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THE (MIS) REPRESENTATION OF PALESTINIANS IN ISRAELI SCHOOLBOOKS**Abstract:**

The paper is a summary of my on-going research regarding the representation of "others" in Israeli schoolbooks. It presents a multimodal analysis of the (mis)representation of Palestinians in schoolbooks of History, Geography and Civic Studies. The analysis is based on social semiotic inquiry whose main principle is that no sign is neutral, every sign is "engaged" and represents the interest and ideology of sign makers. The paper examines texts and genres, images, maps, icons, graphs and photographs and the relationships between them in order to understand the ideology underlying these representations.

Schoolbooks are still a very powerful tool for the creation of identity and world view and for the reproduction of national narratives. They are used by the state in order to create a "usable past" for the present and future and to legitimate the state's actions. In the case of Israel, they have to legitimate the occupation of Palestine and the state of exception in which Palestinians have been living for over a generation. All schoolbooks in Israel are all meant to reproduce and strengthen the Zionist territorial identity of Jewish students. This identity is that of a modern Western Jew who is the direct descendent of Biblical Hebrews.

The discourse of identity is also the discourse of exclusion. In Israel both Jewish and non-Jewish groups are excluded from this discourse, both verbally and visually. These groups include the Palestinian citizens and non-citizens, "oriental" Jews, Ethiopian Jews, ultra-orthodox Jews and non-Zionist personalities, to name but few.

How are Palestinians represented? What is said or shown about them?

The first question relates to the types of discourse and other semiotic devices used to represent "others" while the second question relates to the verbal and visual content of this representation, namely what ideas and values do we associate with these people and with what means?

Palestinians are seldom represented at all though they constitute 20% of the population of citizens and more than half the population dominated by Israeli government. When depicted it is always in the margins of school texts, as problems and threat, as homogeneous unchanging groups and stereotypes, characterized by permanent negative qualities that are "in their blood" and not as modern, industrious, independent individuals. This is what constitutes them as "others", who don't belong with 'us'. This racist representation promotes narrow nationalism and cultural-differential racism, which is later enacted in other domain of life such as army.

Keywords:

Palestinians, Social semiotics, multimodal analysis, racist discourse

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