

German primers from the Rotermund publishing house (1927-1933): gender representations in rural work ^{1 2 3}

Cartilhas alemãs da editora Rotermund (1927-1933): representação de gênero no trabalho rural

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Abstract

This article aims to analyze gender representation, especially those concerning the work roles attributed to men and women presented on the illustrations of the primers *Mein Rechenbuch* (My calculus book) and *Fibel für Deutsche Schulen in Brasilien* (Primers for German schools in Brazil), both produced by the publishing house Rotermund, which was connected to the Rio-Grandense Synod. Written in German, these guidelines sought to attend Synod schools linked to Lutheran churches, which worked alongside the colonies of German-Pomeranian immigrants in southern Rio Grande do Sul. During this study, the aim was to identify possible social directions transmitted through the work organization portrayed in the primers. In this context, we observed that the social relations represented are ethnic and cultural constructions historically established, integrating a process that involved school and religious institutions.

Keywords: German primers, representation, gender, rural world, work

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Resumo

Neste artigo, buscou-se analisar a representação de gênero, especialmente no que concerne aos papéis de trabalho atribuídos ao homem e à mulher, presente nas ilustrações das cartilhas *Mein Rechenbuch* (“Meu livro de cálculo”) e *Fibel für Deutsche Schulen in Brasilien* (“Cartilha para as escolas alemãs no Brasil”), produzidas pela editora Rotermund, que era vinculada ao Sínodo Rio-Grandense. Elaboradas em língua alemã, essas cartilhas se destinavam a atender escolas sinodais ligadas às igrejas luteranas, que atuavam junto às colônias de imigrantes alemães-pomeranos na região meridional do Rio Grande do Sul. Objetivou-se, assim, no decorrer do estudo, identificar possíveis direcionamentos sociais dados por intermédio do modo de organização do trabalho ilustrado nas cartilhas. Nesse contexto, observou-se que as relações sociais representadas são construções étnicas e culturais historicamente instituídas, integrantes de um processo que envolveu instituições escolares e religiosas.

Palavras-Chave: cartilha alemã, representação, gênero, mundo rural, trabalho

Introduction

This article is part of a master’s dissertation entitled “German-language booklets produced by the Lutheran Synods in Rio Grande do Sul: uses and memories (1923-1945)⁴, in History of Education which aimed to analyze the visual representation in German school primers produced by the publishing companies Rotermund and Concórdia and the influences of their use in the subjects that learned how to read and write in Lutheran religious institutions in Serra dos Tapes⁵. More specifically, in this work, we intend to investigate possible representations of gender, mainly related to the issues of work social roles attributed to men and women, present in the illustrations of the primers *Mein Rechenbuch* (“My calculus book”) and *Fibel für Deutsche Schulen in Brasilien* (“Primers for German schools in Brazil”), from the publishing house Rotermund, connected to the Rio-Grandense⁶ synod. We highlight the use of the category gender to understand the discourses shown in the primers, as gender is a constitutive element of relations and differences between sexes (Scott, 1995). Gender can also

⁴ Albrecht, 2019.

⁵ Microregion in southern Rio Grande do Sul. It currently encompasses the cities of São Lourenço do Sul, Turuçu, Pelotas, Arroio do Padre, Canguçu, Capão do Leão e Morro Redondo. For more on the theme, see Cerqueira (2010).

⁶ T.N.: Rio-grandense refers to the person or the thing that is from the state of Rio Grande do Sul.

be understood, according to Louro (1994), as a social construction of the subjects that is reproduced in different ways in different societies and historic contexts.

Besides this, it is worth highlighting in the primers the presence of ethnic and cultural aspects of the target audience, as it is a didactic material in German created to community German schools, connected to Lutheran churches established by German-Brazilians. According to Kreutz (1994), as they were associated to a community project under church guidance, these primers aimed to reach social and religious aspects, as well as offer guidelines on the ways to establish work relations. This project also implied, according to Weiduschadt (2007), an integration of teaching and religiousness, allowing thus an approximation between church and schooling.

As in Brazil, the education in this period was still restricted to a small part of the population, attending the urban elite, the ruling politicians did not see the need to teach the rural population how to read and write, as their means of production were elementary. In the case of this study, these immigrants and their descendants came from an institutionalized schooling tradition and searched, by themselves, a way to provide an education for their children, finding in the institutionalized churches the necessary aid to create and print the school primers and the work force to teach their children. This way, these primers, founded in pedagogical principles and following the doctrines of religious institutions, aimed to reflect aspects present in the everyday life of German-Brazilian rural communities, showing in their contents, especially the illustrations, everyday activities of these groups and their rural areas. Besides this, they become channels to promote and preserve German culture (Kreutz, 1994), thus strengthening the domestic and social organization of the communities attended (Salamoni, 1996).

To discuss these issues, we also approach in this study the circulation of these material in the immigrant German- Pomeranian communities⁷ in the Southern region of Rio Grande do Sul, mainly the microregion called *Serra do Tapas*, which was selected for the analyses of the

⁷ Pomeranians: the name given to the immigrants that came to Brazil from the former Pomeranian, in the shores of the Baltic sea, a territory currently incorporated by Germany and Poland. Today this culture is almost extinct in the region but is kept alive in some communities in Brazil that still preserve the dialect and certain cultural and religious practices. For more details, see Schaeffer (2012).

primers, having as a reference the memories of the subjects⁸ who learned to read and write through these materials in synod schools. Therefore, we aim to see the possible social differences of work through the visual representations in the primers analyzed. To do so, we use theoreticians such as Joly (2006) and Pesavento (2005), who affirm that images are perceived as representations of something, establishing in the subjects a sensation of belonging. Pesavento (2005) also emphasizes that representation is not a printed copy of reality, as if reality were its perfect image, a type of reflection, but a construction made from reality. In this sense, the author reminds us that:

The representations constructed about the world not only place itself in this world, but make men realize reality and guide their existence. They are matrices that create behaviors and social practices, gifted with an integrative and cohesive power, as well as explicative of reality. Individuals and groups give meaning to the work through the representations they build about reality. (Pesavento, 2005, p. 39).

It is noticeable that representation has an important role, as it is internalized in the collective consciousness, considered as natural and, thus, dismissing reflection. Therefore, representations are full of meanings, rules, discourses, and images that are socially build. Thus, in the primers *Mein Rechenbuch* and *Fibel für Deutsche Schulen in Brasilien*, they play a relevant role, as the illustrations reproduce a representation of the reality parallel to the existence of individuals who learned how to read and write with those primers. Hence, we use the theoreticians who study school culture, especially those which research school primers and the social construction of gender, to understand the relations established between the field of research and the object of study and, therefore, contribute with the theme.

Know to understand: an approximation with the materiality of primers

Researches in the field of history of education have increasingly been focusing on studying and knowing schooling institutions through their materiality. Among these objects,

⁸ Mainly focused to understand the uses of the illustrations on German primers that circulated in this context, we conducted 12 interviews, between 2016 and 2018, with people who were schooled in German and who started their literacy process in this language between 1932 and 1942.

the primers are, according to Choppin (2002), a privileged source as they allow us to observe the political, social, religious roles played by different cultures in different times and contexts.

As a representative object of the history and memory of literacy, Mortatti (2000a) points out that primers systematize a trajectory marked by disputes between traditional and modern methods. Her researches also show that the Republican movement at the end of the 19th century incentivized the creation of didactic materials in Brazil, allowing the expansion of elementary education and, consequently, an increase of national primers. These didactic materials were used throughout the 20th century as important tools to disseminate different teaching methods. Initially, they were strongly influenced by North-American pedagogy and reflected the different educational trends historically established, aiming to teach "...based on the definition of visual, hearing, and motor abilities of the students" (Mortatti, 2000b, p. 43), emphasizing a more instrumentalized education. In other moments of the history of literacy in Brazil, the primers approved by public policies aimed to attend the interests of a part of the Brazilian population, as shown by Messenberg (2012), when analyzing the series *Na roça* (At the farm) which targeted students from rural school. Bertoletti (2006), when studying the primers created by Lourenço Filho, observes the socialization role they had during the *Escola Nova* movement, aiming a cultural uniformization. Therefore, the studies which had national primers and the literacy movement as sources and objects of research were excellent historic sources to understand the educational mentality of each time.

Thus, before we continue with the content analysis of the primers, it is important to observe its material structure, as they can be considered a printed document as well as a cultural product. This way, we understand, based on Chartier (1990), that the description of the materiality of primers allows us to understand the cultural codes and get closer to the social practices represented in them. Such representations, according to Pesavento (2005), are forged from a set of circumstances that probably influenced the choices made by those who produced this material.

Therefore, we should highlight the relevance of studying primers, aiming to notice the social and economic structures of its production time. According to Meneses (1998), "material objects work as means of social qualification..." (p. 90), as they have characteristics of the Society that produces them. Hence, the physical and aesthetical structure of school primers approached in this research correspond to the period they were produced.

The primer entitled *Fibel fuer Deutsche Schulen in Brasilien* was first published in 1878 by Pastor Wilhelm Rotermund, founder and owner of the publishing house Rotermund⁹, which, since the beginning, was connected to the *Rio-Grandense* synod, officially founded in 1886, in the town of São Leopoldo, Rio Grande do Sul. These primers had different editions and re-elaborations until 1932. From 1924 on, besides, two other authors, Nack and Heuer, reproduced the primers which was re-elaborated into two versions: edition A (*Ausgabe A – Deutsche Schrift*), written in German with gothic letters, and edition B (*Ausgabe B – Lateinschrift*), also written in German but with Latin letters – previous editions had only one version. Figure 1 below shows the cover of *Fibel*¹⁰.

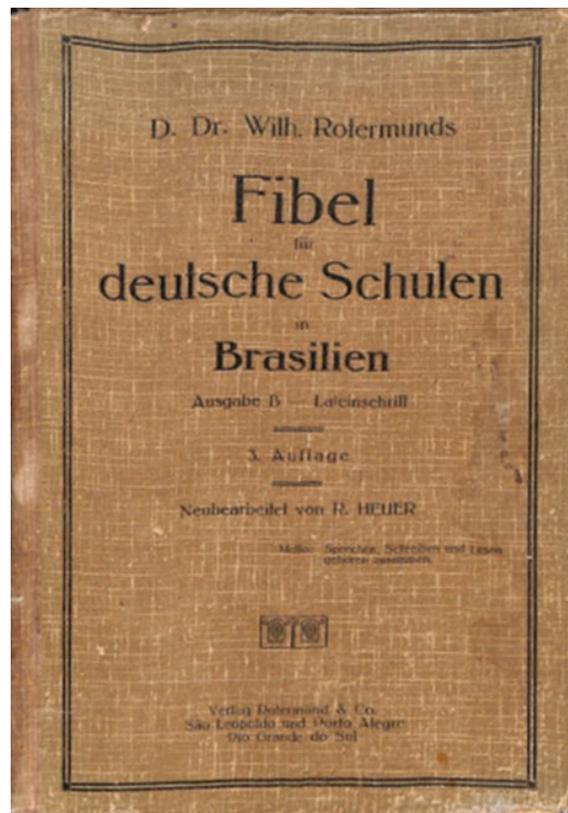


Figure 1 – Cover of *Fibel fuer Deutsche Schulen in Brasilien*

Source: Hisales¹¹archive

⁹ Founded in 1877, in São Leopoldo, by the Pastor Wilhelm Rotermund, who, years later in 1886, founded the *Rio-Grandense* synod, connecting the publishing house with the synod. For more on the theme, see Dreher (2014).

¹⁰ To ease the writing of this text and considering that *Fibel* in German means primer, we choose to use just the first word of the primer *Fibel für deutsche Schulen in Brasilien*.

¹¹ *História da Alfabetização, Leitura, Escrita e dos Livros Escolares* (History of Literacy, Writing, and School books) - Faculdade de Educação/ Universidade Federal de Pelotas- Fae/ Ufpel

The *Fibel*¹² analyzed here is the third edition B, with a Latin writing, reedited in 1927, as informed by the preface (the first edition in Latin letters is from 1924, the year it started to be printed in both versions). According to Cardoso (2005) this primer has characteristics common to most books produced in the 1920s: hard cover, brochure style, newspaper-like paper sheets, discretely showing the fibers, and black and white printing.

As to organizational aspects, this primer has 186 pages, assembling the content of the 1st and 2nd school years. Attached, there is an illustrative appendix, teaching how to make origamis – folded-paper objects. The illustrations oscillate between didactic, social, religious, historic, and folkloric representations, distributed in the different reading stages, from the simpler to more advanced one.

We can also see there was an intentionality in the use of illustrations: to promote a ethic-cultural resignification and reinforce the social relations established. Therefore, it highlights the association between the book and the cultural practices of its use, which is perceived in the materiality and organization of the primer (Frade, 2010). In this sense, it is worth saying that illustrations are the main teaching methodology of both primers analyzed, even before the incentive to the read the written form, as can be seen in the primer *Mein Rechenbuch* below (Figure 2).

¹² 11 *Fibel* primers were produced, 6 written in gothic letters and 5 in Latin ones, all in the 1920s. These primers have similar characteristics of content presentation and analysis, however some have the contents of the first and second grades separated, while others have them assembled in only one primer.



Figure 2 – Cover of *Mein Rechenbuch*

Source: Cedoc¹³Archive

The primer *Mein Rechenbuch* was printed in 1933 and is the first of four¹⁴ primer booklets produced aiming to help protestant and catholic teachers when teaching a “more fruitful and beneficial mental mathematics”, as explained on the preface. It was written by the two authors– W. Nast and L. Tochtrop – and illustrated by Hermann Wrede.

As can be seen, it differs from other primers produced by the publishing house Rotermund, with a yellowish cover, with an emblematic illustration: two children and an image

¹³ Centro de Documentação- Centro de Estudos e Investigações em Educação (Documentation Center- Center of Studies and Investigations in Education)- Faculdade de Educação/ Universidade Federal de Pelotas- Fae/Ufpel.

¹⁴ According to the preface of the primer, the first three books considered especially the school of the immigrant community. The choice to analyze the first of the four books is due to the fact that it was the only one if the collection to be mentioned by the interviewees, though the first and the second books are available at the Cedocof- UFPel.

of what, in the popular imaginary, is recognized as the devil. Hence, the illustration induces the idea of mathematics as something scary.

Contrary to *Fibel*, which was produced to attend the schools connected to the Lutheran synods, the primer *Mein Rechenbuch* also targeted catholic and evangelical teachers, showing then that some Rotermund school materials were not restricted to Lutheran schools. The analysis of this primer shows that the publishing house went through a modernization process, that can be seen in two other primers produced in the 1930s. This may be due to the influence of Concórdia¹⁵ publishing house, linked to the rival synod, that produced covers with illustrations or, as highlighted by Cardoso (2005), a higher investment in the graphic of the book covers, which started to take place in the 1930s in Brazil, what can also justify the change in the graphic format of the cover.

The primer *Mein Rechenbuch* is 20 centimeters high, 13 cm width, and about 1 cm thick. It has a brochure style with the leaves glued and stitched, connected to the spine with an adhesive black ribbon, that fixates the material to the cover, which is hard and covered by a yellowish texturized paper.

Regarding the organization, this primer of numerical literacy targets the first school years. It has 70 pages, including the preface and follows the illustrative standard of *Fibel*, highlighting the visual language, with 41 illustrations of rural-life activities, domestic environment, and commerce. Similar to *Fibel*, in which they create an illustrative context to teach each letter, in *Mein Rechenbuch* each number is contextualized.

Therefore, the primers *Fibel* and *Mein Rechenbuch* are richly illustrated, reproducing a visual context to everyday situations on German- Brazilian communities in Rio Grande do Sul. Thus, it agrees with Kreutz (1994)'s statement that the productions of didactic material in immigration context were connected to a community project under the leadership of churches. This project encompassed social, religious, and work aspects, reflecting such issues in the didactic materials. To Kreutz (1994, p. 73), "they are books created and printed especially for German-Brazilian schools under the justification that the didactic material should start from students' reality and to better prepare them for their context".

¹⁵ Publishing house founded in Brazil in 1923, in the city of Porto Alegre, aiming to assist in the religious and educational project of the Missouri Synod. To know more about the subject, see Warth (1979) and Weiduschadt (2007).

From this concept of didactic material, we can observe the intentionality of preparing the student to be a part of a social and geographic space, so that they can see themselves as an integral part of the German-Pomeranian ethnic community. Under this logic, Weiduschadt and Tambara (2016) assert that the meaning of the book was not only established by its written content, but also through how it was presented. The religious and social aspects, highlighting the practices linked to the work realm, are broadly represented in the primers, showing different activities and, consequently, representations of what was considered men and women activities.

In this sense, Louro (1994) affirms that it is through the symbols culturally evoked and expressed in the teaching-learning process that the subjects are built. If symbols¹⁶ are considered as societal representations, it would be possible to see that, if

... these representations are understood by other people, beyond those who produce them, it is because there is among them a minimal sociocultural convention, in other words, they depend a good deal of its meaning to its symbolic aspect... (Joly, 1996, p. 40).

Similarly, the illustrations carry in themselves the author's intention, that can go beyond a simple learning aid. To Belmiro (2008), the images are filled with stories, feelings, and ideologies, with a social nature. In this perspective, it is a cultural literacy, that targets the types of knowledge that a citizen must have to participate in the life in society.

As mentioned, one of the objectives of this study is to do a brief analysis of the illustrative representations in the primers, aiming to notice possible directions on the relation between gender and work. Therefore, we analyzed the work roles attributed to men and women in the primers. According to Louro (1994), these relations are established by the subjects' social and historic constructions. Kreutz (1994) reinforces that, in the content of primers, there was a pedagogical prominence of the method *Realia*¹⁷, showing what was common among this immigrant group.

¹⁶ Symbols: anything that represents, suggests, or substitutes something. In literature, a symbol means an allegory or a metaphor; word or image whose meaning designates an object of quality, but the similarity relation between them. (Dicio, [s.d.]).

¹⁷ The pedagogical realism was based in a useful and practical teaching, guided towards reality, focused on the observation of the environment. In the case of this study, the focus was on the reality of German-Brazilian rural schools, tools of rural work, domestic life, and local market. To know more about the theme, see Hoff and Cardoso (2006).

As the target audience of this primer was the German-Brazilian rural communities, we guide our view to the work representations in the primers, so as to notice the possible social guidance through the way agricultural and domestic work was organized. This way, we present some findings from the analysis of the beforementioned primers. From that, it is possible to make some considerations on how these representations collaborated to resignify the work social relations established among the subjects taught through these primers.

Work relations represented in educational-cultural processes

Based on the assumption that the educational processes of different times, spaces, and cultures carry within themselves the inheritance of values and ideas of a certain society and promote the construction of its identity, we aim to understand the manifestations, the habits, routines, behaviors, beliefs, religions, family relationships, and artistic manifestations from the group that used this primers, trying to reach the movement that Rodrigues (1989) called relativization. To do so, there needs to be an effort to understand the meaning of behaviors, thoughts, and feelings of human beings within their cultural diversity, as Rodrigues (1989) reminds us that men is the product and, at the same time, the producer of these transformations.

Furthermore, considering that the primers had a significant amount of illustrations on work relations, we need to see how these representations are related to the ethnic and cultural identity, that, according to Silva (2014), is the result of successful articulation between subject and discourse. The author reinforces that people, as active subjects of the society, build their identity guided by symbolic and discursive productions, from the differences present in cultural and social relations. It is, therefore, a construction.

Consequently, Scott (1995) helps us think the category of gender and, thus, the supposed determination of social roles as cultural constructions from different elements. According to her,

Gender is built through kinship, but not exclusively by it; it is also build in the economy and in the political organization that, at least in our society, currently work independently from kinship (Scott, 1995, p. 87).

Therefore, the need to perceive established social relations in the context where the primers were produced and used, to know the possible aims and guidelines of these materials. We can say then that these representations, as expressions, potentialized the understanding and, consequently, helped produce mental projection on the type of citizen they aimed to form.

The illustrations on the primers could help us understand how some representations were chosen aimed to build a collective memory of the narratives considered important enough to be crystalized, in the sense of affirming work and sociability relations that were supposed to be built.

Besides this, to Halbwachs (2003, p. 39), the contact points in common are important so that "...the memories that makes us remind of something are established by a common base". Therefore, the visual representation could have been used as a support to create a combination of different memories around a common representation guided towards a cultural literacy in which the child learned to recognize him/herself as part of a certain culture and stimulated to reproduce it.

It is in this sense that Gramsci (1968) defended that the individual consciousness of most children reflects the civil and cultural relations of those around them. Therefore, the illustrative representations in didactic materials could have been created aiming to affirm the social relation of the environment in which the child takes part.

Joly (2006) calls attention to the need of analyzing images aiming to notice how they are produced, as this would help identify the intentionalities of its production. As previously mentioned, interviews were conducted to understand the appropriation of the primers by individuals who were taught using this didactic material.

When asked about the use of the primers, the interviewees highlighted that the classes aimed to encompass their daily lives and the primers taught what they needed to know to live in a rural community. This way, it is possible to infer that the illustrations of the primers *Mein Rechenbuch* and *Fibel* carry with them the authors' intention to go beyond a simple learning aid. About this, it is worth highlighting Belmiro (2008)'s understanding, to whom the images in the didactic books are filled with stories, feelings, and ideologies, having a social perspective, guiding children's view to certain aspects of social life.

Thus, the content of the primers is organized to contemplate students' reality, so that the illustrations present situations involving activities and habits common to their universe. In some of these representations, we can see the construction of a difference between the typical works of men and women. Such distinction can be seen in figures 3 and 4, below, copied from *Fibel*, in which the boy is represented helping the father and the girl is gardening beside the mother.

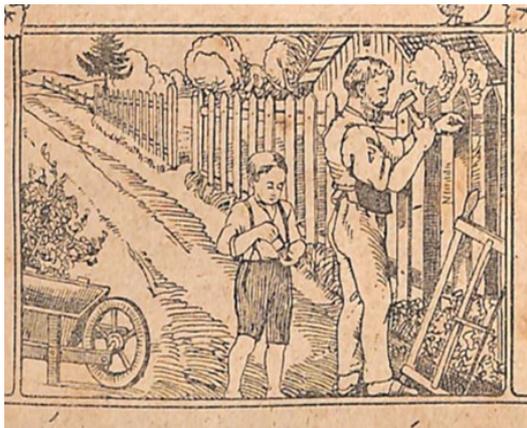


Figure 3 – Boy helping the father
Source: *Fibel* (p. 4)



Figure 4 – Girl helping the mother
Source: *Fibel* (p. 21)

We can see that both figures are connected to activities related to the work world. In figure 3, we can see the representation of a boy helping his father in a farm activity, socially considered as practices from the male universe. The boy is shown holding nails while the father fixes the fence. On figure 4, the girl is helping the mother in the domestic chores, helping with the garden. The girl is shown holding a rake in one hand and garden scissors on the other which she is giving to the mother, while the boy is running through the yard. Thus, we understand that such images reflect family structures and ways of organization, because, as stated by Louro (1994), men and women build themselves during the process of social and family relational practices.

Besides this, according to Nunes (2010), it is impossible to imagine the action and the influences of images with no help of an empirical context that is more or less known, in which such illustrations can be observed and re-elaborated. This idea meets the works of Joly (2006), when she says that an image is never random, as it always has a reason to be and is normally based on its context of production. Therefore, it says much about the society that produces it.

We can also infer that the representations of figures 3 and 4 anticipate situations of everyday adult life, what is clear in different work situations represented on *Fibel*. Thus, children start to see themselves within a work universe in which the activities are considered male or female.

This way, Louro (1997, p. 61) highlights the participation of the subjects themselves in this construction. According to the author, the subjects “are not passive receivers of external impositions. They are actively involved and involve these learnings, react, respond, refuse, or assume them completely”. Hence, knowledge is not automatically transmitted, but passes through a social construction that requires the participation of the subjects involved.

As the target audience of those synod primers were rural German-Brazilian communities, it is clear that the work representations shown in these materials produced by the publishing house Rotermund show rural and domestic activities and some jobs in particular, as teachers and salespeople. These findings are reinforced by Buss (2005), when observing that the school curricula of the *Rio-Grandense* synod was created around societal needs¹⁸, which also reflect on the production and circulation of specific primers to the rural and urban context. However, as mentioned, it is an education established from children’s experiences.

Figures 5 and 6 corroborate such affirmatives: they are representations of the beginning of the 20th century and reproduce the everyday life of rural German-Brazilian communities.

¹⁸ According to Buss (2005, p. 51), “the curricula of *Rio-Grandense* synod schools was not uniform. In the rural area, the main objective of the school was the teach how to read, write, calculate, and provide a good grounding of Christian doctrine. In the towns and cities, school aspiration was higher. The curricula also had Geography, History, Science, and, mainly, commercial bookkeeping. This commercial technique was an important subject to German-Brazilians who had a prominent place in the commerce and industry in the states of Rio Grande do Sul and Santa Catarina”.



Figure 5 – Man working on the field

Source: *Fibel* (p. 7)



Figure 6 – Woman and household chores

Source: *Fibel* (p. 13)

We can observe that, through the representation of specific activities, the primer tends to show different behaviors for men and women at work. On figure 5, we see activities attributed to men. On the lower part of the image, we see a man spreading seeds on the ground and on the upper part there are children playing as if in a civic parade, in which three boys march with their toy weapons, another rides a wooden horse with a raised sword, and a girl carries a flag.

It is visible that there is an intention to show that there are certain activities thought and articulated to portray men, for example, those involving danger, field work, and physical force. While women are relegated to the demure of presentation and domestic life, as shown by figure 6. In this sense, Louro (1994) highlights that it is through the physical and corporeal manifestations that social structures are expressed. These representations are built and formed by a series of activities linked to the everyday life, aiming to legitimize social organizations that are culturally established.

Scott (1995) understands these relations as culturally invoked and normative on the roles socially accepted and recommended to each gender in a certain society. We can then see that in figure 6, the illustration emphasizes activities attributed to women by the targeted social

group, meeting the ideas of Eco (2004) who says that the author, before producing his/her work, observes the reading audience. To reinforce this idea, in the upper part of the image, there is the representation of a lady that has just milked a cow and a girl that observes this activity– also highlighting women’s role to raise children. In the lower part of the image, there is a woman hanging clothes in a clothesline and, on the background, far in the horizon, a man riding a wagon, reinforcing the perspective that outdoor activities, i.e. those outside the house, belong to men. According to Joly (2006), the visual language has a figurative role of naturalizing certain realities. To the author,

... when an image seems “similar” is because it is built in a way to decipher how we decipher the world itself. The unities that we detect on it are “cultural unities” determined by the habit we have to detect them in the world itself (Joly, 2006, p. 73).

Thus, these primers could have established elements that were efficient to transmit culture, and the illustrations were used to affirm social work relations in German-Brazilian communities. This caused a process of assimilation and accommodation, what Nosella (1981) calls a directed way to perceive the world, in which children submitted to the inculcation of a certain ideology would not only apprehend it but also its whole thought structure influenced by it.

In this sense, *Fibel* visual representations show a reproduction of social gender divisions in the family, a space built by cultural unities. Such division can be seen in figure 7, below, that shows a man resting while the woman bathes the child.



Figure 7 – Mother bathing the child, while the father rests

Source: *Fibel* (p. 8)

It is clear that this image reproduces a family space, with a father, a mother, and a child. Such family representation shows a social construction delimited by ideals of a certain society, such as the activities suitable for each gender, which can also be understood as ways to naturalize certain social behaviors.

About this, it is worth saying that most memories brought by the interviewees converge to a rural life in which women helped their husbands in the farming activities. On the other hand, we could perceive that there were activities restricted to men, such as carpentry, plowing, trading, and stocking the house. In this context, women appear in the accounts as responsible for the household, as the one who cared for children's education and hygiene, the organization, and the running of the house. In most memories, it is the mother or the sister who helped with school tasks, as "the father worked tirelessly in the farm and was tired at night" (Albrecht, 2018).

In this sense, Salomani's researches (1996) with Pomeranian communities in the Southern region of Rio Grande do Sul are enlightening. According to her, there was a social division of roles that were naturally build:

... it was men's responsibility to economically support the family, but with the effective participation of women in actions and decisions. Women's role was not restricted to the domestic chores, as it was common at the time. Women were responsible for the household chores, care for children's education, and farming together with the husband. Thus, when back from farming, the man would rest and the woman would continue with her work, cooking, taking care of the children...it was also up to the woman to take care of the vegetable patch, as well as the animals, milking, weeding, sewing, cleaning the house, among other tasks (Salomani, 1996, p. 59).

In this scenario, there were two well-defined and reproduced roles in German-Brazilian communities. Men had the economic responsibility to work and guarantee the family substance, as well as lead with external relations and negotiations. Women's role was connected to the domestic space and its surroundings, as gardening, vegetable patches, and orchards, but also the animals and the children. Thus, we can see the importance of women in the domestic work and of men in the external tasks, as shown by figures 8 and 9.



Figure 8 – The dialogue between a German descendant and a *gaúcho*¹⁹

Source: *Fibel* (p. 62)

Figure 8 shows a mixture of cultures, the result of the contact between German descendants and the *gaúchos*, allowing the incorporation of habits and traditions. We can see the image of a woman that does not directly participate of the conversation, but is represented harvesting grapes, while another woman is by the door of the house, observing from afar. The illustration reinforces Salomani's (1996) analysis, according to which German-Pomeranian women tended not to get directly involved in negotiations outside the domestic sphere, what does not mean that they did not act in the background and, consequently, influenced the husbands' decisions.

Therefore, as pointed out by Louro (1994), the gender social relations derive from a process of construction, socialization, and education, that is established according to different societal models, which also present diverse concepts of gender. There are different ways to socially constitute work built within a process of resistance and accommodation, also accentuated, in our case, by regional divisions.

In this direction, figure 9 shows an image from the mathematical primer *Mein Rechenbuch*, in which man and women are represented in different activities. Though there are less images in this primer and they are simpler, it is possible to see that, as on *Fibel*, there is a tendency to represent women in the domestic space while men are on the field or the commerce.

¹⁹ T.N.: *Gaúcho* refers to someone or something from the state of Rio Grande do Sul.



Figure 9 – The travelling salesman

Source: *Mein Rechenbuch* (p. 3)

Figure 9 suggests that the man represented in the image is a travelling salesman, as the wagon has a cover, showing that there is some type of good protected under the tent. In the lower part of the image, there are the items sold, such as matches, cutlery, clocks, dice, and postcards. Besides this, the image shows the man gesticulating while the woman observes him, suggesting a dialogue between both. However, through the context of the illustration, it is possible to notice that the woman is in a domestic space, a context that meets Salomani's (1996) ideas that the domestic care was under women's responsibility, while men, regardless of his occupation, was always represented in an activity outside the domestic environment. Similarly, figure 10, one of the many representations on the primer *Mein Rechenbuch*, shows a man in a commercial activity.

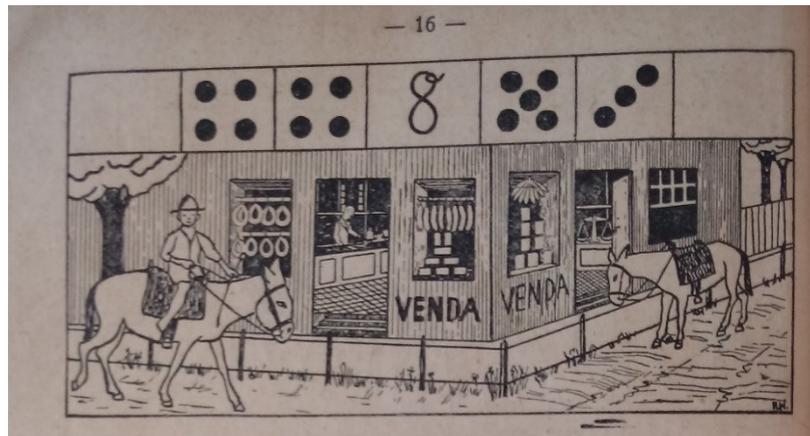


Figure 10 – The man and the commerce

Source: *Mein Rechenbuch* (p. 3)

By the aspects analyzed, both *Fibel* and *Mein Rechenbuch* could have been efficient elements in the cultural transmission of certain behaviors regarding work division. The illustrations on these primers were used to affirm the social work relations in German-Brazilian communities. On this, it is worth highlighting that school's curriculum or the selection of knowledge chosen to be transmitted, as explained by Louro (1997), reveal the social divisions and the legitimization of some groups despite others. Many times, the social differences among individuals are accentuated and justified by what is taught in the classroom, especially through the didactic material used.

We are not saying here that school guides the division of work activities according to gender, though some memories point to this aspect, as is the case of Adolfin K. Neitzke (2016) and Ilsa K. Neunfeldt (2018), who remembered that they had handicraft and home economics classes, in which "... girls learned how to paint, knit, embroider, etc., and the boys to do carpentry, make baskets out of vine and corn straw" (Neunfeldt, 2018). Corroborating with this, Otto Schellin (2016) affirms that there were also recreational activities specific to boys and girls organized by the teacher. These memories match the statements of Kolling (2000) on Pomeranian educational context guided by synod schools in the mid-20th century – as the author shows that some school offered different activities for boys and girls.

However, we understand that the work representations portrayed in the primers, probably showed a social behavior in the society they targeted, even because, as stated by Kreutz (1994), the didactic material created by Rotermund aimed to represent the everyday life

of German-Brazilian rural communities. Therefore, the representation acts symbolically, classifying the social relations established: according to Woodward (2014), culture molds identity from the social and material conditions offered. Thus, the child naturalized certain behaviors, reproducing them in the social structure they lived.

Hence, it is noticeable that work social relations are a product of a process of construction, socialization, and education established according to the various models of society, which are influenced by the gender category. There are, thus, different forms of work constitutions, socially build through a process of resistance and accommodation, highlighting the activities considered as feminine or masculine.

Final remarks

Based on the theoretical reference of this study on images and work relations, and on the analysis of the representations on the primers *Mein Rechenbuch* and *Fibel*, it is clear that the visual language of these works alluded to the rural universe. In this context, the social gender division is accentuated through the illustrations which portray empirical guidelines of what should be understood as a man's and a woman's work.

The evidences shown allow us to affirm that there were social gender constructions in these communities, which were socially recognized and re-signified. Regarding the role attributed to women, for instance, the emphasis on the illustrations revolved around the domestic chores, taking care of the house, the children, the garden, and the animals, thus, showing a good example of mother and housewife. While men are represented in activities external to the domestic environment, placing men as responsible for the financial support of the family.

Therefore, it was possible to see that the representations on primers were extremely relevant to reaffirm the social and cultural relations, as they carried an easily-recognizable functional symbolism, bringing a visual text that could be clearly understood and re-signified, becoming an important resource to teach reading and writing. Besides this, the illustrations reflect the influence of the ethnic society in a rural context of Rio Grande do Sul, which preserve Germanic characteristics and present combinations with the regional culture.

The memory of the interviewees tended to reinforce that these practices were naturalized within their communities and that the authors of the analyzed primers had simply taken this information and reproduced the experiences of this society. Thereby, we can see the power of representation in the construction of a social imaginary from the culture of a community, as, according to Pesavento (2005), representation mediates the world of the spectator and that of the producer, having as a reference the reality socialized around those that integrate the same identity standard.

On the other hand, though the experiences of the interviewees showed that many of those representations were reproduced in their daily lives, we cannot say that the aim of the primers was to engrain in children certain guidelines on work relations. According to Eco (2004), when writing the author points out his/her audience in the work, giving to it a meaningful power and making readers recognize themselves in that content and updating it. Therefore, the primers reproduced the social and familiar life of their audiences, showing the stories and tales that were part of the cultural and social experiences of these communities.

Thus, it is possible to notice, based on the analysis of the data, that the social relations of gender are ethnic and cultural constructions historically build, through a process that involves religious and schooling institutions. Furthermore, as they were ethnic-cultural-religious institutions, many of these relations could have been reaffirmed based on biological²⁰ and theological²¹ issues. However, such aspects are mainly hypothesis, which need further deeper analysis towards this theme.

²⁰ Biological: explanations supposedly natural of being men and women, in which differences in aptitudes and abilities were anchored in people's physique.

²¹ Theologica: it was a didactic material produced and divulged as been in synch with Christian thought. Even though the primer reflected a way of living that was typical of the time, when men worked outside the home and the women took care of the house and the children, behind this perspective there is the reaffirmation of a scene grounded by the Christian religious ethics. The church certainly approved this, reaffirming such type of organization based on the commandments, that emphasized family relations within the marriage, between parents and children, and with those around them.

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