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ABSTRACT

This paper reports the results of a content-analysis for the treatment of gender and diversity in the 11 top-selling lifespan developmental textbooks. The purposes were to measure the amount of information provided on aspects of development specific to Caucasian females and females of Color and to evaluate qualitatively the incorporation of the new research and theory on gender through experts' review of sections on gender role development. Results indicated that the amount of information provided on events in girls and women uniquely encounter throughout the lifespan, such as menstruation, pregnancy, rape, etc., was minimal in all 11 textbooks. Experts' qualitative ratings of the texts' section on gender role development for their race and gender bias were also disappointingly poor. Further, the texts contained almost no material on women (or men) of Color. Unlike most previous analyses of texts, this research focused on error of omission, since the absence of information is difficult to detect and yet may be potentially more damaging. The findings suggest that lifespan texts are deficient in their treatment of gender and diversity. A secondary finding was that the more efficient qualitative assessment yielded essentially the same results as the quantitative procedure. (Author)

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**Gender and Cultural Diversity
Bias in Developmental Textbooks**

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Presented as a Poster

at the

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Abstract

This paper reports the results of a content-analysis for the treatment of gender and diversity in the 11 top-selling lifespan developmental textbooks. Our purposes were to measure the amount of information provided on aspects of development specific to Caucasian females and females of Color and to evaluate qualitatively the incorporation of the new research and theory on gender through experts' review of sections on gender role development.

Results indicated that the amount of information provided on events girls and women uniquely encounter throughout the lifespan, such as menstruation, pregnancy, rape, etc., was minimal in all 11 textbooks. Experts' qualitative ratings of the texts' section on gender role development for their race and gender bias were also disappointingly poor. Further, the texts contained almost no material on women (or men) of Color.

Unlike most previous analyses of texts, this research focused on errors of omission, since the absence of information is more difficult to detect and yet may be potentially more damaging. The findings suggest that lifespan texts are deficient in their treatment of gender and diversity. A secondary finding was that the more efficient qualitative assessment yielded essentially the same results as the quantitative procedure.

Textbooks, viewed by many as an important purveyor of social values and attitudes, have been the target of feminist concerns since the inception of the current women's movement. Despite documentation that the concern was justified, that textbooks are both underrepresentative of and biased against girls and women (Stefflre, 1969), Title IX of the Education Amendments Act in 1972 excluded them due to the argument that mandating fair treatment would infringe on the right to free speech.

Spurred by the notion that revelations of unfairness would evoke its voluntary elimination, a number of activist researchers have continually documented the presence of unequal and stereotyped treatment of girls and women in texts since 1972. They have examined the treatment of girls and women in preschool (Weitzman, 1972; McDonald, 1989) and elementary readers and textbooks (Frasher & Walker, 1972; Graebner, 1972; Saario, Jacklin, & Tittle, 1973; Marten & Matlin, 1976; Rupley, Garcia, & Longnion, 1981; Britton, Lumpkin, & Britton, 1984; Purcell & Stewart, 1990), as well as high school (Walford, 1980; Hahn & Blankenship, 1983; Selke, 1983; Brodbelt, 1985; Ogren, 1985; Warren & Rogers, 1988) and college level textbooks (Birk, Barbanel, Brooks, Herman, Juhasz, Seltzer, & Tangri, 1974; Gray, 1977; Woolsey, 1977; Bonéparth, 1980; Feree & Hall, 1990; Harris & Lightner, 1980; Sadker & Sadker, 1980; Percival, 1984; Brown, Goodwin, Hall & Jackson-Lowman, 1985; Peterson & Kroner, 1992).

Initial research on college level psychology textbooks was completed in 1974 by the Task Force on Issues of Sexual Bias in

Graduate Education of the Education and Training Board of the American Psychological Association (Birk, et al., 1974). They found that women were under represented or stereotyped in photographs; overt sex bias in language was common; few female contributors and professionals were mentioned, and reporting of research using women as participants or examining women's life experiences was extremely limited. Later analyses of psychology texts (Gray, 1977; Woolsey, 1977; Harris & Lightner, 1989; Brown, Goodwin, Hall & Jackson-Lowman, 1985) revealed similar unequal and stereotyped treatment.

Some improvement in psychology texts has been identified since the initial study in 1974, primarily in the area of language where most authors have ceased using the generic "he" to represent all people (Peterson & Kroner, 1992) and in the equalization of pathology-related photographs and case studies of women and men in abnormal psychology texts (Harris & Lightner, 1980).

Peterson and Kroner (1992) recently assessed the top-selling introductory and lifespan developmental psychology textbooks. They focused on the treatment of gender in language and citations, compliance with APA recommendations to make textbooks more gender-equivalent, representation in illustrations, the number of female and male author/reviewers, and the inclusion of the contributions of women theorists and practitioners. They found that women were still significantly underrepresented in the areas of citations, illustrations, and as contributors in both introductory and developmental textbooks.

However, they also reported that only one text (introductory) used the generic "he". Men still outnumbered women as authors (38 to 8) of introductory texts, while the reverse was true for developmental texts where women authored 12 and men 7 texts.

Despite some improvements in gender treatment, there has been little research on the intersection of gender and race. One exception to this is a study by Brown et al. (1985) on psychology of women texts which revealed that the treatment of African-American women by Caucasian women authors was similar to the way women as a group had been treated historically by psychology authors in general. For example, just as research using only male participants has been frequently generalized to females, research on white, Anglo, middle class women was consistently generalized to all women regardless of race or class in the psychology of women texts.

To date, at least two major areas of concern to feminists have remained unanalyzed: (1) how much, if any, information unique to female (of all groups) development across the life span that the new scholarship on the psychology of women has produced do texts present and (2) the extent to which relevant feminist theory and interpretation has been integrated into the presentation of psychological research in textbooks. The present study extended Peterson and Kroner's (1992) work on developmental texts by assessing both of the above dimensions.

Method

The texts examined for this study included the same 11 top-selling lifespan human development texts in the U.S. reviewed by Peterson and Kroner (1992).

The instrument developed for this study was composed of two parts. Part I included 13 content-area scales (see Appendix) representing research gender differences and those aspects of development that are unique to females. Each scale and its items (67 in all) was selected based on a content analysis of psychology of women, child development, and lifespan human development texts (other than those used in this study). The extent of coverage was evaluated on a five-point Likert scale:

1 = not at all

2 = a paragraph or less (six sentences were equated as a paragraph)

3 = more than a paragraph, less than a section (where four paragraphs equal a section)

4 = a section

5 = a chapter

Interrater reliability using Part I was achieved at 84% prior to its use with the sample of texts.

Part II of the instrument contained a total of three items and called for experts to rate those portions of the texts on gender role development on the extent to which feminist data, theory and interpretation and current research on people of Color and culturally diverse backgrounds was incorporated.

Procedure

Part I

A comparison of two reviewing procedures was first carried out to ascertain the more effective method for evaluating text content. A single text (not used in the study) was evaluated, first using only the subject index to locate relevant information and, second, by scanning the entire text line-by-line. Thirty-four percent of the items on Part I received greater content ratings (i.e., a rating of a "2" versus a rating of a "1") using the line-by-line scanning technique than located from counting only material listed in the index. Therefore, a line-by-line scanning was used.

Each item was evaluated, first for the amount of material on women as a single group; second, for the amount of information identifying people of Color, generally; and, third, for material identifying women of Color and culturally diverse backgrounds, specifically. In addition to coverage, we examined whether or not the results of research on girls and women of a specific group were generalized to all females regardless of race or cultural background, and whether or not the results of research on people of Color were generalized to both males and females if the gender of the sample was not specified. If specific racial or ethnic groups were mentioned, they were listed.

Two editors of feminist journals (Sex Roles and Psychology of Women Quarterly) served as expert raters. They independently evaluated the section(s) from each text on gender role development.

Results

Amount of Coverage - General

Initial data analysis consisted of calculating mean coverage scores for each content area across all 11 texts. Figure 1 depicts these means that ranged from 1.2 (1 = no information; 2 = a paragraph or less) for those items pertaining to Violence Against Women to 3.1 (3 = more than a paragraph, but less than a section; 4 = a section) for items about Puberty.

Insert Figure 1 about here

As can be seen in figure 1, gender difference research and unique aspects of female development stages of Puberty and Later Adulthood for girls and women had the largest coverage that was still less than four paragraphs. Seven of the 13 content areas, including Infancy, Adolescence, Cognitive Abilities, Employment, Pregnancy, Childbirth, and Psychological Disorders, were dealt with by only a paragraph or less. For the remaining three areas, Factors Affecting Achievement, Sexuality, and Violence Against Women, the texts contained almost no information. For example, although the Violence Against Women content area contained six items, no information was located in any texts for four of the items.

An examination of the 67 individual items revealed that only one topic, the cognitive development of gender schema and identity for female and male children, was found to be represented by a section of information in each text. For six items no information

was found in any of the texts. These items included treatment of psychological disorder and rape.

An overall mean score of coverage of gender research for each text was computed in order to assess differences among the texts (Figure 2). The means ranged from 1.4 to 2.3. No text was found to present significantly more information about gender differences or the unique life events of females than the others. The initial intent of computing overall means was to rank order the texts coverage; but, due to the small range of means, it was felt that such a ranking would be misleading. No text could be said to have presented even an "adequate" quantity of research on important life events of females.

Insert Figure 2 about here

Gender of Author and Coverage

To assess for the possible effect of the authors' gender on coverage, the texts were separated by gender of the first author and independent t -tests were performed for each content area (Figure 3). No significant differences were found. Nor were any significant differences found when a second set of t -tests compared female and male authors on the six single-author texts on coverage.

Insert Figure 3 about here

Coverage was also calculated by collapsing the five-point Likert scale into two categories, percentage of time information was absent completely (a score of 1 on the Likert scale) versus the inclusion of at least some information (a paragraph or less to a section, numbers 2,3, and 4 on the Likert scale). Using this measure of coverage, the text that included the most information on female developmental issues was noted to have at least some material on 67% of the 67 items. The text that included the least amount of information contained material on only 19% of the 67 items.

Amount of Coverage - Women of Color

To evaluate the amount of information provided within each content area on women of Color, the amount of information on people of Color, gender unspecified, was tallied first, followed by a count of the amount of information dealing specifically with women of Color. Material on people of Color was presented only 25 times, relative to the content areas examined in this study, for all 11 texts (see Figure 4). The highest number of citations identified for an individual text was six. Two texts were found to omit information about people of Color completely. Of the 25 citations, 22 were a paragraph or less of information and three were more

Insert Figure 4 about here

than a paragraph, but less than two paragraphs. The content areas of Childhood and Infancy were found to have the most information

on people of Color with ten and five citings, respectively. Four racial/ethnic groups were identified in the 11 texts, Asian, Black (African-American), Hispanic, and Native American. Of those groups, Blacks were mentioned 22 times, Asians six, Hispanics five, and Native Americans three. Three texts were found to use such labels as "non-whites", "non-English speaking", and "minority". Only three texts provided any information specific to women of Color, found in the areas of Infancy, Childhood, and Employment.

Expert Ratings of Gender Role Development Sections

Using the five-point Likert scale, the experts' interrater reliability coefficients was low-to-moderate at 44%. The scale was collapsed to three points (1 = completely inadequate to inadequate; 2 = somewhat adequate to adequate; 3 = exceptional) and reliability increased to an acceptable 84% on the collapsed data.

Insert Figure 5 about here

The first question of the experts called for their judgement of the extent to which the textbook cited feminist research and theory about the development of gender roles. Of the 11 texts three were rated as completely inadequate to inadequate, five as somewhat adequate to adequate, while two were rated as exceptional.

The experts then rated the extent to which the texts provided a feminist interpretation of gender role development research whether feminist or not. Five of the texts were rated as completely

inadequate to inadequate, five as somewhat adequate to adequate, and only one rated as exceptional.

Finally, the experts rated the extent to which the texts cited research that included or focused on gender role development among various racial and/or ethnic groups. Nine were rated as completely inadequate or inadequate and only one was rated as somewhat adequate.

Discussion

Overall, the amount of information specific to the development of girls and women throughout the lifespan, assessed on Part I of the instrument, was found to be disappointingly low. Treatment of issues and events that may be especially important in the development of females, as well as gender difference research, was minimal. The lack of coverage of critical events, such as factors uniquely affecting women's achievement, sexuality and violence against them implies that they are not part of human development. Rape, for example, was never mentioned.

Perhaps the most important (and disturbing) finding of the present study was the virtual absence of information on people other than white, middle class, as well on women in these groups. Previous research (Brown, et al, 1985; Ferree & Hall, 1990) suggested that American society views the concepts of gender and race as distinct categories for classifying segments of the population. Yet, when females are acknowledged in research and textbooks, they predominantly, if not completely, are White females. Where race is represented, the discussions are either

about males or people of Color, not women. The life experiences of women of Color were seldom, if at all acknowledged, in the surveyed texts.

The expert ratings indicated a similar disregard for feminist and racial/ethnic material by text authors. Only two of the texts were rated as exceptional for citing feminist research and theory on the development of gender roles and only one was rated as exceptional in providing a feminist interpretation of gender role development research. No textbook was rated higher than "somewhat adequate" for their inclusion of material on racial/ethnic issues in gender role development.

The gender inequities repeatedly found in evaluations of textbooks may be characterized by the problems of underrepresentation women encounter in psychological research, including women as authors/researchers, as participants in research, and the reporting of differential research results based on participant gender. Etaugh & Spandikow (1979) compared two journals, one with a written policy requiring studies to report sex of participants and, if both males and females were included, to analyze and interpret sex differences, and the second with no policy. Not surprisingly, they found that researchers who published in the former journal specified the sex of the participants and analyzed for sex differences more often than those who published in the journal with no such policy. A second study on the treatment of gender differences in journals was further analyzed by Lykes and Stewart (1986) through a comparison of the

Journal of Personality and Social Psychology and the Psychology of Women Quarterly. They found that feminist research was cited less often in the former (APA) journal than the latter. Research published in APA journals was more than twice as likely to be cited in APA journals as articles published in feminist journals. This suggests the tendency of mainstream journal authors to disregard the findings of feminist research. A by-product of this relative invisibility of feminist research may be the omission of feminist research findings and interpretation from college texts.

Implications

The quantitative evaluation for the present study attempted to move beyond the work of previous research, that addressed language and counted citations and illustrations (Birk et al., 1974; Gray, 1977; Harris & Lightner, 1980; Peterson & Kroner, 1992), and toward an examination of inclusion of the new scholarship. Simply removing biased language and illustrations and including greater numbers of women researchers in citations will not alleviate misconceptions of gender differences or tell the whole story. Unique developmental events for both sexes must be covered. Feminist theories also must be incorporated as valid interpretations of psychological data. Future assessment of progress toward fair textbooks must include both aspects.

One goal of this study was to develop a brief, but reliable qualitative evaluation. The expert ratings using this evaluation were commensurate with the findings of the quantitative evaluation, suggesting that a qualitative analysis developed here can be used

reliably. Given the time consuming nature of qualitative analyses, especially line-by-line, this has practical significance for consumers of texts who wish to select the fairest one available.

Monitoring Implications

The results of this research supported the need for the continued monitoring of text content using both quantitative and qualitative methods for evaluation. While a few studies documented relatively equal numbers of females and males depicted in illustrations, and the almost complete elimination of the generic use of "he" to represent all people (Harris & Lightner, 1989; Woolsey, 1977; Gray, 1977) most analyses have been relatively superficial and the results have a false impression of fairness. It is important to assess how topics are treated and the incorporation of the New Scholarship.

To be fair Lange (1991) suggested that difficulties found with the amount and quality of information presented in texts may reflect not only the preferences or theoretical beliefs of the authors, but may be determined by the demands of the publication process and/or the political/scientific orientation of the faculty who adopt the textbooks. Although these issues do affect the type and quality of information included in texts, the present obstacles must not be used to sanction the lack of accountability on the part of researchers/authors, reviewers, publishers and text adopters to develop and find acceptable only those texts that accurately represent the life experiences of all people. The responsibility

for change lies at all levels of the production and adoption process.

Since textbooks are a means for transferring and interpreting knowledge, educators and students need to be aware of the unwritten assumptions, such as attitudes and beliefs and about race, gender, social structure, life situations, and career possibilities, that may be transmitted through what is omitted as well as included in textbooks. Texts not only affect readers directly, but also have an indirect effect through meta-messages individuals receive about what is appropriate for their gender, race and culture through interactions with others who have been influenced by their own educational background. Fair and affirmative treatment of gender and cultural diversity in texts and classes would enable both males and females of all cultural backgrounds to pursue their personal and professional goals and be treated individually.

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Appendix

Content Areas - Part I

1. Infancy
2. Childhood (age two to 12 or 13)
3. Adolescence
4. Puberty
5. Factors Affecting Achievement
6. Sex Differences in Cognitive Abilities
7. Employment
8. Sexuality
9. Pregnancy
10. Childbirth
11. Psychological Disorder
12. Violence Against Women
13. Later Adulthood

Figure 1. Mean amount of information per content area

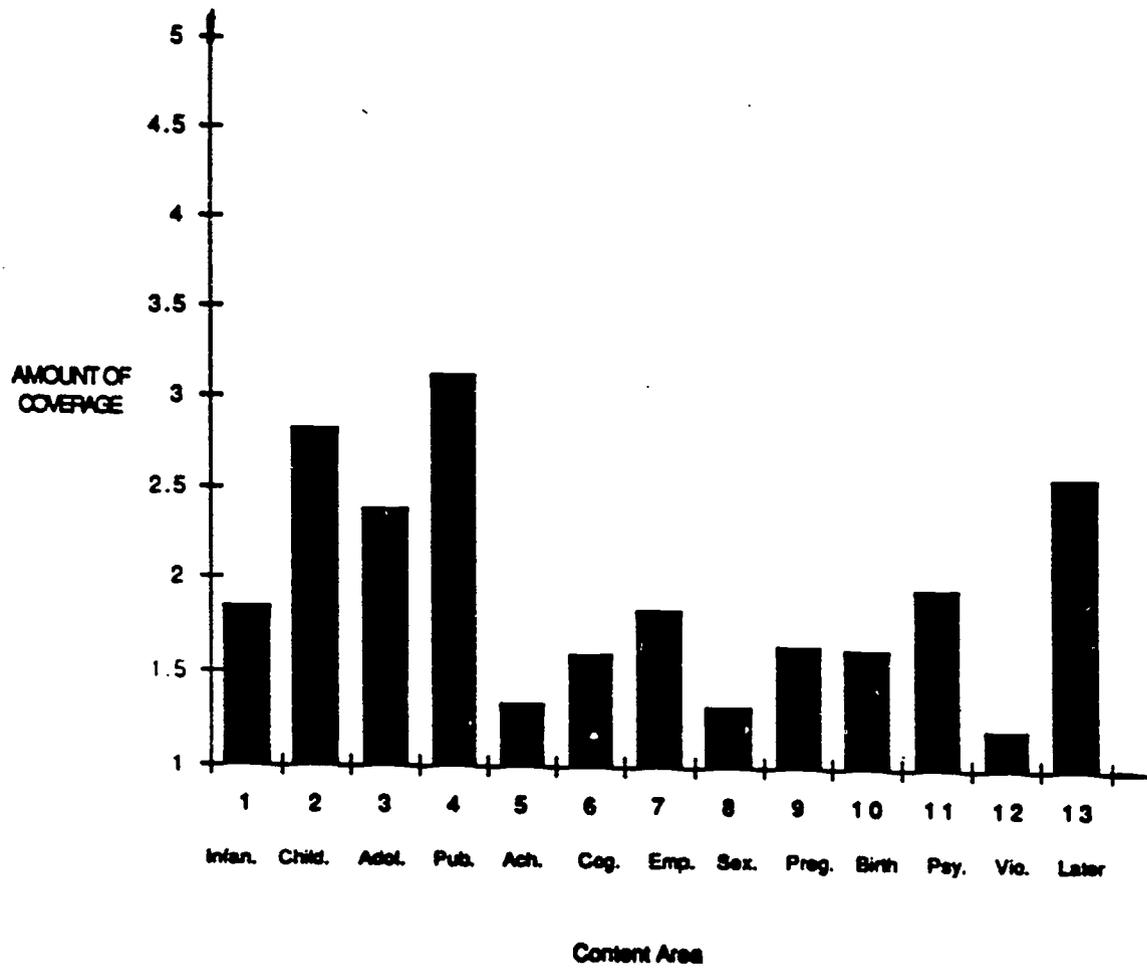


Figure 2. Overall Mean score of coverage for each text.

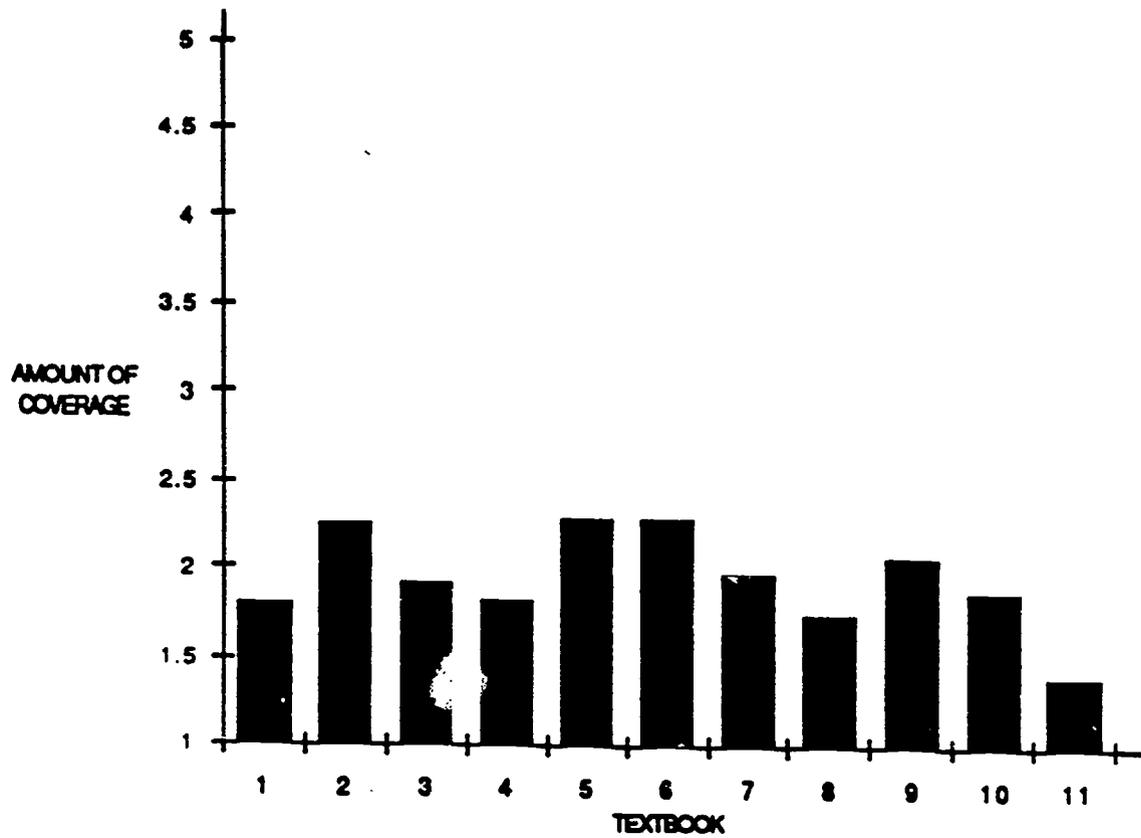


Figure 3. Mean amount of information per content area when comparing female versus male single author texts.

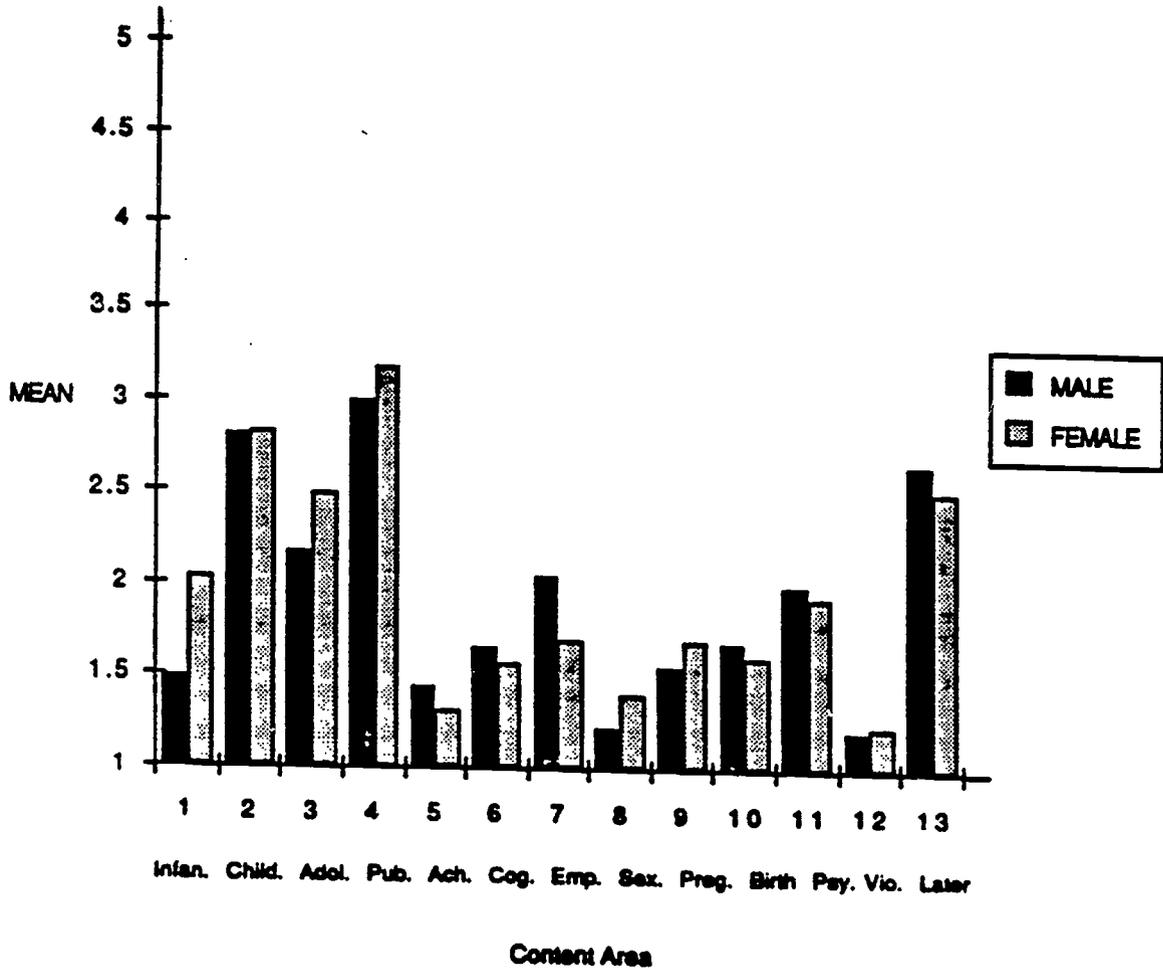


Figure 4. Number of times people of Color in general and women of Color specifically were identified, relative to the content areas, per text.

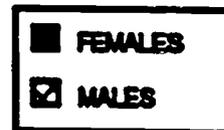
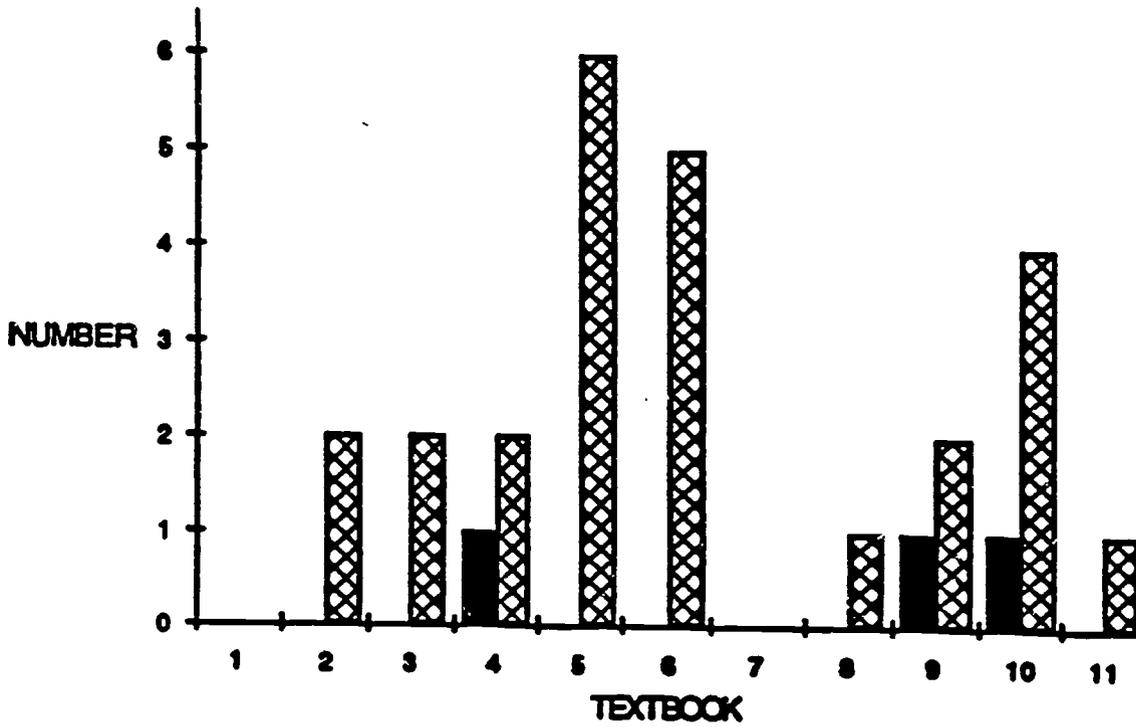


Figure 5. Expert ratings of the extent to which feminist data, theory and interpretation and current research on people of Color has been incorporated into the texts' sections on gender role development.

