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Informal patriotic education in Poland: Homeland, history and citizenship in patriotic books for children

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Abstract

This article uses a critical discourse analysis approach to observe themes and patterns in eight non-fiction books about Polish patriotism for children. The books are commercially available in mainstream bookshops, and may be used in a range of home or educational settings. In a social and political context where the concept of patriotism has a long history of use by various powerful elites to legitimize their positions and political actions, and where approaches to teaching patriotism in schools have been widely discussed, the article compares themes emerging from the books with patterns in wider social and political discourse, as well as considering what messages and assumptions are revealed in the texts themselves. The analysis finds that, while most of the authors try to associate themselves with a modern and inclusive type of patriotism, they also tend to reproduce certain assumptions that favour exclusionary or hierarchical understandings as to who has the right to be recognized as a member of the national community.

Keywords: Poland, patriotism, national identity, informal education, children's books

Note on translations

All the quotations from children's books in this article, and many of the other references, are translated from Polish. I have tried to express the authors' intended meanings as clearly as possible, which occasionally meant changing wording and/or word order, and have indicated where meanings may be ambiguous. One problematic word to translate is the Polish word *ojczyzna*, which could be 'fatherland' or 'homeland'. I have used 'fatherland' in translations, despite it often sounding clumsy in English, because the word's specific relationship with 'father' (*ojciec*) is occasionally relevant.

Introduction

References to patriotism, national identity and the expectation that we should feel a sense of attachment to a political or geographical concept of 'nation' are common in political and social discourse all over the world. We are regularly reminded that we live in a particular nation, and what might be expected of us as a result, in contexts ranging from political and media discourse to various 'banal' everyday situations (Billig, 1995: 8). Many studies have looked at how messages about national identity and patriotism are presented to children in educational environments (for example, Abdou, 2016; Barrett, 2000; Haste, 2004; Low-Beer, 2003). However, the meanings attached to patriotism and national identity can vary greatly in different contexts, and over time, as political, cultural and social structures change, so new research into how ideas about identity

are communicated to children, in the context of wider public political debates, always has the potential to provide new insights into dominant attitudes in a given society at a given time (Hollindale, 2003: 26).

Poland is a particularly interesting context for such an article, as patriotism is often referred to and discussed in public discourse, and this has been the case for over a century (Davies, 2001: 235–44). Furthermore, the concept ‘has been used for political manipulation to an unusual extent in Poland, where anyone using the term may give it a different meaning’ (A. Kubacki, cited in Kopińska *et al.*, 2017: 94 [translated]; see also Szeligowska, 2016). There is extensive literature on how patriotism is and should be taught to children in Poland (for example, Głoskowska-Sołdatow, 2009; Drzeżdżon, 2013; Kania, 2016), and how it has been taught in the past (for example, Jarosz, 1998; Kołakowski, 2012), including some studies focusing specifically on patriotic education in the home, particularly during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (for example, Walasek, 1996; Bołdyrew, 2011). However, there do not seem to be any recent studies looking at the significant number of non-fiction books for children currently available in Poland that are presented as resources for teaching what it means to be a Polish patriot. Such books are interesting in that they are a type of educational resource that is not limited by national school curricula and may be used in a range of family and educational settings. Children become aware of expectations relating to citizenship and national identity at home (Drzeżdżon, 2013: 75) as well as at school and elsewhere, and such books may provide insights into societal attitudes to patriotism and patriotic education in a slightly different way to analyses of school textbooks. This article uses critical discourse analysis methods to examine eight such books, and discusses themes that emerge in the context of wider debates about patriotism in Polish society.

Theoretical framework

Patriotism is a contested term both philosophically and in the specific context of social research (Drzeżdżon, 2013: 71; Szeligowska, 2016: 29). The purpose of this article is to analyse different interpretations of the concept, so it is not necessary to fix a working definition here beyond the basic ‘love of one’s country’ (Szeligowska, 2016: 29). However, it is clear that in order for political actors to be able to use the concept of patriotism for their own ends by framing ideas they wish to promote as ‘patriotic’ (*ibid.*), patriotism itself must be accepted as a positive value in society, and there is a wide range of views on whether patriotism is in fact morally good (Ben-Porath, 2007: 41) and necessary (MacIntyre, 1995), or whether it is potentially divisive, morally questionable (Keller, 2005: 564) or even ‘dangerous’ (Nussbaum, 1996: 4; see also, for example, Kodelja, 2011; Osler, 2009). In the Polish context, patriotism is widely regarded as a positive moral value (Kania, 2016: 90), often contrasted with ‘*nacjonalizm*’, which tends to be a more unambiguously negative term than the equivalent ‘nationalism’ in English. This can be seen in some of the books discussed here, such as *Wielka Księga Małego Patrioty*, which advises children that ‘it is definitely better to be a patriot than a nationalist. Badly understood nationalism leads to war’ (Skibińska and Łazowski, 2018: 44 [translated]). Also relevant here are attempts to identify and categorize different types of patriotism, such as distinctions between what Szeligowska calls ‘moderate’ or ‘liberal’ patriotism (Szeligowska, 2016: 31), and more ‘authoritarian’ approaches (Westheimer, 2006: 610), which demand uncritical loyalty to the homeland.

In terms of how we can understand the idea of homeland or nation itself, it is clear that states and their borders are absolutely ‘real in their consequences’ (Merton, 1995: 380) for those who live in them, are denied the right to live in them, or are affected

by wars that break out because of them (Billig, 1995: 2). However, this article focuses on how ideas about nation are constructed discursively (Billig, 1995; De Cillia *et al.*, 1999; Anderson, 2006), and the various meanings authors may attach to Poland or Polishness through these processes. Historically, definitions of nation and citizenship have tended to be informed by a contrast between 'ethnic' understandings of nation based on culture and ancestry, and 'civic' understandings based on political rights (Shulman, 2002: 555), although Shulman points out that most interpretations involve elements of both (*ibid.*: 554; see also, for example, De Cillia *et al.*, 1999: 169; Drzeżdżon, 2013: 72). Authors' assumptions about how citizenship should be defined can be a useful focus for analysis in this context. In the Polish context, Szeligowska contrasts the use of the Polish words 'society' (*społeczeństwo*) and 'nation' (*naród*), explaining that 'one can link ... "nation" to common culture, and language, thus putting it closer to the "ethnic" understanding of the nation, while ... "society" would be closer to the idea of civic values, thus putting it closer to the political understanding of the nation' (Szeligowska, 2016: 45–6). Many of the books in this article repeatedly use the Polish word *naród*, suggesting a tendency to construct ideas about nation and identity in terms of culture and ethnicity.

The books analysed in this article are not school textbooks, but they are still a type of educational resource, and the extensive literature about how national identities are constructed in educational materials can provide useful insights here. Such studies have often focused on history textbooks, which, like books about patriotism, 'embody personal histories, subjectivities, ideologies and worldviews' (Watkins, 2003: 175), and as such have been described as 'tools for indoctrination and domination' (Abdou, 2016: 230). De Cillia *et al.*'s (1999: 155) article on Austrian textbooks uses a 'discourse-historical approach', analysing discourses used in textbooks in the context of 'information on the historical background and the original sources in which discursive "events" are embedded'. This is a useful tool to consider here, and in order to inform such an analysis, it is important to be aware of some key historical reference points that are often mentioned in discussions of Polish patriotism.

Historical and political context

Szeligowska (2016: 38) highlights Poland's 'long tradition of statehood, starting in the tenth century', and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, which occupied a 'relatively powerful position in Central Europe between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries', until the Partition period, when the area was divided into three sections and occupied by the Hapsburg, Russian and Prussian Empires until the end of the First World War in 1918 (Davies, 2001: 138–51). Poland was then an independent republic until it was occupied by Nazi and Soviet forces during the Second World War. A frame of reference that became important during the post-war period and continues to be relevant today concerns border changes and resettlement schemes following the Second World War (see, for example, Porter-Szűcs, 2014: 201; Wylegała, 2015; Pietraszewski and Törnquist-Plewa, 2016). These changes, together with the death or displacement of almost all Poland's Jewish population during the Second World War and the Holocaust, meant that Poland became much more ethnically and linguistically homogeneous after 1945 than it had been previously (Porter-Szűcs, 2014: 9).

Szeligowska (2016: 38) describes the post-war communist government (1947–89) as 'imposed from abroad', and in attempts to address this perception and gain legitimacy, the communist authorities frequently used references to patriotism in their rhetoric (Korkuć, 2006: 178; Kofakowski, 2012: 129). Following political change in 1989,

patriotism was again a key reference in public debate over how Polish identity should be redefined (Michnik, 2003: 131; Kubik and Bernhard, 2014: 8), and such debates are ongoing, as there is no agreed 'standard discourse on the recent past' (Bernhard and Kubik, 2014: 81). Brier (2009: 63) reports that this has tended to have a 'deeply divisive influence ... on the country's political discourse', which was particularly pronounced in debates over EU accession. When Poland did join the EU in 2004, significant demographic changes occurred, as large numbers of Poles migrated to other EU countries (Statistics Poland, 2019: 459), while immigration to Poland, notably from Belarus and Ukraine, increased (ibid.: 439).

In the context of education, there has been widespread public debate in Poland in recent years specifically focused on how patriotism should be taught to children (for example, Starzak, 2017; Suchecka, 2018). The current Law and Justice (PiS) administration have introduced new core curricula in both primary and secondary schools since 2016 (Chłoń-Domińczak, 2017; ORE, 2017), prioritizing patriotic education (Hejwosz-Gromkowska, 2017: 78; see also Suchecka, 2018). This is part of a wider 'historical policy', which aims to influence how historical figures and events are used publicly to promote particular narratives of national identity (Porter-Szűcs, 2014: 356; Lande, 2015; Janicki and Władysław, 2017; Nizinkiewicz, 2017; Wroński, 2015), and which addresses a perceived decline in patriotic attitudes, particularly among young people (Hejwosz-Gromkowska, 2013: 140; Kania, 2016: 89). However, the popularity of commercial products specifically marketed as 'patriotic', such as branded clothing (Mróz-Gorgoń and Perchla-Włosik, 2016; Łabuszewski et al., 2016), suggest that patriotism is still valued positively and regarded as important by many people in Poland.

Rationale and methodology

For practical reasons, the eight books analysed in this article are all titles that were commercially available in Poland at the time of writing (2019). Potential books for the article were identified from major Polish online bookshops (Onet Kultura, 2017) using the search terms '*patriot*', '*patriotyzm*' and '*ojczyzna*'. From the children's books that appeared in the results, I chose those that explicitly give instructions or associate particular knowledge or behaviours with patriotism, and excluded those that simply reproduce traditional songs or poems. This left the following sample of eight books, listed together with the abbreviations used to refer to them in the analysis section:

- WK: *Wielka Księga Małego Polaka* (The Little Pole's Big Book)
Joanna Bachanek, 2018
- PS: *Klub Małego Patrioty: Polskie Symbole* (Little Patriot's Club: Polish Symbols)
Dariusz Grochal, 2017
- EMP: *Encyklopedia Młodego Patrioty* (The Young Patriot's Encyclopedia)
Beata Kosińska, 2019
- PTL: *Polska, To Lubię!* (Poland, I like it!)
Grażyna Maternicka (ed.), 2014
- CWSO: *Polska: Co Wiem o Swojej Ojczyźnie?* (Poland: What do I know about my Fatherland?)
Tamara Michałowska, 2013
- KTJ: *Kto Ty Jesteś?* (Who are you?)
Joanna Olech and Edgar Bąk, 2013

- PMP: *Poradnik Małego Patrioty* (The Little Patriot's Guide)
Marcin Przewoźniak, 2017
- WKMP: *Wielka Księga Małego Patrioty* (The Little Patriot's Big Book)
Ewa Skibińska and Maciej Łazowski, 2018

The analysis refers more to PMP and WKMP than the other books because these two, presented as instruction manuals, contain more material suitable for detailed analysis than the others, which either have fewer words or focus more on factual knowledge than discussions of how a patriot should behave. However, almost all the themes referred to are based on examples from at least two books, as well as relating to wider debates about patriotism in Poland as discussed above. All the books are aimed at primary school children aged approximately 6 to 10, apart from PTL and EMP, which are aimed at older primary and secondary school children aged approximately 10 to 16. Although this article does not attempt to analyse in detail how the books are received and used, online sources show that at least some of them have been used in extra-curricular educational settings such as libraries (Orzechowska, 2016; Miejska Biblioteka Publiczna w Sosnowcu, 2018), or given out as prizes at school events (Szkoła Podstawowa im. Józefa Chełmońskiego w Błędowie, 2018; Szkoła Podstawowa im. Antoniego Abrahama w Połczynie, 2019). Page references for the books are given in brackets.

Methodology

This is an interpretative article that attempts to identify themes that could be explored further in future research, rather than aiming to provide generalizable conclusions based on quantitative data. Although the eight books in the article represent a significant proportion of the books currently available in the specific and limited genre of Polish patriotic books for children, this is still a 'relatively small data set ... emerging from [a] specific social setting' (Tonkiss, 2012: 417), and it is important to bear in mind that any individual text is unlikely to have 'large-scale effects on sense-making practices' (McKee, 2003: 48–9). As a result, I focus mainly on the content of the books rather than on how they might be received. However, while we cannot assume that books such as these would, in isolation, have the power to significantly influence public attitudes to patriotism, they do need to be accepted as legitimate and useful in order to be purchased and used, and as such they need to represent patriotism in a recognizable way that refers to established discourses (Kubik and Bernhard, 2014: 9).

The article uses critical discourse analysis methods, as suggested by Fairclough (2003) and Tonkiss (2012). A discourse can be defined as 'a group of statements which provide a language for talking about – i.e. a way of representing – a particular kind of knowledge about a topic' (Hall, 1992: 290, quoted in Tonkiss, 2012: 406), and this type of analysis allows us to 'examine how ideologies are reproduced through language and texts ... and how discourse can be understood in relation to historical processes and events' (Tonkiss, 2012: 407–8). We can also use discourse analysis to identify patterns and similarities between the books in the article and other relevant texts on Polish patriotism, such as literature about general attitudes to patriotism in Poland (for example, Szeligowska, 2016) and about teaching patriotism to children (for example, Głowska-Sołdatow, 2009; Drzeżdżon, 2013; Kania, 2016), as well as school curricula.

I used an inductive approach (Rivas, 2012: 368), beginning with the following five questions informed by the framework suggested by Tonkiss (2012: 412–13) for initial data coding:

- What values, behaviours and knowledge do the authors prioritize, and how do they link these to patriotism?
- What assumptions about nation and society (Fairclough, 2003: 40; 70–1; 124) do the books reflect? Who is included and excluded from the version of society represented in the books? How is difference represented, for example, in terms of gender, religion, and national or ethnic identity?
- Which historical events and figures are highlighted, and which are marginalized and omitted (Tonkiss, 2012: 416)?
- What contradictions and inconsistencies (Tonkiss, 2012: 412) can we observe in the texts?
- How can we link the themes in the books to wider public debate about patriotism in Poland and beyond?

The findings are summarized below in four sections: nation and fatherland; values and behaviours; inclusion and exclusion; and history and memory. This follows a brief discussion of reader–author positioning in the books.

Analysis

Reader–author positioning

The process of educating children about what is expected from them in terms of national identity involves decisions about what to include and exclude taken by those who ‘can occupy a subject position of “knower”’ (Bjerg and Lenz, 2012: 45). In educational texts for children such as school textbooks, authors are typically positioned as authorities in relation to readers (VanSledright, 2008: 116), and this is the case in *Encyclopedia Małego Patrioty*, where the author presents information in a straightforward, factual way, as an authoritative version of ‘the truth’. In fact, much of the information in EMP, particularly about certain historical events, uses very similar and in some cases identical wording to entries on Wikipedia (such as the entry on ‘National Day of Remembrance for the Cursed Soldiers’ on p. 7). *Polska, to Lubię!* is also presented as an ‘encyclopedia’, and although the tone is more conversational, it is still authoritative. *Wielka Księga Małego Polaka, Co Wiem o Swojej Ojczyźnie* and *Symbole Narodowe*, all aimed at younger readers, are similar in this respect. *Kto Ty Jesteś* is written in the first person, and simply presents concrete behaviours and links these to patriotism, such as ‘I stamp my ticket on the bus. I am a patriot’ (11). Galasiński and Skowronek (2001: 51, citing Anderson, 2006) suggest that a ‘critical part of “imagining us as a nation” ... is to give us “our” national name’, but this does not happen in KTJ. Without its occasional references to, for example, the Polish language and *matura* exams (the final exams Polish students take after finishing secondary school), KTJ could be a guide to citizenship in a range of contexts.

More complex author–reader relationships are found in *Poradnik Małego Patrioty* and *Wielka Księga Małego Patrioty*, where it is made explicit that work ‘is being done to reconcile conflicting ideas’ (Tonkiss, 2012: 414). The former is written as a dialogue between the author and an ‘implied reader’ (Ross Johnston, 2011: 134), who is both addressed in the second person and included as a voice in the first person. The implied reader is clearly identified as a child from a Polish background in sections such as one entitled ‘I’m Polish. What does that mean?’ The conditions for being Polish are defined in ethnic terms: either ‘I live in Poland and my forefathers come from here’, or ‘I live in a different country, but my family comes from Poland’ (6). Children are invited to consider alternative points of view and negotiate what patriotism means for them

as individuals, but only to an extent, because the author has the final authoritative word as to what should be considered correct and incorrect patriotic behaviour. *Wielka Księga Małego Patrioty* also addresses an implied reader directly, encouraging them to reflect on the content: 'What does the word "fatherland" mean to you?' (5). At other times, the author tends to use 'we' rather than 'you', with 'we' specifically identified as a group of people with a Polish identity. This is established, for example, through shared geographical references, such as 'we go to the Baltic in the summer and in the winter we go skiing in the Tatras' (8), and this example of how the nation is 'mapped' for the child is relevant to discussions of how the homeland is represented.

Nation and fatherland

One central issue in understanding attitudes to patriotism is the question of what is referred to when someone says that they feel an attachment to their homeland or nation, as this may be a physical space, a group of people, a set of government institutions, or something else. The use of names, both of people and places, to define the 'nation' as a physical space and a concept is discussed by Galasiński and Skowronek (2001: 52), who refer to the idea 'that official naming practices impose a legitimate vision upon the social world'. Through being repeatedly told that land on one side of a line is 'ours' and land on the other is not, we come to accept this as true and to develop a sense of attachment to this space. Their examples of political and religious leaders referring to specific locations in Poland to 'map' the idea of the nation (ibid.: 58) is echoed in the suggestion that a Polish child would travel between the Baltic, in the north of Poland, and the Tatra mountains in the south, mapping out the full extent of the nation geographically. This idea of mapping 'our' territory is important in almost all the books. *Poradnik Małego Patrioty* also maps out Poland as a physical space in 'a large, green continent called Europe' (6), and also lists geographical features (the Baltic sea, the mountains in the south) and names of cities, before explaining that 'the lines on the map that separate Poland from other countries are our borders'. Presenting these borders in a list of geographical features implies that they are natural, inevitable and stable, and, at least on this page, there is no mention of the fact that the current borders have only been in place since 1945. PS, on the one hand, shows a map of Poland next to neighbouring countries (12), each showing a smiling child holding a flag – the neighbours are presented as equally friendly. In PRP, on the other hand, there is an explanation of why Poland currently has open borders with some countries and imposes border checks at others (13). The idea that people from certain countries are more likely to pose a threat to 'us' is revisited several times in the book, notably in references to the role of the navy (13) and border police (95) in 'protecting us' from vague implied threats from anyone 'passing [this way] uninvited' (13).

Also relevant is how authors situate Poland in wider geographical and political contexts. The new school history curriculum describes Poland as 'permanently rooted ... in the heart of Europe' (ORE, 2017: 10 [translated]), and both the emphasis on Europe and the use of 'permanently' are interesting here, given the historical context of occupation and changing borders. There are also interesting patterns in how political institutions such as the European Union, NATO and the United Nations are referred to. Poland's membership of such bodies tends to be presented as established and stable, and PMP specifically associates Europe with peace, citing 'smart European politics' as the reason why 'there are no more wars' (51).

Patriotic values and behaviours

Another way patriotic texts may construct a relationship between the reader and the imagined wider community is through generalizations about shared values, attitudes and behaviours. PMP and WKMP clearly define important aspects of correct patriotic conduct, many of which also appear in KTJ. Such behaviours, including working hard at school, looking after the environment, and non-violence, generally reflect the examples of 'liberal' or 'civic' patriotism referred to in Szeligowska's analysis, specifically the 'patriotism of minimal means' discussed by, among others, Cichocki (2014). However, the most significant idea in terms of behaviours and attitudes, referred to in several of the books, as well as being extensively discussed in the wider literature on patriotism both in Poland and elsewhere, is the idea of making sacrifices for the good of the nation. This can be a useful concept politically, as 'sacrifice' can mean a range of different things, from 'obeying laws, rules and traditions even though you reeeeeally don't want to' (PMP: 53) to the ultimate sacrifice, dying for the nation (Lisica, 2018: 22; Szeligowska, 2016: 113, 212; Głoskowska-Sołdatow, 2009: 611; Cichocki, 2014). Both PMP and WKMP clarify that most Polish citizens nowadays will not be expected to die for their country, although historical figures who sacrificed their lives 'to protect our country's borders' (WKMP: 6) are still presented as national heroes, implying that this should be considered a positive thing for a patriot to do (Zakrzewski's (2018) article on pre-1939 patriotic children's books shows that fighting and dying for the nation were presented much more overtly as heroic ideals at this time). Furthermore, both books allude to the possibility of new wars in the future, in which some patriots would be expected to sacrifice their lives. PMP frames this in the context of what adult patriots do, rather than suggesting that the child themselves should be prepared to die: 'if a war breaks out? Then [patriots] fight for Polish independence' (55). Here, obscuring human agency in the idea that war simply 'breaks out' frames it as 'an inevitable process' (Fairclough, 2003: 45), and WKMP treats potential future 'armed conflict' in a similar way (6), but allows the child space to consider how they might want family members to react: 'if an armed conflict did break out, would you like your parents to fight to defend [the country]?' (6)

Correct patriotic behaviour is also defined in opposition to bad, unpatriotic behaviour in several of the books. This may involve disrespecting national symbols (WKMP: 3; PMP: 52), or choosing alternative approaches to patriotism that the authors consider incorrect. Examples include 'confus[ing] patriotism with football fandom' (PMP: 55) and celebrating certain festivals in the 'wrong' way. WKMP tells children that 'the celebration of Independence Day should be a joyful occasion, without divisions and conflict,' (44), apparently a reference to recent Independence Day marches in Warsaw that have been attended by large numbers of far-right ultra-nationalists (Cockburn, 2018; TVP Wiadomości, 2017). PMP also refers to the use of the phrase 'Poland for the Poles', associated with racist and anti-immigrant attitudes (PMP: 14–15). Here, the author seems to be responding to real concerns that children may hear such phrases used, or be told that such attitudes are patriotic.

Inclusion and exclusion

A common criticism of history textbooks is that they often prioritize the perspectives of dominant groups in a particular society while others are minimized or excluded (Abdou, 2016: 226; Christou, 2007: 717), and this issue is also highly relevant to texts on patriotism and national identity. One example of this concerns hierarchies in terms of who has the automatic right to be identified as Polish. In one passage, the implied

reader of *Poradnik Małego Patrioty* asks: 'Can a foreigner be a patriot too?' (63). The author answers:

Of course. And even if someone lives here in our country, they probably love their own fatherland ... OK, OK – you ask. But can someone love Poland if he's a newcomer and ... foreign? But maybe he's not so foreign? Think about it. He goes to the same school as you, and you work together to get good grades. Your friend knows Polish language and culture, and they've become his language and culture. (PMP: 63)

There is a contradiction here: the 'foreign' child is deemed 'not so foreign' in the sense that his experiences are similar to those of the implied reader of the book, and he is granted the right to 'love Poland'. However, he is not included as a full member of the national community because he still has his 'own fatherland', so 'our country' is not his country. The aim seems to be to promote inclusivity as a value, but in order to make the point, the author has to emphasize that 'x is different from y' (Fairclough, 2003: 27). Furthermore, the author suggests that the friend is 'not so foreign' because he 'knows Polish language and culture', and gets 'good grades', implying that it might be acceptable to reject someone who seems more 'foreign' and does less well at school. This recalls the idea of the 'good immigrant' (see, for example, Kwak, 2018: 448), where newcomers, particularly those from certain groups, are required to meet higher standards than established citizens in order to be accepted.

PMP and other books also repeatedly use references to ancestry to define Polishness in passages such as 'you live here, your father, your father's father, ... therefore it's our fatherland' (48), and referring to ancestors in this way is common both in political debate and discussions about patriotic education, as in Drzeżdżon's assertion that the role of patriotic education is 'to help understand the historical continuity of Poland by showing the contribution of the child's ancestors and other people in preserving ... the fatherland' (Drzeżdżon, 2013: 76 [translated]). PMP also tells readers that it is not important for a patriot to have a Polish name, because what matters is 'respect for the fatherland and traditions' (99), but in fact the vast majority of notable historical figures and national heroes presented in all the books do have Polish names.

The illustrations and images used in many of the books also provide interesting insights in the context of inclusion. Overwhelmingly, the people pictured are coded as white. On the one hand, this is unsurprising, as a large majority of people currently living in Poland are white (Morath, 2017), but at least in larger cities there are significant numbers of people who are not, so presenting a picture of an all-white society is no more accurate than it would be in, for example, many parts of the UK. In the case of PMP, it is clear that choices about representation have been made deliberately, as there are a few cases where children of colour are pictured, but only where the text discusses how 'we' should treat 'outsiders', which shows a diverse group of children playing basketball (15), and a black child who appears to be waiting for a decision from three white adults as to whether he will be granted a Polish passport (96). PTL is the only book to show a child of colour alongside white peers without a specific textual reason for this (158). Other black children appear in this book, in a section about doing voluntary work, where they are pictured as inadequately dressed or housed, surrounded by rubbish, or otherwise in need of help (182, 188, 197 and 198), which is notable in the context of ideas from post-colonial theory such as the 'white gaze' (Hall, 1992: 258) and the idea of the 'white saviour complex', where 'the Global South is ... portrayed as a place waiting for salvation from the Global North' (Bandyopadhyay, 2019: 332).

Another interesting aspect of representation to consider in terms of what is expected of a patriot relates to gender (Osler and Starkey, 2001: 293). Repoussi and Tutiaux-Guillon (2010: 161) found that most of the history textbooks they analysed were written by men, which is not the case for the books in this article, where there are six female and four male authors/illustrators. However, they also note that female authors do not necessarily produce greater gender balance in discussions of history (ibid.: 162). WKMP (written by a woman) acknowledges and challenges this phenomenon, writing that 'history is full of men's names, but that doesn't mean that there aren't any female heroes' (10). However, across all the books men are, unsurprisingly, referred to far more often than women in the pages about national heroes, and there are few attempts to challenge normative ideas about gender roles and family structure. Soldiers, police, and firefighters are pictured as men in PMP (46, 56 and 94), while women walk past with children and shopping bags (46). The books also reproduce normative ideas about 'traditional' family structures, tending to assume that children will have a mother and a father, grandmothers and grandfathers. This is unsurprising, but worth noting in the context of 2019 PiS election campaigning, which specifically cited LGBT+ rights as an EU-based threat to national values (Plucinska and Ptak, 2019, see also, for example, Coman, 2019; Easton, 2019).

Religion is another key theme to consider in terms of who is included in constructions of national identity. Catholicism has been associated with Polish patriotic identities since the Partition period (see, for example, Davies, 2001: 237; Wydra, 2012: 27; and Porter-Szűcs, 2014: 15–18, who argues that the connection has been mythologized to an extent), and this link was reinforced during the communist period, when the Catholic Church was regarded as 'a strong opponent to the communists in the sense of enjoying a strong legitimacy in the eyes of the people' (Szeligowska, 2016: 48). Poland is officially a secular state, but, according to European Commission data, around 87 per cent of Poland's population identifies as Catholic (Eurydice, 2019). None of these books directly links Polish patriotism with Catholicism, although several assume a default Catholic identity in references to celebrations that should be important to a patriot, such as Christmas, Easter and Corpus Christi (PMP: 117). WKMP seems to make a conscious effort to avoid this association, referring to Muslim and Buddhist festivals (28), and noting that many people celebrate Christmas 'regardless of whether they are religious or not' (28). This book, like all the others except *Kto Ty Jesteś*, features Pope John Paul II as an example of an important Polish historical figure ('The most famous Pole'), but even here the author highlights that 'he respected people of other religions and atheists' (67). However, the books are generally silent about religious groups other than Catholics, and, most notably, references to Jewish Poles and Jewish history in Poland are almost completely absent, as discussed below.

History and memory

Most of the books in this article include sections about history, and examining what authors choose to include and exclude and how they frame key points can reveal messages about what values and behaviours good patriots are expected to aspire to. WKMP tells readers that 'a nation is united ... by a common history' (12), reflecting an assumption that a country has 'a history' and that a child can 'know' it, and ignoring the fact that such national narratives tend to present highly selective and even mythologized versions of history (VanSledright, 2008: 117). Again, because they are not constrained by official curricula, the authors of these books can challenge dominant narratives to an extent if they regard them as, for example, too male-dominated (WKMP: 10, as discussed above), or by emphasizing 'heroes' associated with culture, science or sport

rather than war (PMP: 80–3). However, again this is limited by the fact that authors need to present a version of patriotic history that is recognizable enough to make sense to the book-buying public, and overall the books repeat patterns where majority Polish perspectives on history are prioritized.

The fact that Poland was previously much more ethnically and linguistically diverse is not generally mentioned, and, as is typical in many European contexts (Repoussi and Tutiaux-Guillon, 2010: 161–2), Jewish history is almost completely ignored. Only one book, *Polska, To Lubię*, refers to everyday Jewish life in Poland outside the context of the Second World War, in a section about the Kazimierz neighbourhood in Kraków: ‘From the 15th century, Jewish immigrants to Poland settled here. Today it has one of the biggest collections of Jewish monuments in Europe’ (123). The author does not explain why there are now so many Jewish monuments but so few Jewish residents. Even in the context of the Second World War, Jewish perspectives tend to be marginalized in favour of ethnic Polish narratives. CWMO frames the war as simply a German invasion of Poland (54), mentioning no other aspects apart from the Warsaw Uprising and the German surrender in 1945. The book mentions that ‘Poland suffered the greatest losses [*straty*] out of all the countries in Europe’ (54), but without clarifying that around half of those who died were Jewish Poles (Crampton, 2005: 197). The only book that does refer to this is PTL (49), which is also one of only two books to mention the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in 1944 (108; the other is EMP: 27, where it is included as an ‘important date’ but with no additional details). This is discussed, along with Holocaust Memorial Day, on a page featuring an image of the Israeli flag, distancing these events from Polish history. Later, the book discusses the Auschwitz Museum (126–7) in its section on UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Poland, but without referring to Polish people, Jewish or otherwise, dying here. The only connection made between Auschwitz and Poland is that this ‘most terrible object on the list of World Heritage Sites can be found on Polish land’ (126).

There are also elements of conflict in several of the books in how they discuss the communist period between 1947 and 1989. Authors typically refer to ‘the PRL’ (*Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa* – Polish People’s Republic) rather than ‘Poland’, implying that communist Poland should be considered a different country, despite having the same borders and despite continuity in terms of population – the implied child readers of these books can be expected to have family members who remember life in communist Poland. PMP describes the PRL as ‘strange’ and ‘mysterious’, while CWMO calls it ‘sad, grey [and] poor’ (56), asserting that ‘Poles did not feel happy’, and thus, by implication, excluding anyone who did feel happy during this period from the category ‘Poles’. PMP uses the pronoun ‘they’ to distance those living in the PRL from today’s population (44), even though ‘we’ is sometimes used to link author and reader to earlier events, such as gaining independence in 1918 (42). WKMP portrays the PRL as the polar opposite of contemporary Poland: ‘Thinking for yourself, initiative, self-reliance, private property, were not welcome in the PRL. In other words, everything that is valued in today’s democratic world’ (46). Including ‘private property’ and ‘self-reliance’ as modern values in ‘today’s democratic world’ is particularly interesting here, effectively dismissing publicly owned services and state support as unpatriotic. A reviewer on a literary blog (Kurojazdy, 2018 [translated]) comments on what she regards as a one-sided portrayal here: ‘I would like [the author] to have written ... not only about ration cards, but also about the abolition of illiteracy and dramatic rural poverty’, and in PMP there is more of an indication that this period was nuanced rather than simply a time when ‘Poles were not happy’. Although it calls communist Poland ‘an absurd society’ (47), the book also reminds children of links between Poland

today and the PRL by encouraging them to ask older people they know about their experiences during this time (47), as does CWMO (46). All of this can be considered in relation to another key question in Polish public debate, that of 'the continuity of the (spiritual) fatherland, and whether the People's Republic of Poland and its legacy should constitute a part of it' (Szeligowska, 2016: 67; see also, for example, Bernhard and Kubik, 2014; Ochman, 2010, 2013).

Conclusions

Generally, in presenting themselves as modern, inclusive and pro-European, most of these authors seem to align themselves with 'liberal' interpretations of patriotism as described above, including versions of the civic-behaviour-orientated 'patriotism of minimal means' (Cichocki, 2014 [translated]), and concepts of national identity where citizenship is not dependent on ancestry. However, closer examination reveals that the authors frequently reproduce assumptions about nation based on ethnic ancestry. References to Poland's diverse past are minimal, and events and issues both in the present and from history are generally considered from ethnically Polish perspectives.

Notable contradictions include assumptions that borders are natural, fixed and eternal on the one hand, and vulnerable and in need of protection from 'enemies' on the other. Poland is characterized as a stable, peaceful country, but the idea of potential future threats to stability is also present. Such threats may be linked to the idea that patriots are expected to make sacrifices for the nation, hinting at the possibility of a more 'authoritarian' type of patriotism.

Furthermore, the exact nature of what citizens are expected to feel patriotic about is never conclusively resolved, as the 'fatherland' may be defined by current borders as a physical space on a map, mapped out by mentioning specific place names, but it may also be an imagined 'idea' of the nation. Communist Poland is not understood as the 'fatherland' in the way that the same physical space may be now, and border changes mean that even if 'your father's father' lived 'here' (PMP: 48), 'here' may refer to somewhere beyond current national borders. The authors do not tend to clarify which version of Poland they are talking about at any given moment, so it is assumed that the reader will understand what is being referred to in each case.

The fact that such tensions can be observed even in texts aiming to present modern and inclusive versions of patriotism demonstrates the complexity of the arguments, and the extent to which such issues are likely to remain a subject of debate and contestation both in Poland and elsewhere. Szeligowska concludes that 'in Poland the concept of patriotism ... contributes to polarizing the people, rather than creating community' (Szeligowska, 2016: 229; see also Brier, 2009: 63). Most of these children's books show at least some evidence of a will to challenge such divisions, but in terms of the assumptions they reflect, they all, to varying extents, reproduce established assumptions and hierarchies regarding who has the most right to be considered a citizen and a patriot.

Future research

Aside from the fact that each of the themes briefly discussed here could potentially be developed to form the basis of an individual study, there are several possible ways this research could be further developed. Most obviously, it would be interesting to investigate reception of these books in more detail in terms of who uses them, why and how, considering the perspectives of children, parents and educators. It would

also be interesting to conduct a more detailed comparison with earlier patriotic books for children such as those discussed by Zakrzewski (2018), as well as books published during the communist period and/or new titles published in the future, to analyse continuity and change in the narratives presented over time and compare these with wider political and discursive contexts. One framework that could be interesting to explore in this context is Wydra's concept of 'generational memory' (Wydra, 2012), based on his discussion of how ideas about collective memory and national identity, including attitudes to patriotism, may be influenced by generational factors, such as children spending time with grandparents (*ibid.*: 30) and how adults are influenced by patriotic ideas learned as children and key historical events experienced during adolescence (*ibid.*).

Finally, it would be interesting to examine how the themes and assumptions found in these books compare with equivalent titles in other national contexts. Although it is less common for children's books to be overtly presented as 'patriotic' in the UK and elsewhere in Europe, it is still possible to identify books that communicate clear ideas about patriotism, citizenship and national identity. Applying, for example, frameworks such as those used by Watkins (2003: 185–95) in his study of classic children's novels to more recently published books that link particular attitudes and behaviours with national identity could provide new insights.

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