, we focus on *social actors* as the main unit of analysis. The social actors, in this case, are the male and female characters appearing in school textbooks (Van Leeuwen, 1996). These figures, in their interactions and communications, serve as a link between discourse and reality, constituting an essential element in the students' configuration of identity (Eco, 1993; Meyer, 2001). The sense of belonging to a specific social group molds the way in which individuals shape their own identity. According to Atienza and Van Dijk (2010), we can find two differentiated social groups in the discourse of textbooks: the *in-group* and the *out-group*. Under the social identity theory, these social groups are commonly known as "us" and "them" (Tajfel & Turner, 1979;

Van Dijk, 1998). The construction of identities implies both inclusive and exclusive processes of comparison and contrast (Wodak, 2012). We tend to see the *in-group* (us) with positive qualities and adopt their norms, attitudes and behaviors. The enhancing of similarities within said group implies, at the same time, a negative evaluation and rejection towards “the others” (*out-group*), which can dangerously lead to bias and prejudices such as sexism. Therefore, in a dichotomous gender system, men identify themselves against or in opposition to what women represent, and vice versa. In the context of this study, the *in-group* is made up of male characters —associated, in school discourse, with positive traits and privileged positions— while the *out-group* consists of female characters, who are ascribed a secondary role, omitting their achievements and skills.

This study undertakes a discourse analysis of textbooks. The fundamental questions behind the CDA of our study are: a) how are men and women named and referred to?; b) what traits, qualities, values and roles are associated with male and female characters and used to define them?; and c) what discursive strategies are used to justify and legitimize the discrimination, exclusion and suppression of women? (Wodak, 2001).

2.1. Materials

Our sample consists of eight textbooks, approved by the Spanish Education Ministry and pertaining to two elementary school subjects: fifth grade Language and Social Studies. We reviewed a total of 1620 pages of text, which were scanned and converted into a digital format using ABBYY FineReader PDF 15. Additionally, we carried out a thorough revision and verification of the final document and performed the literal transcriptions manually.

The textbooks were purposely selected from two concrete historical periods: the Spanish Transition to democracy (1975-1982) and the second decade of the current century.

The so-called “Transition” began in November 1975 when General Francisco Franco died and lasted until 1982 with the electoral victory by the absolute majority of the Spanish Socialist Workers’ Party (PSOE). It encompassed the political transformation experienced in Spain from a dictatorial regime to the consolidation of a parliamentary monarchy. A comparison between textbooks from this period and ones from the current 21st century enables us to know whether the efforts to promote values of equal opportunities in Spain since the establishment of the democratic system are reflected in patterns of gender representation in the school discourse of elementary education textbooks. The description of the textbooks analyzed in our study is summarized in Table 1:

Table 1

Summary of textbooks information

Nº	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Title	Ciencias Sociales	Lengua española	Cosmos 5	Lenguaje 5	Lengua Castellana 5	Lengua primaria 5	Ciencias Sociales	Ciencias Sociales
Subject	Social St	Language	Social St	Language	Language	Language	Social St	Social St
Publisher	Santillana	Anaya	Anaya	Santillana	Santillana	SM	SM	Santillana
Level	EGB	EGB	EGB	EGB	Primaria	Primaria	Primaria	Primaria
Grade	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Year	1976	1979	1979	1982	2009	2010	2014	2015
Author(s)	Rafael Álvarez et al.	Fernando Lázaro & Benjamín Aragón	Dpto. de Educación Anaya	Javier Gómez & Jaime Mascaró	Asunción Honrado et al.	Begoña Oro et al.	Ezequiel Parra et al.	Mar García et al.
Book sections	6		2		3	3	3	3
Units	27	30	31	25	15	15	6	9
Avg. pages per unit	11	6	7	6	15	15	24	17
Total pages	299	183	239	160	223	221	143	152

Source: Prepared by the authors.

2.2. Data collection procedures

For this study we used the software package MAXQDA in its version Analytics Pro 20.2.2. as an analytical tool for the main body of research. This software belongs to the family of *Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software* (CAQDAS) (Lewins & Silver, 2008; Rädiker & Kuckartz, 2020). MAXQDA is considered to be among the most reliable software available and prior studies have shown its potential for work involving CDA (Biçer & Batdı, 2019; Calderón et al., 2011; Nguyen, 2019; Sobyana & Khokhlova, 2018).

In this study we used CDA as a theoretical framework while also taking into consideration a variety of analytical models developed by different authors. This allowed us to structure and organize the material being analyzed by means of a complex hierarchical system with categories and subcategories. Our goal was to obtain complete, multiple perspectives of the phenomena under study, in line with the triangulation principle of CDA.

First, using the *Appraisal Framework* (Martin, 2000; Martin & White, 2005; Martin & Rose, 2007), we examined the most important semantic block pertaining to gender issues, which is *attitude* (Fernández, 2017). This block establishes *judgements* about social esteem that serve to reveal in discourses the different evaluations assigned to social actors based on their gender. We did this by using the analysis model proposed by Fernández (2017), *Modelo de Valoración* [MVA Appraisal Model]. This original approach expands the subsystem of “*judgement*” through the inclusion of four new categories of analysis (Table 2). It explains the semantic options that could be contained in school discourse to model social actors, construct their identities, assign roles, evaluate their actions, create relational networks, naturalize social positions of power and domination; in other words, to reinforce ideologies (Kaplan, 2004).

Table 2

MVA Appraisal Model categories

Categories	
Attribute	Which of the social actors' qualities are valued in the discourse? ¹ We used as a reference the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI), a scale of 60 adjectives that represents social perceptions about gender stereotypes and allows to evaluate and label social actors as masculine, feminine or neutral (Bem, 1974).
Contribution	What have the social actors done?
Significance	What do they represent for other social actors?
Achievement	What have the social actors accomplished?

Source: Prepared by the authors, based on Fernández (2017).

We also adapted the Van Leeuwen's *System Network of Social Actors* (1996) to the five most relevant categories of analysis in order to analyze the cases of gender discrimination (Table 3). This model allows us to identify within the discourse which social actors are exercising relationships of domination and power over the different groups, what actions they are engaging in, and the possible effects that these instances could have on the students using these books.

Table 3

Categories examined with the System Network of Social Actors

Categories and subcategories
1. Exclusion – Inclusion
<i>1.1. Radical exclusion:</i> excludes social actors as well as their activities.
<i>1.2. Suppression:</i> suppresses social actors carrying out certain activities or achieving certain objectives.
<i>1.3. Backgrounding:</i> mentions social actors in a background role.
2. Assignment of active or passive roles
<i>2.1. Activation:</i> represents social actors as agents of action, operating in a decisive, dynamic manner and with the ability to undertake and control activities.
<i>2.2. Passivation:</i> represents social actors as receptors of an action, emphasizing their subordination and submission in certain activities and processes.
3. Genericization – Specification

3.1. *Genericization*: introduces social actors as social classes or groups.

3.2. *Specifization*: depicts social actors as specific individuals whose identity comes through in their discourse.

4. Nomination – Categorization

4.1. *Nomination*: presents the social actor as an individual with a unique and personal identity.

- a. Formalization: social actors accompanied by a last name, with or without courtesy deference.
- b. Semi-formalization: social actors presented with their first and last names.
- c. Informalization: social actors introduced by their first name.
- d. Nominations featuring treatments of courtesy or in the form of affiliations: actors are named with honorification (Mr., Mrs., Ms., Sir, Madam...) or with their personal or family relationship to others (e.g. of affiliation: Aunt Mary...).

4.2. *Categorization*: social actors are presented based on their function with relation to others (workers, mothers, teachers, etc.).

5. Functionalization – Identification

5.1. *Functionalization*: social actors are presented by reference to their occupation, role or activity. We used as a reference the *Structure of the International Standard Classification of Occupations* from 2008 (ISCO-08).

5.2. *Identification*: social actors are defined by who they are.

- a. Classification: social actors are classified based on their age, gender, social class, etc.
- b. Relational identification: social actors are identified in terms of their family or work relationship.
- c. Physical identification: social actors are described in terms of their physical traits.

Source: Prepared by the authors, based on Van Leeuwen (1996).

We also took into account other elements such as: a) the *order* in which the female and male characters appear in the discourse of the textbooks (Amerian & Esmaili, 2015; Lee & Collins, 2008); b) the *location* within the text (main body, activities section, annexes) and the *mode* (profiled, cited, work) in which characters appear (López-Navajas, 2014); and c) the *type of character* (main character, ordinary character, and cultural reference) (Brugeilles & Cromer, 2009).

In order to discover the presence of gender bias in the material we calculated, on the one hand, the *Gender Parity Index* (GPI) (UNESCO, 2015; 2020), widely used by international organisms in literature on educational inequality. The GPI is obtained by dividing the number of female social actors by the number of male social actors. The proportion indicates the relation between women and men, we use as a reference the scale proposed by Covacevich and Quintela-Dávila (2014) (Table 4). On the other hand, we measured the *Gender Equity Index*

(GEI), developed by López-Navajas (2015). The GEI is the quotient of the two differences: the numerator is represented by the percentage of appearances by female characters —this being the underrepresented gender— minus the minimum absolute value (0%); in the denominator we find the value corresponding to total parity (50%) minus the minimum absolute value (0%). Gender equity can be classified on the scale established by López-Navajas (2015) (Table 4). A comparison of these two indexes provides us with an idea of how far textbooks produced during the Spanish democracy are from achieving a long-sought parity in their depictions of social actors. A comparison of these two indexes provides us with an idea of how far Language and Social Studies textbooks produced during the Spanish democracy are from achieving a long-sought parity in their depictions of social actors.

Table 4

Gender Parity/Equity Scale

	Type of gender parity/equity	Range of values
Gender Parity Index (GPI)	Masculine bias	$(0.0 < GPI \leq 0.7)$
	Parity	$(0.8 < GPI \leq 1.3)$
	Feminine bias	$(GPI > 1.3)$
Gender Equity Index (GEI)	Very high	$(.8 < GEI \leq 1)$
	High	$(.6 < GEI \leq .8)$
	Moderate	$(.4 < GEI \leq .6)$
	Low	$(.2 < GEI \leq .4)$
	Very low	$(.0 \leq GEI \leq .20)$

Source: Prepared by the authors, based on Covacevich and Quintela-Dávila (2014) and López-Navajas (2015).

2.3. Data analysis

The textbooks were subjected to a painstaking systematic process of codification using the computer software MAXQDA. This process followed a deductive CDA logic based on the system of categories described above. With the MAXQDA program we mainly employed key analytical strategies of qualitative analysis in order to quickly and efficiently access significant words and/or fragments that would lead us to the necessary information contained in the original textual context (Saillard, 2011). We also relied on memos, for example, to retain the definition of a category, to create our notes and remarks and attach them to text extracts, etc. We decided to integrate the MAXQDA logbook throughout all stages of our analysis in order to record, in a digital research diary, valuable information from the research process, as well as reflections and plans for further studies (Rädiker & Kuckart, 2020). Additional functions were used, such as a search for codes and texts, an analysis of the identification frequency of linguistic units, correlations through cross-reference tables and visual tools like word clouds, among others. Some of these functions allow for obtaining quantitative data in the form of variables in MAXQDA—for example, we identified the distribution of textbooks characters by gender and measured textbooks' gender equity/equality—, which is very helpful in the analysis of qualitative data (Rädiker & Kuckart, 2020).

3. Results

3.1. Discrimination through underrepresentation

In the first place, and in keeping with the goal of our study, we undertook a quantification of the social actors present in the school discourse of the textbooks ($N = 2361$) (Table 5). We identified just 514 women, meaning that men constituted the central figure in the material nearly 80% of the time. This infra-representation of women is maintained

throughout the entire period of the Spanish democracy. In more recently published textbooks, the presence of female characters increases, but only by 6.3%.

The textbooks used in the subject of Social Studies evidence an even greater disparity of male and female characters. In both historical periods, the gender equity (GEI) of the Social Studies textbooks is *very low* (López-Navajas, 2015). According to GPI parameters, during the Transition these textbooks depicted five women for every one hundred men; and current textbooks show eight women for every one hundred men. In contrast, we observed that the textbooks used in Language classes present the most extensive representation of women (avg. 26.48%). The GEI of the more recent textbooks from this subject is considered *high* (López-Navajas, 2015), although this supposed equality is still insufficient and continues to denote a *masculine bias* (Covacevich & Quintela-Dávila, 2014). As can be seen in the calculation of the GPI, for every one hundred masculine social actors we find approximately forty women; in other words, men are more than twice as prevalent. Comparing both areas of learning, we can confirm that there has been more substantial progress in addressing the unbalanced appearance of female characters in the textbooks of Language (8.84%) than in those of Social Studies (2.78%).

Table 5

Appearance of social actors in school discourse, based on their gender

	Women	Men	Total	% Women	% Men	GEI	GPI
Total	514	1847	2361	21.77	78.23	.44	0.28
Transition	191	855	1046	18.26	81.74	.37	0.22
<i>Social St</i>	11	219	230	4.78	95.22	.09	0.05
<i>Language</i>	180	636	816	22.06	77.94	.44	0.28
Current day	323	992	1315	24.56	75.44	.49	0.33
<i>Social St</i>	27	330	357	7.56	92.44	.15	0.08
<i>Language</i>	296	662	958	30.90	69.10	.62	0.45

Source: Prepared by the authors.

3.2. Discrimination through nominations and titular representations

Following Van Leeuwen's *System Network of Social Actors* (1996), most of the social actors depicted in school discourse appear under their own identity (*specification*). The *informal nomination* prevails ($N = 1863$) for both genders. However, *formal* nominations are reserved for men, especially in cases of prominent figures from our history (Picasso, Einstein, etc.). No women are referred to exclusively by their last names, the most common treatment for them being the *semiformal* category (Gabriela Mistral, Marie Curie, etc.). On the other hand, when male characters are presented with a *semiformal* treatment, this is accompanied by an *honorification* (Don Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, etc.). We identified a total of 150 *nominations* using *honorification*. We observed a symmetry in the use of the more common honorific titles for male and female characters (Mr./Mrs., Sir/Madam). However, 73% of the personal titles were assigned to men. We also found feminine personal titles that have been identified by female academics as asymmetrical and sexist (Pauwels, 1998), such as “Miss”, traditionally used to indicate whether a woman is married, i.e., if she is potentially available to men.

One of the most common *nominations* used in presenting social actors in the textbooks is through their *personal familial relationships* ($N = 412$) (Van Leeuwen, 1996). The most common *relational identifications* are “mother” ($N = 38$) and “father” ($N = 57$). The use of these affiliations evidences differences in the nominations of male and female characters, with women frequently being presented stereotypically as “wife of”, “spouse of” or “mother of”, a fact that also applies to the use of *honorifications*. This is a way of associating them directly with their husbands or with their roles as mothers or their relationship with their family, thus suppressing their own identity or individuality.

3.3. Discrimination through representation in professional roles and occupations

Of the great many social actors presented on the basis of their profession (*functionalization*) ($N = 1234$), only 13.78% are women. Accordingly, the gender equity is *very low* ($GEI = .28$), reflected in the fact that for every one hundred men identified on the basis of their profession we find just sixteen women ($GPI = 0.16$), an index of inequality that remains constant through the two periods studied.

In addition to the predominance of *functionalization* in the presentation of male social actors, considerable use is also made of *relational identifications* based on their role at the workplace, such as “workmate” ($N = 100$) or “boss” ($N = 44$). Female characters, on the other hand, even in the case of *cultural references*, are more often accorded a *relational identification* based on a *familial link* than one based on their profession, or *functionalization*. For example: There have been many illustrious Frenchmen: Descartes, the philosopher; the writer Molière, Louis Pasteur, the brilliant chemist and bacteriologist; the Curie spouses; these are just a small sample of the many great and wise French artists (Álvarez et al., 1976). In this case, we can see how the outstanding scientist Marie Curie is effectively hidden by the abuse of the generic term “men” as a synonym for “people”, leading to confusion and ambiguity. Instead of being presented with her name and her own identity, she remains occult behind the term “spouses”, reflecting her matrimonial relationship. No mention is made of her profession or merits (*suppression*) in contrast to the other characters referred to (Van Leeuwen, 1996). In the textbooks analyzed, the only women recognized by their *functionality* are the “writers” Elisabeth Mulder, Concha Méndez and Santa Teresa de Jesús; Ana María Matute and J. K. Rowling as “authors”; and Cecilia Böhl de Faber as a “novelist”.

The dearth of women in the workplace has much to do with the limited range of professional roles assigned to women in school discourse ($N = 103$). Males, on the other hand, engage in a broad and diverse range of occupations ($N = 481$) and are omnipresent across all

of the large professional groups (International Labour Office, 2012). Even in masculine *cultural references* we find that not only is the principal “profession” of the character highlighted, but also his versatility in different undertakings. For instance, San Juan de la Cruz: Before being inducted into the Carmelo Order he worked as carpenter, tailor, sculptor, painter, nurse, etc. (Departamento de Educación de Anaya, 1979).

The presence of masculine characters is especially noteworthy in the group of *managers*, where they abound in managerial positions in the public administration as well as in the executive and legislative branches of government (as politicians, presidents, chief executives...). We also find a preponderance of men in the *technical and associated professions* (pilots, captains, athletes...). Female social actors predominate among *clerical support workers* (secretaries, cashiers, telephone operators...), in the *field of personal caregivers* (childcare providers, caretakers for the elderly...), and in *elementary occupations* (cleaners...). We find a *radical exclusion* (Van Leeuwen, 1996) of women in *protective services and armed forces occupations*, among *plant and machine operators and assemblers*, and in the *science and engineering professions*.

All of this evidences an *occupational segregation* that is not only *horizontal* but *vertical* as well. Within the *health care professions*, men are above all doctors, dentists and surgeons, while women hold positions of a lesser social rank (nurses, midwives, veterinarians...). The same is true in the field of *teaching*, where women are schoolteachers and tutors, and men are school principals or hold university chairs, etc. With regard to professionals in the areas of *law, social sciences and culture*, female characters tend to work as journalists, translators, actresses or dancers, while men are most often depicted as film and theatre directors, lawyers, judges, humanists, writers, composers.... As pertains *trade workers, laborers and handicraft workers*, female social actors tend to be limited to seamstresses, while men pursue prestigious activities such as sculpting, painting, etc. (International Labour Office, 2012).

3.4. Discrimination through stereotypical gender representation

In the *Sex Role Inventory* elaborated by Bem (1974) the author identifies two different patterns used in attributing qualities to social actors (Table 6). In general, the *masculine attributes* that are attributed to males and the *female attributes* associated with females tend to align with traditional social perceptions regarding gender stereotypes. Feminine characters are focalized around emotional elements and around the care and service and well-being of others. Masculine characters, on the other hand, are associated with the exercise of leadership, risk-taking, self-sufficiency, competitiveness, aggressiveness and ambition. Furthermore, they are present in a greater range of sexual roles than women. There are also certain *neutral or socially desirable attributes* (“happy”, “jealous”, “sincere”), *feminine attributes* (“cheerful”), and *masculine attributes* (“athletic”) that are assigned indistinctly to men and women (Bem, 1974).

Table 6

Attributes assigned to social actors according to their gender

Masculine items		Feminine items		Neutral items	
Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
1. Self-reliant	4. Defends own	5. Cheerful	2. Yielding	15. Happy	3. Helpful
4. Defends own beliefs	beliefs	26. Sensitive to	5. Cheerful	18.	9.
7. Independent	10. Athletic	the needs of	8. Shy	Unpredictable	Conscientious
10. Athletic	19. Forceful	others	11. Affectionate	21. Reliable	12. Theatrical
16. Strong personality		29.	20. Feminine	24. Jealous	15. Happy
22. Analytical		Understanding	23. Sympathetic	27. Truthful	24. Jealous
25. Has leadership		35. Eager to	26. Sensitive to	30. Secretive	33. Sincere
abilities		soothe hurt	the needs of	33. Sincere	39. Likable
28. Willing to take		feelings	others	42. Solemn	45. Friendly
risks		59. Gentle	29.	51. Adaptable	57. Tactful
34. Self-sufficient			Understanding		
40. Masculine			32.		
43. Willing to take a			Compassionate		
stand			38. Soft spoken		
46. Aggressive			41. Warm		
55. Competitive			44. Tender		

53. Does not use
harsh language
56. Loves
children

Source: Prepared by the authors, based on Bem (1974). *Note.* The number preceding each item reflects the position of each adjective as it actually appears on the Inventory.

3.5. Discrimination through appraisal of cultural references

The textbooks analyzed contained a significant number of *cultural references* ($N = 317$) (Table 7). These social actors allow for students to respond to the questions of who has done what and why is the world the way it is. Only 14.19% of these characters are women, a level of equity considered *low* ($GEI = .28$); this means that for every one hundred men there are sixteen women ($GPI = 0.16$).

Table 7

Cultural references

Male social actors (272)	Female social actors (45)
<i>Scientific realm</i> (24): Albert Einstein, Al-Idrisi, Carlo Frabetti, Carlos Sagan, Edwin Aldrin, Fernando de Casas y Novoa, Gabriel Fahrenheit, Galileo Galilei, Johannes Gutenberg, José Churruiguera, Juan de Herrera, Kepler, Konstantín Tsiolkovski, Leonardo Torriani, Louis Lumière, Louis Pasteur, Miguel Servet, Neil Armstrong, Nicolás Copérnico, Nikolài Zhukovski, Pedro de Ribera, Pedro Duque, Ptolomeo, Yuri Gagarin.	<i>Scientific realm</i> (1): Marie Curie.
<i>Artistic realm</i> (41): Alonso Cano, Antonio de Segura, Antonio López, Aristófaes, Bach, Bartolomé Esteban Murillo, Benito Cabrera, Caravaggio, Claude Monet, Dalí, Diego Velázquez, Alberto Durero, Eduardo Jimeno Rodó, Enrique Lorenzo, Ernst Kirchner, Francisco de Goya, Francisco de Zurbarán, Francisco Pacheco, Francisco Ribalta, Fructuoso Gelabert, George Meliès, Gian Lorenzo Bernini, Greco, Gregorio Fernández, Igor Stravinski, Jesús Gabán, José Luján Pérez, Juan de Avalos, Keith Moseley, Leonardo da Vinci, Ludwig Van Beethoven, Manuel González Méndez, Martínez Montañés, Miguel Ángel, Milivoj Ceran, Ole Könnecke, Pablo Ruiz Picasso, Rafael, Richard Burton, Teobaldo Power, Tiziano.	<i>Artistic realm</i> (2): Katy Perry, Beyoncé.
<i>Realm of humanities and literature</i> (118): A. Grin W. Fahrman, Agustín Fernández Paz, Alejandro Casona, Alfredo Gómez Cerdá, Ángel María De	<i>Realm of humanities and literature</i> (30): Ana María Matute, Beatriz Ferro, Begoña Oro, Carmen Gil, Carmen Martín Gaité, Carmen Vázquez Vigo, Cecilia Böhl De Faber, Christine Nostlinger, Claire Llewellyn, Concha Méndez, Elisabeth Mulder, Ema Wolf, Emily Dickinson, Gabriela Mistral, Gloria Fuertes, Graciela Pérez Aguilar, Hilary Ruben, Isabel Belmonte, Isabel Córdova Rosas, J.K. Rowling, Laura Gallego García, Mari Paz López Muñiz, María Gripe, Mercedes Formica, Morita

Lera, Antonio De Nebrija, Antonio F. Grilo, Antonio Machado, Aristóteles, Arturo Pérez-Reverte, Averroes, Azorín, Benito Pérez Galdós, Blas De Otero, Bram Stoker, Calderón De La Barca, Camilo José Cela, Carlos Lapeña, Carlos Reviejo, Carlos Villanes, Charles Dickens, Chris Hawkes, Clavijo Tomás De Iriarte, Dámaso Alonso, Daniel Defoe, Daniel Nesquens, Demóstenes, Descartes, Emili Teixidor, Emilio Salgari, Enrique Jardiel Poncela, Esopo, Federico García Lorca, Federico Tozzi, Félix Lope De Vega, Felix María Samaniego, Fernando Del Paso, Fernando Díaz-Plaja, Francisco De Quevedo, Gabriel García Márquez, Gabriel Miró, Gerardo Diego, Gianni Rodari, Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe, Gómez Manrique, Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer, Hermanos Grimm, I. González Gallego, Ignacio Aldecoa, Inca Garcilaso, Isaak Bábel, Isidoro González, J. L. Alfonso De Santos, James Joyce, James Matthew Barrie, Jonathan Swift, Jorge Guillen, Jorge Manrique, Jose Antonio Del Cañizo, José De Espronceda, José De Sigüenza, José Hierro, Jose Luis Alonso De Santos, José M. Pemán, José Viera, Juan Carlos Marín Ramos, Juan Cruz Iguerabide, Juan De Timoneda, Juan Ramón Jiménez, Juan Ruiz De Alarcón, Julio Alfredo Egea, Julio Caro Baroja, Julio Cortázar, Julio Verne, Jürgen Banscheraus, Kant, Konstantín Ushinsky, Leopoldo Alas “Clarín”, Lewis Carrol, Lope De Rueda, Luis Cernuda, Luis De Góngora, Maimónides, Manuel Altolaguirre, Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera, Manuel Machado, Mark Twain, Menéndez Pidal, Miguel De Cervantes, Miguel Delibes, Miguel Hernández, Miguel Mihura, Mijaíl Sholójov, Mikel Valverde, Molière, Nicolás Guillén, Ortega y Gasset, Pablo Neruda, Pío Baroja, Platón, Plinio El Joven, Rafael Sánchez Ferlosio, Rafael Alberti, Ramón Del Valle-Inclán, Ramón Gómez De La Serna, Ramón Pérez De Ayala, Robert Louis Stevenson, Ruben Darío, Salvador De Madariaga, San Juan De La Cruz, Sheil Silverstein, Skip Skwarek, Sófocles, Unamuno, Virgilio, Wenceslao Fernández Flórez, Willi Fährmann, William Shakespeare.

Historical realm (64): Abderramán I, Abderramán III, Agustín De Bethencourt, Alejandro Magno, Alfonso Fernández De Lugo, Alfonso VIII, Alfonso X El Sabio, Alhaken II, Almanzor, Álvaro Núñez Cabeza De Vaca, Baltasar Carlos De Austria, Bolívar, Borrell II, Carlomagno, Carlos I, Carlos II, Carlos III, Carlos IV, Camillo Benso Conde De Cavour, Conde-Duque De Olivares, Diego De Herrera, Duque De Lerma, Eloy Gonzalo, Felipe I, Felipe II, Felipe III, Felipe IV, Felipe V, Felipe VI, Fernando De Aragón, Fernando II De Aragón, Fernando III, Fernando VI, Fernando VII, Francisco Pizarro, Franco, Gadir De La Salle, Garibaldi, General Moscardó, Guzmán El Bueno, Haile Selassie, Hernán Cortés, Hernán Peraza, Hitler, Jaime I El Conquistador, John Speke, Juan Carlos I, Juan Ponce De León, Julio César, Lenin, León Tolstoi, Leopoldo II De Bélgica, Luis XIV, Maximiliano I De Habsburgo, Mobutu, Mohamed Reza Pahlevi, Napoleón Bonaparte, Pedro De Vera, Pedro El Grande, Reza Pahlevi, Salomón, Sancho III, Victor Manuel, Viriato.

Carrillo, Paloma Bordons, Pilar Lozano Carbayo, Pilar Mateos, Santa Teresa De Jesús, Sor Juana Inés De La Cruz.

Historical realm (11): Agustina de Aragón, Catalina II, Sofía de Grecia, Margarita Teresa de Austria, Isabel I de Castilla, Juana de Arco, María de Borgoña, María Pita, Leonor de Borbón, María Luisa de Parma, Simone Veil.

Other areas (1): Juana Pacheco.

Other areas (25): Américo Vespucio, Bartolomé Díaz, Cardenal Aquaviva, Cristóbal Colón, David Livingsstone, Francis Drake, Georges Henri Rivière, H. M. Stanley, Jean De Béthencourt, Jesús De Nazaret, José De Anchieta, Joselito, Juan Sebastián Elcano, Lancelloto Malocello, Lutero, Magallanes, Mahoma, Manolete, Mungo Park, Nicoloso Da Recco, Pedro De Betancur, Renato Giovanni, Rurik, Sánchez Mejías, Apóstol Santiago.

Source: Prepared by the authors.

This female exclusion becomes more pronounced by the mechanisms through which women are included in school discourse itself (Van Leeuwen, 1996). From the perspective of the *MVA Appraisal Model*, females who figure as *cultural references* are not recognized for their *attributes*; neither their personal qualities nor the professional talent that has led them to stand out in political, cultural or scientific circles are acknowledged (Fernández, 2017; Martin & White, 2005). The few *attributes* assigned to women tend to be from those items considered to be *feminine* (Bem, 1974). Among these, we can point to the sensitivity and concern that Carmen Martín Gaité showed in incorporating into her works the feelings, desires and dreams of women (Honrado et al., 2009); or the special affection for boys and girls shown by Gloria Fuertes, whom school discourse assures us was delighted to be called: the children's poet (Lázaro & Aragón, 1979).

At the same time, we find a *suppression of feminine contributions* in school discourse, enabled grammatically by the use of passive or subject-less constructions and indefinite pronouns (Martin & White, 2005; Van Leeuwen, 1996). For instance, Martín Gaité: wrote numerous stories as well as some poems (Honrado et al., 2009). The textbook merely cites a few of the character's contributions to the development of humankind's knowledge in a very general way; for example, students are told that Marie Curie: is known for her discoveries involving radioactivity (Parra et al., 2014). The descriptions dealing with the *contributions* of masculine social actors provide a stark contrast and it is quite common to find exactly how many works the author has bequeathed to humankind, as in the case of Benito Pérez Galdós:

he wrote 46 volumes of national episodes, which are stories about the history of Spain; 34 novels; 24 plays and 15 volumes of varied literary works (Lázaro & Aragón, 1979).

Nor do the textbooks acknowledge the *achievements* of female characters, as illustrated by the biography of Marie Curie; the text informs us that she: received two Nobel prizes (Parra et al., 2014), without specifying when or in what fields they were awarded to her. Curie won the Nobel Prize in Physics (1903) and the Nobel Prize for Chemistry (1911). In the case of masculine social actors, we could not find a single instance in school discourse where the complete name of the prize and the year it was awarded went unmentioned. Einstein is one example: he obtained the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1921 (Parra et al., 2014). The only female authors whose accomplishments are fully acknowledged in this sense in the textbook discourse is Ana María Matute, winner of the “Premio Nacional de Literatura” (1959) and the “Premio Nadal” (1960).

Furthermore, the *achievements* of female social actors tend to be associated with their sex, that is to say, we find an *identification* on the basis of *classification* by sex (Van Leeuwen, 1996) —Marie Curie was: the first woman to teach at the University of Paris (Parra et al., 2014)— a statement which, from the *MVA Appraisal Model*, ignores her talent (*attribute*) as well as her work (*contribution*) (Fernández, 2017; Martin & White, 2005). Another evaluative difference can be found in the way that masculine characters are described as having “won”, “achieved” or “attained” something, verbal expressions which make the men *active subjects* of the merit accorded and highlight their skills in attaining such recognition (*activation*) (Van Leeuwen, 1996). The accomplishments of female characters, in contrast, are much more likely to be expressed in the passive form: “she was awarded”, “she received”, “they bestowed on her”, etc. (*passivation*) (Van Leeuwen, 1996).

In school discourse, women are not presented as “founders of...” or “creators of...”, in the way that masculine social actors are, with the corresponding social value that such expressions confer on an actor’s *contribution* —for example, Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer: is the greatest exponent of romantic poetry in our country (Lázaro & Aragón, 1979)—. From the *MVA Appraisal Model*, this may be due to the fact that the *significance* accorded to female social actors in school discourse is negligible (Fernández, 2017; Martin & White, 2005). With males, the use of evaluative adjectives such as “well-known”, “outstanding”, “distinguished”, “principal” or “prominent” is common, conferring on them a greater importance as social actors. The discourse is laden with recurring, robust expressions presenting men as “the principal/leading representative of...”, “one of the most important scientists/artists of ...”, etc. Such formulations highlight the transcendent role of these figures in the cultural and artistic development of their country at an international level. These are social actors who leave their mark; their significance, which is presented in a more explicit manner in the discourse, is inseparable from their *contributions*, *attributes* and *achievements* (Fernández, 2017; Martin & White, 2005).

3.6. *Discrimination through mode and location in school discourse*

On the basis of the ideas expounded upon so far, we would now like to turn our attention to the *location* within the text and the *mode* in which social actors are presented in the textbooks (López-Navajas, 2014). We may begin by identifying where women tend to be presented in school discourse. Our data show that women are excluded from the *main body* of the texts, this being the privileged position containing the information that, as a rule, students are required to read, understand and learn. Of all of the characters present in the *main body* of the text ($N = 1079$), only 14.75% are women. This represents an equity classification considered *low* ($GEI = .29$). In GPI terms this translates into seventeen females appearing in the body of school

discourse texts for every one hundred men ($GPI = 0.17$). Nor are there significant contrasts between the two periods studied. Female social actors appear above all in the *activities section* of the textbooks (56.23%), but we should keep in mind that these parts of the textbooks are not generally used by the teachers.

We are also interested in examining just how female social actors were depicted in school discourse (Table 8). The *mode* in which they are presented most often is by *profile* (López-Navajas, 2014). A profile offers certain information that helps confer visibility and import to the character. A total of 236 women appear in the school textbooks in this *mode*, meaning that nearly 80% of the *profiled* characters are men. Both during the Transition and in the more recent period, women figure more prominently among the characters *cited* (25.03%), which may be translated into their representing *ordinary characters* (Brugeilles & Cromer, 2009). The *main characters* of the textual discourse are generally *profiled* in the *body* of the text, in other words, they are given a privileged position. In the textbooks studied, of the total number of *principal* social actors ($N = 441$), 85.49% are males. Therefore, we can affirm that there is a *radical exclusion* of female social actors as protagonists in the school textbooks. In contrast, their *inclusion* generally occurs in the *background* category, especially in current schoolbooks (27.25%), in which they are presented as *cited*, embodying a secondary position (Van Leeuwen, 1996).

Table 8

Mode in which social actors appear in school discourse

	Mode	Women	Men	Total	% Women	% Men	GEI	GPI
Total	Profiled	236	857	1093	21.59	78.41	.43	0.28
	Cited	220	659	879	25.03	74.97	.50	0.33
	Work	31	210	241	12.86	87.14	.26	0.15

Transition	Profiled	85	406	491	17.31	82.69	.35	0.21
	Cited	81	288	369	21.95	78.05	.44	0.28
	Work	7	104	111	6.31	93.69	.13	0.07
Social St	Profiled	7	131	138	5.07	94.93	.10	0.05
	Cited	2	49	51	3.92	96.08	.08	0.04
	Work	1	20	21	4.76	95.24	.10	0.05
Language	Profiled	78	275	353	22.1	77.9	.44	0.28
	Cited	79	239	318	24.84	75.16	.50	0.33
	Work	6	84	90	6.67	93.33	.13	0.07
Current day	Profiled	151	451	602	25.08	74.92	.50	0.33
	Cited	139	371	510	27.25	72.75	.55	0.37
	Work	24	106	130	18.46	81.54	.37	0.23
Social St	Profiled	8	144	152	5.26	94.74	.11	0.06
	Cited	14	106	120	11.67	88.33	.23	0.13
	Work	1	32	33	3.03	96.97	.06	0.03
Language	Profiled	143	307	450	31.78	68.22	.64	0.47
	Cited	125	265	390	32.05	67.95	.64	0.47
	Work	23	74	97	23.71	76.29	.47	0.31

Source: Prepared by the authors, based on López-Navajas (2014).

In our study, we identified a considerable number of *works* ($N = 241$), of which approximately 13% are by female authors. During the Spanish Transition to democracy, nearly 94% of the works referred to are by male social actors. This represents an equity index (GEI) that is *very low*. According to the GPI, this implies that for every one hundred *works* written by males, there are seven by females. Disaggregating the data by subjects, we observed that Social Studies textbooks had not incorporated additional female works over time. In both historical periods, Social Studies textbooks only contain one work by a female author. On average, the ratio of female works has decreased 1.73% in recent schoolbooks, in which almost

97% of the works correspond to male authorship. In contrast, Language textbooks show a notable advance in addressing gender equity. Current textbooks of this area present a *moderate* representation of females works ($IEG = .47$). The data show a 17.04% reduction in the proportion of works developed by men, offering more space for the visibility and artistic production of women. Yet we are still far from anything resembling parity, as for every one hundred works by men, we still find approximately thirty by women. All of this reflects a lack of female genealogy in the world of the arts at a national and international level, where it would seem that only works by men are worthy of appearing in our didactical material.

The textbooks studied mention prominent male authors in a great diversity of literary genres as well as intellectual and artistic movements, including the Golden Age, the Baroque era, Romanticism, etc. Part of school discourse content involves describing these groups of artists and their works, delving into the historical, formal, thematic and aesthetic aspects that they have in common—for instance, The Generation of '98: is the name given to a group of writers of similar age and characteristics, who reflected in their writings their love for Spain and the pain they felt due to the country's grim situation (Departamento de Educación Anaya, 1979)—. Women, in contrast, appear independently—even in recently published school textbooks—with no link to group them together or to help in the construction of a shared female genealogy. In the case of male social actors, we encounter frequent expressions along the lines of “protégé of...” or “disciple of...”, a way of highlighting the importance that these networks of knowledge, synergy and relationships among artists have had in bequeathing us their many works. Female authors tend to appear “accompanied” or “camouflaged” among different male authors. For example: Creole literature developed considerably. Some of its more famous authors were Inca Garcilaso, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz and Juan Ruiz de Alarcón (Álvarez et al., 1976). This only serves to make the female authors less visible, relegating them to the *background* (Van Leeuwen, 1996).

4. Discussion

This study explores the gender representations of social actors in school discourse, seeking to identify discursive strategies that legitimize relationships of power, domination, and privilege of the masculine over the feminine in textbooks. It offers an analysis from the perspective of CDA of androcentrism and of the prevalence of gender discrimination contained in the didactical material.

Given the increase in gender awareness prompted by the feminist movement during the Spanish democracy, we would have expected greater progress to have been made in the current textbooks in terms of a more equitable presentation of male and female characters (Guichot-Reina & De la Torre-Sierra, 2020b). The Gender Equity Indexes analyzed in this investigation show that the presence of women in school discourse has gone from *low* ($GEI = .37$) during the Transition, to *moderate* ($GEI = .49$) in Spanish textbooks published in the last decade of the 21st century. On average we are shown almost thirty women for every one hundred men ($GPI = 0.28$). This ratio becomes even more disparate if we focus on *main characters*, on *cultural references*, or on *works* with an attributed authorship; in these instances, we find a mere ten women for every one hundred men. This leads us to conclude that much has yet to be done to achieve a semblance of parity, especially considering that, according to prior studies on sexism, even more discriminatory results are likely to be found in textbooks used at the middle school or high school levels, or in other subjects such as Science (Blanco, 2000; López-Navajas, 2014), Math (Brugeilles & Cromer, 2009), Music (Bernabé-Villodre & Martínez-Bello, 2018), or Physical Education (González-Palomares et al., 2017).

Women's milestones have been obscured and forgotten over the course of History (González-Ramos, 2014; Pérez-Sedeño, 2003). For instance, a shallow analysis of the History

of Science would drive us to think that women have not contributed to its development (Fara, 2013; González-Ramos, 2014). This lack of acknowledgment of many female scientists, authors and artists is also reflected in textbooks' school discourse. One of the principal forms of discrimination against women used in the textbooks is that of *nomination*. In discursive terms, men are more likely to be addressed—especially in the context of *cultural references*—with *formal* nominations (Van Leeuwen, 1996). Such differences in nomination affect the prestige and fame attributed to the individual (Atir & Ferguson, 2018; Gallego, 2013). In general, it is assumed, both in the school and in academic literature, that behind a surname we find a man and not a woman. This habit or tradition implies an attribution of power in certain public domains as well as positions of privilege and greater social status to men, who in such a case represent the *in-group*, to the detriment of women, the *out-group* (Atienza & Van Dijk, 2010). As Atir and Ferguson (2018) have pointed out, presenting women by their first name does not serve to emphasize their gender as much as it makes them appear less eminent, famous or worthy of social acknowledgement.

The negation of the woman's voice in school discourse takes the form of non-inclusive language (Barton & Sakwa, 2012; Moreno-Marimón, 2000). Females are camouflaged and relegated to a secondary position (*background*) (Van Leeuwen, 1996), as dependent complements to men (Hamid et al., 2008; Llorent & Cobano, 2014). This women's invisibility is further aggravated by the verbal predominance of generic, masculine terms that are ambiguous, decontextualized, and unclear (Moreno, 1987). However, textbooks can include multiple strategies to guarantee an equal visibility of male and female characters, such as alternating the order of mentions of men and women in text; using epicenes that can refer to both genders (persons), collective designations (student body), or including both gender terms (mothers and fathers, girls and boys...) (Amerian & Esmaili, 2015; Lee & Collins, 2008), etc.

There is a clear omission in the schoolbooks of many feminine *achievements* and *attributes*, one that leads to their *contributions* and *significance* for humanity being ignored (Fernández, 2017; Lee & Collins, 2008; Martin & White, 2005). They are presented in passive roles, even in the achievement of their merits, while disproportionate value is placed on their physical and personal attributes, especially their beauty, youth or emotional qualities (Cabrera & Martínez-Bello, 2014; Carroll & Kowitz, 1994; Evans & Davis, 2000; Lee, 2014). At the same time, they are *identified* most often in terms of their *familial* and/or affective *relationships* instead of their professional position (Van Leeuwen, 1996). All of this draws the reader's attention to elements that do not necessarily have any direct relationship to the cultural, political, historical or economic context being alluded to (Fernández, 2017).

We should also like to call attention to the text boxes and appendixes used to present the lives of certain female figures. Given how this excludes women from the principal body of discourse, we do not consider this isolated sort of incorporation—which ultimately minimizes their importance—to be a desirable solution (Fernández, 2001). Their inclusion in the discourse needs to be given in an appropriate context and framework, in a way that avoids exceptionality and at the same time helps to contribute to a genealogy (Gómez-Carrasco & Gallego-Herrera, 2016). In this inclusion process, it is essential to recover women's legacy, share their career paths, and unveil the difficulties, invisibilities, and barriers they had to break through (Zafra, 2013). As López-Navajas (2015) points out, gender-sensitive research can serve as a backbone to promote a more just and egalitarian representation of social actors in the discourse of textbooks. Nevertheless, the integration of the gender dimension in educational disciplines (such as History, Literature, or Science) requires a significant commitment on the part of researchers and gender equality training (García-Dauder & Pérez-Sedeño, 2017). For example, we highlight the projects "No More Matildas", created by the Association of Women Researches and Technologists (AMIT) and "Women's Legacy: Our Cultural Heritage for

Equity”, coordinated by researcher Ana López-Navajas. These initiatives develop resources to facilitate the inclusion of women in educational content in order to recognize their role as protagonists of culture and history and restore their hidden social value and cultural heritage.

With regard to occupational visibility, the proportion of women engaged in professional activities is minuscule (13.78%). In our analysis we have identified a slight increase (3.42%) in the *functionalization* associated with female characters in the democratic period (Van Leeuwen, 1996), but such results continue to evidence a clear exclusion of women in the labor force. Furthermore, this portrayal of their presence in the Spanish economy is belied by their actual importance; while women represented 28.67% of Spanish economic activity at the start of the democracy (1976), they now account for a full 53.30% (2019) (INE, 2020).

In school discourse, we find a predominance of horizontal and vertical segregation in the work market that has much to do with the *sexual roles* attributed to male social actors (authority, leadership, ambition...) and to female social actors (comprehension, compassion, gentleness, an affinity for boys and girls) (Bem, 1974). Gender stereotypes of this kind respond to traditional, hierarchical models of masculinity —“showing themselves to be” or “taking charge of”— and femininity —“being there for” or “taking care of”— and denotes an implicit dichotomy regarding the social functions carried out by each (Moore & Gillette, 1993; Valcárcel, 2008; Yang, 2016). The textbooks give form to the social perceptions about which kinds of work men and women stand out in. Female characters are relegated to professions as nurses, teachers, caregivers, clerks, etc., jobs which, in addition to offering lower salaries, can be seen as extensions of the domestic tasks traditionally assigned to women. We also encounter female characters engaging in professional activities such as dancers, singers, acrobats, or skaters. According to Cabrera and Martínez-Bello (2014) in a few, numbered instances, these pursuits may be considered by students to represent qualified labor activities, but for the most part they are associated with entertainment or activities practiced in one’s free time. Masculine

characters, on the other hand, take on jobs associated with greater formation, power, responsibility and social prestige: heads of state, directors, engineers, scientists, soldiers, etc. (Barton & Sakwa, 2012; Cabrera & Martínez-Bello, 2014; Gebregeorgis, 2016).

As the primary resources used in formal education, school textbooks constitute a powerful instrument for transmitting and consolidating ideologies (Apple, 1986). The professionals who write and illustrate textbooks present us with a human world full of masculine and feminine characters who, in their interacting, partaking in discursive practices, developing skills and attributes, playing roles, etc., are offering their boy and girl readers a glimpse of what it means to be a male or female in our society (Ahmad & Shah, 2019; Burr, 1998; Gharbavi & Mousavi, 2012; Gebregeorgis, 2016; Romera, 2015; Scollon, 2001; Ullah et al., 2014). The theory of social identity points out that observation, imitation, and modeling are basic agents in human gender development (Bandura, 1997; Bruner, 1995; Tajfel, 1978). Students identify with the characters presented in school textbooks (Van Leeuwen, 2008). Therefore, an unequal gender representation of said social actors constitutes one of the principal obstacles to the promotion of gender equality in education worldwide (UNGEI, 2010).

The United Nations High Commission for Human Rights (2019) has affirmed that gender stereotypes are potentially dangerous. Repeated exposition to gender-biased messages through textbooks can lead to the development of sexist attitudes among students (Donovan et al., 2019; Lee, 2014; Sunderland et al., 2000). The discriminations observed in the discourse of school textbooks can induce a limited understanding of the social role that females play in society (Ahmad & Shah, 2019) and, at the same time, affect students' self-images concerning the perception of their own abilities and those of others.

Gender stereotypes represent one of the main causes for the persistence of a universal gender gap in school systems regarding the type of university and training studies that male and female students opt for, depending on their sex (MEFP, 2019a). According to Bian et al. (2017), at the age of six, girls start to perceive themselves as being less capable than boys. This leads them to associate activities and professions requiring heightened intellectual skills and brilliance with men. Stereotypes can have profound effects on women's self-esteem, expectations, interests, capabilities and motivations, to the point where they may voluntarily renounce certain pursuits, opting instead for occupations identified with their traditional roles (Barberá et al., 2008; García-Ael et al., 2018; Kim et al., 2018; Lerchenmueller et al., 2019).

In the latest edition of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) report, carried out in 2018 by the Organization for Cooperation and Economic Development (OECD), 15-year-old students were asked about the profession that they hoped to practice in the future. Among OECD respondents, the percentage of boys aspiring to work in the fields of Science and Engineering was eight points higher than among girls. Girls, meanwhile, showed a clear preference for working in the health care fields, by a difference of fifteen points. In fact, five of the nine preferred occupations cited by female respondents belonged to the health care field (specialist doctor, nurse, psychologist...) while the others were jobs inked to Community Services (lawyer, teacher...). In general, boys' choices included a broader range of professions (engineering, sports, politics...) (MEFP, 2019b).

The sexist stereotypes and prejudices found in school textbooks do not help in narrowing this gender gap. From an early age, students are exposed to an unequal, hierarchical world, and the fact that they may construct their identities on such a basis is, as Caldas-Coulthard and Van Leeuwen (2002) have put it "terrifying".

Elementary school students tend to take the contents of their textbooks as unquestionable universal truths, a posture which can lead them to accept attitudes and visions of the world that justify inequalities (Blumberg, 2008; Kalmus 2004; Sunderland et al., 2000; Oteíza, 2006; Van Dijk, 2003; Witt 2001). The unequal representation of male and female social actors in didactic material can end up creating in students a biased view of reality (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; Lomas, 2003; Subirats, 1993; Van Dijk, 1981). This in turn can influence and limit the development of their personal skills, their behaviors, their choice of professional pursuits, and decision-making about other aspects of their lives and life-projects (Britton & Lumpkin, 1977; Crawford, 2004; Guichot-Reina & De la Torre-Sierra, 2020a; Ndura, 2004; Sarvarzade & Wotipka, 2017).

5. Conclusions

The discourse contained in curricular materials during the democratic period in Spain legitimizes, even today, sexist models that encourage and justify an unacceptable discrimination towards women. The content of textbooks used in schools contradicts the objectives of any fair, democratic, egalitarian study program, constituting one of the elements that hinders the achievement of an egalitarian education. We believe that the findings contained in this study will help to heighten the awareness of teachers about the importance of eliminating all vestiges of androcentric and stereotyped discourse.

A textbook's impact on students depends not only on its contents: on the one hand, students bring to the classroom a gender background, result of the intersection of multiple discourses within and beyond school. The construction of their gender identity draws upon these discourses and can lead them to accept, reinterpret or reject —entirely or partially— what they read (Apple, 1993; Davies, 1989). On the other hand, teachers mediate and transform

textbooks when they use them during lessons (Durrani, 2008). A teacher can react in various ways when facing a text that exposes traditional gender roles: 1) Teacher ignores traditional gender representation; 2) Teacher subverts traditional gender representation; 3) Teacher endorses (or exaggerates) traditional gender representation; 4) Unclear (Sunderland et al., 2001). According to Durrani and Halai (2018), gender norms are chiefly located in all discursive contexts and practices that students and teachers reach. In the Global North and the Global South context, teachers who utilize feminist pedagogies have reported resistance and backlash by students and teaching staff sustained in traditional gender norms (Elwell & Buchanan, 2021). Additionally, Ellsworth (1989) claims that even teachers with a feminist identity and who wish to combat sexist ideologies are not free of these learned and internalized oppressive gender norms. These “rules” —about how women and men are expected to be and act— are internalized by individuals at a young age, reinforcing a systemic inequality that undermines the rights of women and girls and devalues what is considered female or feminine (Heise et al., 2019).

Unveiling and bringing out into the open all forms of exclusion, domination or segregation found in the school represents a pedagogical exercise of social compromise and political resistance, one in which teachers need to stand up to hegemonical discursive practices. A classroom can potentially be a privileged setting for dealing with issues of gender bias, but this can only occur if serious changes are made in the way teachers are trained in their initial and continuing formation (Cumming-Potvin & Martino, 2018; Tantekin, 2009). The enhancement of gender awareness through teachers' training encourages them to select and use didactic materials adopting an egalitarian perspective. As long as school textbooks cannot guarantee equitable gender representations, it is the teachers who must intervene, adapting and complementing the material (Mineshima, 2008). Furthermore, a successful implementation of a feminist pedagogy must listen to student's experiences and expose them to challenging

viewpoints (Hooks, 1994; McCusker 2017). In this way, students can acquire skills to critique and dismantle sexism and develop alternative discourses, acting as active subjects instead of mere consumers of textbooks (Chick, 2006; Davies, 1989; Widodo, 2018).

The need for substantial changes in school materials is urgent. Given the school's role as the primary institution in forming a free and educated citizenry, it is crucial that it be fully committed to an equal treatment of males and females. Textbooks must advocate for the equality of conditions and possibilities between both genders. Didactic materials should employ a fair, symmetrical nomination of their social actors, a goal which could be achieved by giving visibility and merit to the contributions made by women (Gallego, 2013). If schools continue to use textbooks that exclude women, how can we expect to eradicate these models of discriminatory, stereotyped thoughts from the pupils studying in them? Ideally, school textbooks should be showing a broad range and diversity of sexual roles and positive models both in the public and domestic domain, encouraging subjects to try out, fantasize about and construct different possible "Is", and to imagine alternative futures and life projects, ones that have references in the school materials they learn with.

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