

## GENDER STEREOTYPES IN PRIMARY SCHOOL TEXTBOOKS

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*The article deals with the problem of gender stereotyping. The article presents the results of content analysis of primary school textbooks in order to clarify the nature of gender stereotypes contained in them.*

**Introduction.** Gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls was proclaimed at the United Nations Summit on sustainable development (New York, 2015) as one of the 17 sustainable development goals until 2030. This means that the progress of countries in achieving prosperity and well-being for all will depend directly on their dedicated efforts to further promotion de facto equality between men and women in all spheres of society. The consistent implementation of the national action plans on gender equality and state programmes on various aspects of the advancement of women has enabled the Republic of Belarus to make significant progress in addressing issues of equal rights and opportunities both within the country and in the international arena.

The results of the implementation of the gender policy for the period from 2011 to 2015 were presented by the delegation of the Republic of Belarus at the 65th session of the United Nations Committee on the elimination of discrimination against women (October 2016, Geneva). Belarus presented the eighth periodic report on the implementation by the Republic of Belarus of the provisions of the Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women [5].

However, gender stereotypes still exist in people's minds.

**Task formation and methods of research.** Where do gender stereotypes at school begin? Many think that - from pictures in ABC Book. We can remember our first school books with bright pictures, they show us typical "male" and "female" professions and occupations. Even the first teacher is usually a woman. This also applies to other professions: a doctor, a shop assistant, an accountant. Pictures present men as they work; they solve economic and political issues.

We wanted to see if school textbooks were one of the channels of translation and formation of gender stereotypes. The aim of our study was to analyze textbooks on the Russian language for the second grade.

The content of the images and texts in the textbooks were analyzed. They were published in 2015 by M. B. Antipova, A. V. Vernikovskaya, E. S. Grabchikov) [1, 2].

**Results, their discussion and perspectives.** In the first textbook ("Russian. Part 1") there are 86 images, only 24 of them present people - 5 females, 11 males, 8 pictures - male and female.

Table 1. – Frequency of references to gender characteristics (pictures), %

Female images	5,8%
Male images	12,8%
Both female and male	9,3%
Other images	72,1%

There are 173 exercises in the textbook - 34 (19.7 %) exercises mention people: 15 are about men, 8 –about women, 11 –about men and women [1].

Table 2. – Frequency of reference to gender characteristics (texts of exercises), %

Women	4,6%
Men	8,7%
Both men and women	6,3%
Other topics	80,4%

Already at this stage of the study, gender asymmetry is clearly visible. In this textbook, references to men are 2.2 times more common than references to women.

In the second textbook ("Russian. Part 2") there are 89 images, 22 (24.7%) depict people: female image – 6, male image – 10, and both female and male – 6 [2].

Table 3. – Frequency of reference to gender characteristics (pictures), %

Female images	6,7%
Male images	11,4%
Both female and male	6,7%
Other images	75,2%

In this textbook, there are 179 exercises, 27 of them are about people (15.1%): female – 3, male – 17, both – 7.

Table 4. – Frequency of reference to gender characteristics (texts), %

To female images	1,7%
To male images	9,5%
And to those, and to other	3,9%
Other topics	84,9%

In the textbooks, girls are usually depicted in pink clothes, boys in blue clothes.

John McKee and A. Sheriffs concluded that the typical male image is a collection of traits associated with socially no limiting behaviors, competencies, and rational abilities, activeness and efficiency. A typical female image, on the other hand, includes social and communication skills, warmth and emotional support. In general, men are credited with more positive qualities than women are. At the same time, the authors believe that the excessive accentuation of both typically masculine and typically feminine traits acquires a negative evaluation color: typically, negative qualities of men are recognized as rudeness, authoritarianism, excessive rationalism, etc., women-formalism, passivity, excessive emotionality, etc. [3]

It is also found that men show much greater consistency in relation to typically masculine qualities than women do [5].

V. G. Gorchakova (2000) revealed that in the stereotypical mass consciousness a woman is perceived as a carrier of aesthetic function: beautiful, charming, feminine. This was stated by 60% of women and 68% of men. A man in the public consciousness should be courageous, strong, and reliable. 69% of women and 61% of men think so [4].

Gender polarization is the representation of men and women as opposites and the extension of this opposition to all spheres of life: from the manner of dress to the "male" and "female" emotions, ways of thinking and professions.

Gender polarization is a component of sexist ideology. It structures scientific knowledge, in particular biology, which describes genes, hormones, reproductive anatomy and physiology in terms of two opposing genders ("sexual dimorphism") — although in reality the observed biological reality is a continuum, not a set of two opposing variants.

Many school subjects contain gender stereotypes, but not in direct but hidden form. For example, the math problem for 6th year children asks how many boys and girls are passionate about music, but it's not hard to guess what the gender ratio is. Or, for example, a task in which it is stated that two girls want to join additional mathematics course, in which "boys over 91%". Almost all the tasks in which people act are very traditional, when it comes to mom/grandmother; they usually bake cakes, muffins. If adults work or function, they are specified in the masculine [6].

Myra and David Sadker found that teachers interact with boys eight times more frequently than with girls. Boys are called on more often. Girls are given less time to answer. Boys are rewarded for being smart. Girls are rewarded for being neat, pretty, compliant, and nice. Teachers help girls by doing things for them. They help boys by teaching them how to do it themselves [8].

Over time, society has recognized that stereotypes of masculine and feminine behaviors and characteristics are inaccurate. In the past, girls were only allowed to do feminine things like playing with dolls or cooking. They were expected to be more passive. Boys were expected to be more aggressive and to only show masculine behaviors.

Our expectations of "*what girls do*" and "*what boys do*" have changed. Girls frequently excel at sports and school subjects traditionally thought of as masculine. Boys frequently excel in artistic subjects once traditionally thought of as feminine. All children show some behaviors that were once thought of as typical for the opposite gender and this is normal.

When a child's interests and abilities are different from what society expects, he or she is often subjected to discrimination and bullying. It is natural for parents and teachers to want their children to be accepted socially. However, children need to feel comfortable with and good about themselves. If boys do not excel in sports or even do not have an interest in them, there will still be many other opportunities and areas in which they can excel. Each child has his own strengths, and at times, children may not conform to society's or adults' expectations, but they will still be a source of their current and future success [7].

**Conclusion.** Thus, the textbooks continue to broadcast gender stereotypes, the division of the world into male and female, thereby limiting the opportunities of growing boys and girls.

Sexism is often veiled, but it seems to be everywhere. Sexism in the educational environment means that neither boys nor girls receive equal education. Sexism contributes to the perpetuation of the ideas of traditional gender norms and gender stereotypes.

In order for gender education to be effective, teachers need to eliminate gender stereotypes and consider whether their teaching methods, language and interaction with boys and girls reflect gender equality.

The result of gender education for girls can be greater self-confidence, perseverance, independence and participation in social activities. The result for boys is overcoming the fear of failure, coping with aggression, increasing socialization and responsibility, and increasing attention to the private sphere.

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