Gender Bias in Selected Philippine English Textbooks

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Introduction

Textbooks, as one of the educational materials in any teaching–learning situation, do more than just inform or instruct. They represent the many facets of what is taught and learned in school, that then directly or indirectly affect and influence a learner's education by 'transmitting models of social behaviour, norms and values'[1] which are considered as acceptable and appropriate. Aside from imparting the basic factual knowledge and skills learners are supposed to acquire, textbooks also 'offer varieties of identities, interests, attitudes and experiences that determine the position of the children,'[2] that may strongly influence their view of life, gender socialisation and the (re)production of gender stereotypes in society. Given that the amount of time both students and teachers use them,[3] it can be argued that the sensitive influence of textbooks may foster positive or negative attitudes among learners in different aspects of their lives. And because textbooks may affect the 'development of attitudes students carry into adult life, the values and societal roles suggested in textbooks [should] be positive ones, and [should] be as free as possible from bias, stereotypes, and career-role restriction.'[4] As Henry Holt reminds us, repetitions of such biases, stereotypes, and career-role restrictions may 'leave a permanent distorted imprint upon our children's future, and distort their self-image and the images of the opposite sex.'[5] Subtly, and often in unconscious ways, the tone and development of the content and the illustrations in textbooks foster in a learner, positive or negative attitudes about self, race, religion, regions, sex, ethnic and social class groups, occupations, life expectations, and life chances.[6]

In view of the unbroken perpetuation of gender biases in textbooks as seen in various studies,[7] the need for eliminating gender stereotyping in education, particularly in textbooks, and that of any stereotypical concept of the roles of males and females at all levels and in all forms of education should be eliminated.[8] An examination of the (un)conscious promotion of gender bias in textbooks has become imperative.

But what is gender bias and how do we detect its presence? To define gender bias, we first must make a distinction between the terms gender and sex. *Sex* pertains to 'a set of biological characteristics in humans and animals, primarily associated with their physiological features including their chromosomes, gene expression, hormone levels and function, and reproduction by/sexual anatomy.'[9] *Gender,* refers to the socio-cultural distinction people make between males and females, which may denote social and cultural meanings connected to being feminine or masculine. Our traits, actions, roles, expressions, and identities as girls, women, boys, or men are based on a socially constructed and continuously (re)produced framework of femininity or masculinity. Thus, when we speak of gender here, we draw from socio-cultural theories which suggest that gender is a social construct where attitudes, behaviour, expectations, and roles are socio-culturally defined 'to make sense of and deal with sex difference.'[10]

Gender bias, by definition, and as generally used in this paper, refers to implicit or explicit practices or ideas that favour or infer that one gender is superior to another. It is present 'when one receives a different treatment' or represented as inferior 'based on the person's real or perceived gender identity.'[11] Gender bias is a by-product of gender stereotypes, which are 'beliefs about attributes of men and women and produce expectations about what they are like and should be like' that resulted in what social role theorists call 'gender-typical social roles,' which in turn establish a social division of labour and gender hierarchy.[12] Alice H. Eagly, Wendy Wood and Amanda B. Diekman have argued that:

> Men and women have historically held different social roles: Men have been more likely to engage in tasks that require speed, strength, and the possibility of being away from home for long periods of time, whereas women have been more likely to stay home and engage in family tasks, such as child-rearing. As a consequence, men are perceived as, and expected to be, *agentic,* namely, active, independent, and resolute, whereas women are perceived as, and expected to be, *communal,* namely, kind, helpful, and benevolent [emphasis added].[13]

Over time, these gender perceptions and expectations became heteronormative, and establish what would be socially known as female and male attributes, occupations, and family roles. What is problematic about this, however, is that men's traditional social roles are perceived to be 'higher in status and authority than those occupied by women.'[14] The positioning of women as *communal* and of men as *agentic* creates a misleading depiction of their competence and character, in this case, a prejudice in favour of men.

In the Philippines, for example, research has long established that before Spanish colonisation, indigenous Filipino women were highly regarded in society. Karen Sacks argues that 'women's social position has *not* always been, everywhere or in most respects, subordinate to men.'[15] They participated in the decision-making and social processes at home and in the bigger community, had equal access to production resources, education, inheritance rights, and were free to move and to occupy leadership roles in political and religious arenas alongside their male counterparts.[16] 'Indigenous women had to be reconstructed to reflect the virtuous, chaste, moral representations of 'good' women of Judaeo/Christianity' which the Spanish missionaries introduced.[17]

The perpetuation and (re)production of these perceptions/biases against women continue in our narratives,[18] everyday language use,[19] and daily lives.[20] These assertions confirm what the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2022 claimed: Despite the many longstanding measures in place to achieve gender equality globally, gender gaps still exist. In the Philippines, notwithstanding its rank as #2 in gender equality in East Asia and the Pacific and as nineteenth in the world, gender inequality is still a reality.[21] Could the official and primary sources of information and instruction—English textbooks—be contributory to this concern considering that 'English is inextricably involved with values, beliefs and ways of thinking about ourselves and the world we dwell in?'[22]

Given the dearth of gender bias studies in our local setting,[23] this paper attempts to explore whether gender bias in the English textbooks used in Grades 4, 8 and 12 (Elementary, Junior High School and Senior High School, respectively) in a private coeducational school in Manila (where one of the researchers works) is present. Our decision to examine these three grade levels is anchored primarily on what the World Health Organization has reported:

> Adolescence is the phase of life between childhood and adulthood, from ages 10 to 19. It is a unique stage of human development and an important time for laying the foundations of good health.[24]
>
> When children move into early adolescence, they begin to take on new gender roles associated with femininity and masculinity, often reinforcing socially and culturally conventional gender norms related with being women or men. These gender roles have an impact upon the decisions that young people in early adolescence make, and therefore upon their health and well-being. They have an impact on the choices young adolescents make in relation to sexual and inter-personal relationships, which can have an effect on their health and well-being throughout the rest of their lives.[25]

Raising awareness about gender bias at this vital stage in their lives could encourage adolescents to

assume more roles and participate in activities without being restricted to traditional, stereotypical settings. In addition, cogent analysis may inform the school textbook committee's decision in choosing books for their learners. We wish to emphasise, however, that the overall quality of the textbooks in this study is not under scrutiny nor consideration here, and that we do not wish to undermine the pedagogical excellence in other areas of these books.

In examining how males and females are represented in the three textbooks, we draw inspiration from language and gender studies where the role played by language in promoting and perpetuating gender prejudice has been well-documented and established. We adapt and combine the categories proposed by Karen Porreca: *visibility, firstness, occupational roles, activities* and *character traits,*[26] and Shristi Bhattacharya's expansion of *visibility* to include *authors, character/participants, topic/theme focus.*[27] The five categories of gender bias: *visibility, firstness, occupational roles, activities* and *character traits* serve as our guide in coding, categorising, and analysing the visual and textual representations of genders to reveal which group is more visible, is mentioned first, and what kinds of activities, social/family roles, and attributes are assigned to it. Following is a discussion of each category.

Visibility. Gender bias in textbooks is manifested when one gender is more visible or appears more frequently than its counterpart. For example, when there are more reading selections written by male authors; more male characters/participants in stories or texts; and the reading materials are male-oriented or dominated by male/masculine topics/interests or are simply about them and their experiences, the implicit message is that 'women's accomplishments are not important enough to be included.'[28] The *visibility* or omission of one gender in educational materials like textbooks could also signify the lack of attention, and worth given to the said gender as human beings or members of the society.

Firstness. The second category of gender bias is the order of mention also known as *firstness.* It is defined as the number of times that females or males were presented *first* in texts and illustrations.[29] In addition, when two gender-specific nouns or pronouns appear as a pair in a text, like *brothers and sisters* or *he/she,* the one appearing in the first position can be interpreted as having a higher status. It has been argued that firstness 'reinforces the second-place status of women and could, with only a little effort, be avoided by mixing the order.'[30]

Occupational-role representation. The third category of gender bias is in the form of 'portrayal of males and females in occupational roles.'[31] With the wide selection of occupations/jobs available for both genders, which ones are assigned to males, and which ones are occupied by females in the textbooks?

Activities. These are the actions or activities in which females and males are engaged in or depicted in textbooks.[32] These may include *cleaning the house, washing the car, cooking dinner,* or *making repairs to household appliances.*

Character Traits. This category looks at the words/adjectives used to describe females and males in terms of their *physical appearance/state/condition* (e.g., petite/handsome; strong/weak), *intellect/education* (e.g., intelligent, high school graduate), *emotionality/state of mind* (e.g., calm, angry), *age* (e.g., young, old), and *rapport/reputation* (e.g., famous, unknown).[33]

Methodology

Written permission from the school's principal and the English Area Coordinator to borrow and use Grades 4, 8, and 12 English textbooks was sought prior to the conduct of the study. For ethical considerations, we did not reveal the titles, nor the names of the authors of these books. We reiterate that the overall quality of the textbooks is not under consideration here as we only looked at gender representations in texts and illustrations found in the books.

The data used in this study are the three English textbooks used in the Basic Education Department in a private, coeducational school in Manila during the Academic Year 2018–19. These textbooks, written by Filipino authors and published by different commercial publishing houses, were chosen by the English Area teachers for use in the three selected grade levels. Textbook 1 for Grade 4 has four units with six lessons per unit. Each lesson focuses on the various speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills to be acquired or performed by the learners. The various lessons are presented following this template: lesson objectives, key questions, motivation, vocabulary, reading selection, comprehension questions, valuing or meaning-making based on the reading selection, application or transfer tasks, grammar lessons, spelling exercises, skill-extender activities, writing tasks, synthesising activity, and a summative test.

Textbook 2 for Grade 8 has four units with five lessons in each unit centred around Afro–Asian literature. Each lesson follows a sequentially arranged outline: introduction of the topic via an essential question, exploration of the topic, presentation of the selection, vocabulary and reading comprehension check, application/transfer of newly acquired skills to real-life situations, additional information about the author, and reflection questions are alternative activities were also given.

Textbook 3 for Grade 12 is divided into two sections: Philippine literature and world literature. It has six units with three to four modules per unit following this sequence: schema activation, attention-getting activities, information about the text, reading comprehension check, after reading activities, either speaking or writing tasks, and an enrichment exercise.

The present study is mainly descriptive-analytic in nature and design that includes both quantitative and qualitative content analyses of the depiction (frequency and nature) of the two genders across five gender bias categories: *gender visibility, firstness, activities, occupational roles* and *character traits.* These categories were investigated in the following sequence in both texts and illustrations found in the books.[34]

First, an examination of the visibility or occurrences of males and females as authors, characters/participants, and the focus of stories in the reading selections was counted. Second, instances of firstness—the number of times each gender was presented or mentioned first—was tallied. Each noun was then paired with its opposite-sex counterpart and were likewise recorded. Next, the total number of occasions in which males and females were depicted in occupational roles were tabulated as was the total number of different occupations for each gender. The same procedure was done to count the occasions where males and females participated in activities. Finally, to document character traits of females and males in the stories/passages, words that describe or modify each gender were recorded in terms of their physical appearance/condition, intellect/education, emotionality/state of mind, age and rapport/reputation.

Cross-coding of the three textbooks was done separately by the two researchers and an invited colleague with the same training and experience as the original authors. It may be worth mentioning here that occurrences of discrepancies in the counting of frequency of the female and male characters and in determining which category a particular illustration falls under were easily addressed when the coders reviewed any problematic items of the data. They were resolved by going back to the nature of each category, agreeing as to the correct and appropriate way of labelling or identifying data categories. After discussion and deliberation, a consensus was eventually attained. These were then tabulated in an Excel file worksheet and descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) were used for analysis.

Findings and discussion
Gender Visibility

This section presents and discusses the findings with regard to the representations of each gender in terms of their visibility as authors, participants, and topic focus in the texts and illustrations across the

three books.

Table 1. Frequency and percentage distribution of authors' gender in the three English textbooks

Authors	Book 1		Book 2		Book 3		Total	
	freq	%	freq	%	freq	%	freq	%
Male	12	24.00	19	86.36	16	57.14	47	47.00
Female	7	14.00	2	9.09	12	42.86	21	21.00
Unknown	31	62.00	1	4.55	0	0.00	32	32.00
Total	50	100	22	100	28	100	100	100

As can be gleaned from Table 1, most of the selections included in the three English textbooks are written by male writers. Of significance here is the high percentage of representation of male authors, 86 percent, in Book 2. Noteworthy, too, is the use of adapted texts in Book 1 where the names of the authors of the original texts are not mentioned nor provided. The most consistent exclusion of women as authors is found in Book 2 where the choice of selections are popular male writers from Afro–Asian countries; namely, Matsuo Basho and Kobayashi Isso from Japan, Nelson Mandela from South Africa, and Rabindranath Tagore from India. Book 3 reflects an almost equal distribution of texts authored by males and females like Gina Apostol and Merlinda Bobis from the Philippines, Margaret Atwood from Canada, Amy Tan and Eve Ensler from the United States of America. Despite this, however, over the three books there is a high concentration of male writers which creates a very distinct masculine presence. The average ratio of females to males in the texts and illustrations is 1:2.23. Worth mentioning here is the fact that although all three English textbooks are authored by female writers, texts/selections from other female writers are under-represented or not visible. These textbooks are intended for higher grade level learners where identity building and self-concept forming are crucial. Whether these selections are intentional or not, the results indicate significant gender bias/visibility against female authors.

Table 2. Frequency and percentage distribution of characters' gender in the three English textbooks

Characters/Participants	Book 1		Book 2		Book 3		Total	
	freq	%	freq	%	freq	%	freq	%
Male	32	58.18	45	60.00	49	52.13	126	56.25
Female	15	27.27	20	26.67	33	35.11	68	30.36
Neutral	8	14.55	10	13.33	12	12.77	30	13.39
Total	55	100	75	100	94	100	224	100

We analyse the characters/participants present in the stories found in the books by categorising them into type and gender. Characters may be human or non-human. Within the non-human type, there is no distinction made of whether the depiction regards animals or objects. We determine their gender based solely on the pronouns used to refer to them, not on their given names to avoid bias.

As Table 2 shows, the prominence and visibility of male characters as compared to their female counterparts cannot be overlooked. For every one female character/participant in the stories, there are

almost two male characters/participants portrayed or present. This is also observed in other gender studies where girls/women are still illustrated as playing supporting roles as opposed to boys/men's more active stance.[35] Noteworthy, too, is the consistent portrayal of a Filipino family in Book 1 as having two boys as the eldest and youngest, and a girl as the middle child. The inclusion of the grandparents in some stories could likewise signal the book writers' idealised notion of a standard size/composition of a Filipino family and the specific roles each member has to play. It can be argued that the inclusion of stories in English textbooks with female characters in prominent and visible positions is an effective way of bridging the gender gap present in the society. For the target learners of these English textbooks, reading stories where girls/women are protagonists and visibly at the centre of the stories, presents a people grappling with and finding ways to resolve personal or societal dilemmas will leave a mark in their impressionable minds, and may produce 'performative effects of power,' according to American philosopher Judith Butler.[36]

Topic Focus

Table 3. Frequency and percentage distribution of gendered topics in the three English textbooks

Topic focus of selections	Book 1		Book 2		Book 3		Total	
	freq	%	freq	%	freq	%	freq	%
Male-centred	9	45	8	40	13	41.94	30	42.25
Female-centred	8	40.00	2	10	12	38.71	22	30.00
Neutral	3	15.00	10	50.00	6	19.35	19	26.76
Total	20	100	20	100	31	100	71	100

Table 3 indicates the occurrences of gendered topics found in the three English textbooks. These include stories from a boy's courage in enduring an injury to a tadpole's (named Freddie) account of his physical and emotional transformation into a full-grown frog. Conversely, texts with females as topics dealt with Sandra as a protagonist who used her artistic talent to sketch the face of a bank robber that led to his arrest, and a girl who still showed compassion towards a classmate who had bad-mouthed her prior. When numbers of this category across the three textbooks are combined and averaged, the computations reveal that there are more stories about experiences of boys and men than girls and women. The most distinct example is found in Book 1 where the narratives about the diligence of two male Philippine national heroes are interrupted with the insertion of a story about a female national heroine. What is most disturbing though is that in Book 1, three stories about young girls focus on their meanness and arrogance toward their house helpers, compared to the politeness and courage of young boys in dealing with other people narrated in the same textbook. In Book 3 which is intended for senior high school students, two stories are about the experiences of wives 'internally' agonising over their womanising husbands. Noteworthy is the absence of narratives of women 'having several husbands' or of pre-Hispanic Filipino women having 'autonomy and choice as far as their sexual activity was concerned, or indeed for husbands to share their wives.'[37] The inclusion of these texts would have been enlightening for the young learners to grapple with and scrutinise the self-sacrificing/selfishness and chastity/promiscuity dichotomy imposed on women by colonialism and Christianity.[38]

Firstness

The second category of gender bias that is examined here is the order of mention also known as *firstness* where names and terms referring to men are mentioned before women. Table 4 shows the number of textual occurrences of *first mentions* found in the data.

Table 4. Frequency and percentage distribution of firstness in the three English textbooks

Firstness	Book 1		Book 2		Book 3		Total	
	freq	%	freq	%	freq	%	freq	%
Male first	29	80.56	19	73.08	9	50.00	57	71.25
Female first	7	19.44	7	26.92	9	50	23	28.75
Total	36td>	100	26	100	18	100	80	100

In the three English textbooks investigated in this paper, the ratio of female firstness to male firstness is 1:2.48 confirming the dominance of males in textbooks as previous studies have shown. Book 1 has the worst ratio, 1:4.14, but Book 3 has an impressive balanced representation of both genders. In many societies, females are always mentioned in reference to the father, husband, brother or son and the like. Generally, the word *king* comes first followed by the term *queen, man* before *woman,* and *husband* before *wife.* A *mistress* is mentioned only in reference to her *master* in a story in Book 1 while in Book 2, *brotherhood* precedes *sisterhood.* However, there are also a few instances when the representations of females in terms of firstness are positive. For example, in Book 3, the reference of *girl* comes before her *brother, women* followed by *men,* and the pronoun *she* before *he.* In Book 1, there are also two examples of these positive representations of females. For instance, the reference of the *loving wife* comes first followed by the *loving brother,* and the *name of wife* is mentioned first followed by the *husband's* name. In all three books, the use of *ladies and gentlemen* is consistent. Overall, however, masculine generic constructions such as the above occurrences are still male referenced. As Bhattacharya reminds us, 'These examples highlight the stereotypical gender roles where the females or the wives are mentioned in reference to the male character'[39] in stark contrast to the women not taking their husbands' names on marriage in the preconquest Philippines.[40]

Activities

There is a wide range of *activities* that are found in the three English textbooks. These include among other things, fighting for one's country, receiving orders from kings, fixing heavy stuff, driving a car/tricycle, carrying heavy equipment, planting, and watching a fight, nursing sick people, dancing, going to the market with friends, cooking, and setting the table. As expected, the data characterise men as carrying heavy equipment, driving cars, going to work, travelling, and going to war, while women are seen dancing, conversing/talking, having an argument with another female character, or cooking. These stereotypical activities are most evident in Textbook 1 for Grade 4. Although a Philippine national heroine, featured in one of the stories in Book 1, is described as a courageous and intelligent woman, her portrayal is still considered stereotypical because she is seen as nursing the injured and taking care of the sick soldiers. Kathryn P. Scott argues that textbooks should veer away from depicting cleaning, cooking, taking care of children as women's roles, and making household repairs, cleaning cars, fixing broken appliances as men's activities. She further argues that males can also be fearful, weak, mechanically inept, and illogical and, as such, are incapable of performing activities assigned to them by textbook writers.[41] Textbooks that classify these activities as either feminine or masculine misrepresent social realities and send misleading implications about each gender.

Occupational roles

Another manifestation of gender bias in textbooks can be seen in how traditional *occupational roles* are depicted or gender assigned.

After identifying the various occupations present in the data, and the gender depicted in each occupation, it could be safe to say that traditionally stereotypical biased occupations are present in the three textbooks. Out of the 38 (not considering the number of times an occupation was repeated) traditional or common occupations either mentioned in texts or illustrated in pictures in all three books, 22 or almost 60 percent of different jobs like *engineers, doctors, local leaders, bank managers, drivers, politicians, writers,* and *scientists* are occupied by men and in only 16 instances or a little over 40 per cent of women were stereotypically depicted (either as *teachers, principals, caregivers/nurses, entertainers*). Despite having women as major characters in some stories, they are always portrayed as wives and mothers who stay at home and take care of the families, whereas men are seen working in their offices or outdoors. It is worth mentioning here that male nurses and female doctors rarely appeared in any of the three books, but they were consistently portrayed as female and male, respectively, in the data. An entire page in Book 1 has drawings of men—either standing or sitting—professor, competitor, prosecutor, ambassador, physical fitness instructor, ancestor, property assessor, and *a sole* picture of a female counsellor sitting behind a desk talking to a boy sitting across from with his head bowed low. Notable in Book 1 is the marked picture of a male professor where the job of educating people is stereotypically portrayed by women throughout the book. We could only infer that this is due to a common understanding among locals that professors usually teach in colleges or universities; thus, they are more prestigious and higher in rank compared to a teacher, usually portrayed in elementary/high school settings. It has been argued that educational processes set the foundations of social expectations and roles where gender patterns are created and reproduced. A continued (mis)representation of occupational roles that are restrictive to both males and females may impress upon the users of these books the choices they have with regard to their career goals and opportunities.

Character traits

The last category of gender bias examined in the three English textbooks is the depiction of both genders in terms of their *traits* or *attributes.* To determine this, descriptive words in texts like adjectives, adverbs, and nouns used as modifiers, as well as facial expressions, gestures and clothing in illustrations are counted and recorded. The range of character traits associated with females mentioned in texts or illustrated in the three English textbooks point to the gender stereotyped. Females were described mainly in terms of their positive and negative attributes (old, weak, young, old maid, very small, gentle, mild, nurturing, timid, protective, nervy, fragile, warm, friendly, loud). Males on the other hand, are portrayed as exhibiting power, authority, command, intelligence, resilience, aside from the adjectives depicting their emotions (angry, wrathful, controlled, aggressive, brave). Of particular interest is a story in Book 1 of a young boy and his brother Ed, who are both portrayed as being defiant against the decision of an old doctor to amputate the young boy's leg. Three stories of young girls depict them as being remorseful only after realising how badly they treated their *yayas* (nannies) and house helpers. Based on illustrations, men are portrayed wearing a wide array of clothes from *formal office attire* to *mountaineering gear* and other *sports outfits,* in contrast to the *casual blouse* and *skirt* for women, and an *apron* if she is depicted as a mother or a housewife. There is, however, a picture of a young ecstatic woman wearing a formal blazer with her arms raised above her head in Book 1. This is a welcome sight in the midst of men occupying varied occupations and engaging in fun activities while highlighting the domestic roles women play. It could be argued that continued or repeated portrayals of males and females exhibiting these attributes may create an inaccurate representation and reinforce a limited impression of the diversity, capabilities,

potentialities and opportunities that are available.

Summary

In essence, the three English textbooks investigated here overrepresented male authors and characters both linguistically and visually in frequency and order of appearance/visibility, occupational roles, activities and traits. Whether the writers of these textbooks are conscious or not of their own gender biases or personal beliefs about what women and men should be and should do, which may have (un)intentionally influenced the choices they made in designing and drafting their lessons/modules, is beyond the scope of this paper. However, these male overrepresentations have pedagogical impacts on the users of these textbooks. The invisibility or omission of women authors, characters, and women-centred topics, and the assignment of traditional/stereotypical occupations, roles, activities, and traits to both genders, when repeated, reproduced, and reinforced across grade levels as seen in these textbooks may negatively influence the learners' affective and cognitive development.

Addressing gender bias in an educational context like the school in this study may be daunting especially when it has become unnoticed, unchallenged, and normalised over time. Despite the impressive performance of the Philippines in closing the gender gap, and the presence of national laws and structures ensuring equality among its citizens, gender bias still finds its way in the production of English language textbooks. It is important and necessary, therefore, to ask how it got to this level, and what to do to systematically address it.

Filipino Benedictine sister, Mary John Mananzan claims that 'when the Spanish colonial administration instilled the idea that virginity was a "pearl to be lost", they eventually succeeded in domesticating and controlling the women.'[42] The undermining of women's image from 'highly respected equals of men to objects of subjugation began when the Spanish masters brought in their institutions and transplanted them on native soil.'[43] As Aida Maranan argued,

> The 'new' Filipina (or female Indio) was now her father's meek daughter, her husband's faithful subject, the Church's obedient servant, and before her marriage, a chaste virgin who would yield only to her husband (and occasionally to the friar). But of course, like her peasant husband, she was also a slavelike toiler who worked the rich man's and his descendants' land for pittance.[44]

This 'new' image and the concomitant role of women are reinforced in families, religion, sciences, mass media, and schools. At home, the primary responsibility of the mother is to take care of the children and her husband. Children early on learn their stereotypical roles and imbibe their feminine and masculine traits. Boys play with guns and toy soldiers while girls dress up and nurture their dolls. Christianity, in general, has perpetuated male domination and female subordination/weakness using myths/stories lifted from the Bible: Adam was created first before Eve and that she was created *only* from his short rib (Gen 2:21–24).[45] Biological theories espousing the generalised notion of men as strong, commanding and purposeful and women as weak, subservient and utilitarian permeated the consciousness of the educated and influenced law, politics, social philosophy and moral discourse.[46] Mass media's perpetuation of women's image, space and roles are seen in highly publicised beauty pageant shows, their presence in advertisements targeting male consumers, and as endorsers of cleaning and other household products.

Conclusion and implications

In this study we have analysed and discussed gender bias across five categories depicted in the three English textbooks used by Grade 4, 8, and 12 students in a private coeducational school in Manila.

The findings from the data reveal that in all gender-bias categories, a dominance of male gender exists in

terms of both quantitative and qualitative aspects of their representations. Despite some encouraging signs indicative of gender equality, all three English textbooks are gendered towards the male group. Male authors, characters, and male-centred topics averaged and almost 53 percent *visibility* rate compared to 21.45 percent of females. In the *firstness* category, men are always mentioned first, except in two instances where *mother/mom* was mentioned before *father/dad*. *Occupation*-wise, girls/women were depicted as *teachers, nurses, singers, dancers, caregivers* while men were *doctors, judges, counsellors, local officials.* The *activities* associated with males were those of fixing broken *household appliances, carrying heavy stuff, travelling* while women were seen *cleaning the house, cooking, taking care of sick people.* Finally, stereotyped linguistic terms describe girls/women as *friendly, weak, nurturing, bad-mouth,* boys/men were seen as *angry, brave, aggressive, strong.* In essence, the depiction of both genders in the three English textbooks is affected by gender norms and bias. The study has suggested that representations of females and males in these textbooks could have been influenced by some pervading male-dominated/colonial Christian-oriented views about what women and men should be and should do. It further hinted at how language[47] or the choice and ordering of linguistic terms and the use of visual elements in the illustrations contribute to the promotion/sustenance of gender bias in our textbooks.

Thus, what must be done?

This study has been conducted with the possibility of informing the school's decision-makers and curriculum implementors to render a more gender-fair environment for the learners. With the results of this study and in consideration of what other studies in this area reveal, the researchers would like to adapt Mai Trang Vu and Pham Thi Thanh Thuy's three main areas to address gender bias in the three English textbooks examined here: awareness raising, capacity building, and behavioural change.

Raising awareness of the presence of gender bias in the selected textbooks for use in three grade levels needs to be the first and key step towards a more informed process of selecting which textbooks to endorse or buy. A review of the Department of Education-issued documents like Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy (GRBE), Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), among others, may serve as guidelines in determining gender bias in textbooks.

Gender-bias training involving unit heads, coordinators, teachers, textbook writers, illustrators, and publishers can be part of the professional development program of the school. An actual evaluation of existing textbooks could be part of this trainings which will provide an authentic experience for participants to determine the presence of gender bias in textbooks.

Finally, behaviour change may be achieved if deeply ingrained gender biases and long-held beliefs and practices about women and men can be identified, revisited, and revised. Stories and evolving feminist interpretations about women in the Old Testament (like Eve) and the New Testament (like Mary Magdalene,[48] inaccurately portrayed as an adulteress and repentant whore) and other women disciples like Joanna and Susanna who accompanied Jesus during his ministry and supported him out of their private means in Luke 8:1–3 might be good starting points. Emphasising that women remained firm when Jesus was said to have been deserted by his male disciples during his arrest, that Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome were the first to visit his tomb (Mark 16:1) may reverse mindsets as regards women's strength and commitment.

What needs to be done to address gender bias? Sr. Mary John Mananzan declared it accurately: 'We need to transform the mainstream because it is largely *malestream'* [emphasis added].[49]

Notes

[1] Carole Brugeilles and Sylvie Cromer, *Promoting Gender Equality through Textbooks: A Methodological Guide,* UNESCO Digital

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[12] Michela Menegatti, 'Gender bias and sexism in language,' *Oxford Research Encyclopedias, Communication,* 26 Sep. 2017, pp. 1–22, at p. 3, online: https://oxfordre.com/communication/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228613-e-470?print=pdf, accessed 03 Aug. 2022.

[13] Alice H. Eagly, Wendy Wood and Amanda B. Diekman, 'Social role theory of sex differences and similarities: A current appraisal,' in *The Developmental Social Psychology of Gender,* ed. Thomas Eckes and Hanns M. Traunter, Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2000, cited by Michela Menegatti, in 'Gender bias and sexism in language,' *Oxford Research Encyclopedias, Communication,* 26 Sep. 2017, pp. 1–22, at p. 3, online: https://oxfordre.com/communication/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228613-e-470?print=pdf, accessed 03 Aug. 2022. Hilton J. Aguja, however, argues that among the primitive communities in Asia, males and females were viewed as equals as both played economic roles to support families and communities. Aguja, 'The Filipino woman,' p. 49.

[14] This is particularly evident in the workplace, where women are more likely than men to be employed in positions with lower status and less power than men. Menegatti, 'Gender bias,' p. 3.

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[33] Porreca, 'Sexism,' p. 718.

[34] Porreca, 'Sexism,' p. 712.

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