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The Representation of Social Groups in U. S. Educational Materials and Why it Matters

A Research Overview

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Acknowledgments

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About the Author(s)

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Introduction

Teaching and learning require intentional selection of media materials—a given in most schools and classrooms within the United States. The materials students read, watch, and listen to helps them learn new words and concepts and gain knowledge in science, history, and a myriad of other subjects. But what stories compel students to further engage with the content? Are students exposed to authentic representations of people that look like them and people from different cultural groups? And how do those representations affect how students learn, advance through school and choose careers, and understand themselves and others?

New America is exploring these questions to examine the impact of educational materials. This report provides an overview of what the research says about why the consideration of materials—and a close look at characters in educational media—is essential. It summarizes what studies say about how these issues affect student learning and their understanding of themselves and different people. The report synthesizes the results of more than 160 studies to convey the connection between culturally responsive materials and learning, frequency of racial, ethnic, and gender groups represented in educational, materials and the portrayal of those groups within those materials[1] and the portrayal of those groups within those materials. These studies include quantitative, qualitative, and meta analyses of educational materials—fiction and nonfiction—published in peer-reviewed journals, professional publications, institutional reports, dissertations, and books dating from the mid-1900s to the present.[2]

This report is an offshoot of an academic study that examines race, ethnicity, and gender in media for young children and examines the representation of these groups.[3] It includes research on materials for adolescents. There are different social identity factors and groups not included here that also need exploration and that scholars are already analyzing. However, presenting research on teaching and learning practices will help support work on different social identity groups and help educators and policymakers gain a more comprehensive understanding of what is presented in educational materials.

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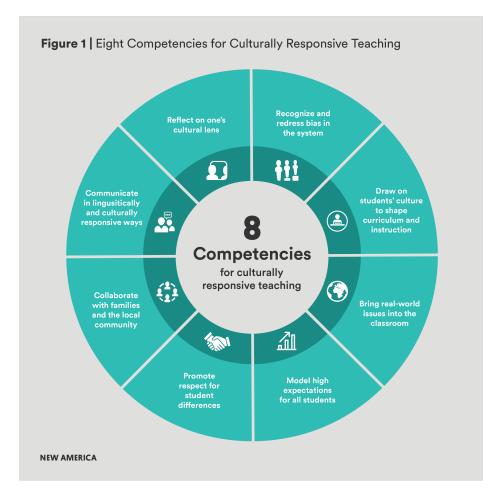## What Is the Role of Materials in Culturally Responsive Education?

Historically, educational spaces in the United States have privileged certain norms and ways of teaching and learning that emerged from predominantly Western European or White cultures. As a result, many educational practices that acknowledge and support communities with non-White or non-Western backgrounds have been omitted and/or erased. That has progressively changed, as teachers have integrated more inclusive practices and materials, and researchers have published more studies about these practices and materials. But while there has been progress, over the past year multicultural approaches to education, such as culturally responsive education, have been affected by misinformed references to critical race theory.[4] New policies either passed, introduced, or emerging are restricting inclusive teaching practices or causing some educators to avoid materials that make references to race or ethnicity in classrooms.[5]

Culturally responsive education, when done well, is designed to make all students feel they are a part of the educational community. As Geneva Gay of the University of Washington explains in her 2018 book, culturally responsive teaching is an asset-based approach that uses "the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them."[6] Culturally responsive education also builds students' accurate knowledge of diverse people and their awareness of different perspectives, and uses their existing knowledge and experiences as bridges to new content. While some critics suggest culturally responsive education practices only support students who are a part of groups that are systematically marginalized, such as those based on race and ethnicity, this approach can support all students to become engaged learners in content, including White, European American students.[7] With this approach to teaching and learning, educators make meaningful connections between the curriculum and home experiences, validate and incorporate students' culture in the learning environment, and build on students' preexisting knowledge and skills.

Rudine Sims Bishop, a professor emeritus at Ohio State University widely recognized for highlighting the value of diverse representation in children's literature, established the concept of mirrors, windows, and sliding doors in a 1990 essay to describe the types of experiences literature offers young readers.[8] She referred to materials that make connections with students' daily experiences as "mirrors" and materials that expose students to other contexts and cultures— and help them acknowledge and appreciate diverse cultures—as "windows."[9] Educators, librarians, and scholars within multicultural education, like culturally responsive education and culturally sustaining pedagogy, have documented the

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importance of integrating materials that reflect students' lives as well as expose them to new environments and experiences to support student learning.[10] Scholars of educational and instructional materials have used these concepts to investigate the frequency with which social groups are presented and the portrayal of varying social groups.

New America's 2020 guide to culturally responsive education identifies eight competencies that educators should acquire to become adept at this type of teaching. The third competency—"Draw on Students' Culture to Shape Curriculum and Instruction"—includes the evaluation of educational and instructional materials. It pushes educators to scan these materials for stereotypes and to seek out resources reflecting students' cultures as well as those that depict his(her)(their)stories,[11] traditions, and experiences of different cultural groups.[12] New America's report on LGBTQ-inclusive teaching presents recommendations for practice that include critically examining the messages classroom materials send to students.[13]

Figure 1 | Eight Competencies for Culturally Responsive Teaching

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Culturally Responsive Education Materials Support Learning

Rather than seeing cultural responsiveness and academic goals as separate agendas, educators can combine them to support student learning.[14] Incorporating culturally responsive materials enhances students' engagement with classroom content, makes them more active learners, and can improve academic achievement over the school year, particularly when teachers initiate a lesson with materials that are mirrors and then progress to materials that are windows.[15] A 2012 study by Beverly Faircloth, at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, explored the connection between learning identity in two qualitative studies with a racial and ethnically diverse group of ninth-graders in English classes designed for remedial, restart, and struggling students.One result showed that when the educator broadened the literature to include characters that mirrored the students demographically, culturally, and experientially, students were more positively engaged learners, asking questions about the content and completing their assignments. There was a positive connection between students relating to the characters and characters' experiences and engagement in their learning.[16]

Students are also encouraged to learn when teachers show they prioritize relating to students through the selection of materials. For instance, while at Otterbein College, E. B. Smith conducted research in 1995 showing that when lessons and activities became meaningful for students, they were more thorough and attentive in their work and participatory in classroom discussions.[17] And studies on children's picture books show that integration of culturally responsive educational materials can also support written and oral language development and reading comprehension.[18]

In the 2015 book *More Mirrors in the Classroom,* the authors use research and practice to demonstrate how culturally responsive education texts that are mirrors allow students to use their existing cultural knowledge to understand texts, which includes language, social contexts, and individuals' responses in certain situations.[19] This in turn reduces students' cognitive load in terms of working memory as they are learning information.[20] As a result, students can use more cognitive processes to focus on meaning-making, which improves reading comprehension.

Characters Influence Content Learning and Understanding of Social Identities

From Doc McStuffins and Dora the Explorer to Pippi Longstocking, characters can impact students' learning more than educators may realize. Characters can be important for engaging students in materials and content, particularly if they are familiar or students relate to them. Some research from Sandra Calvert, Bonnie Strong, Eliza Jacobs, and Emily Conger of Georgetown University

suggests that identification with characters may positively influence children's learning more than for those who do not identify with the characters.[21] Studies with students of older grade levels show that they may identify with characters based on familiar circumstances and life experiences, similar personalities, a common heritage and set of cultural nuances, and/or the same cultural affiliation.[22] Similarities to characters based on social identity groups, such as race, ethnicity, and gender, and shared hobbies and interests can build connection to characters; this can enhance student content learning and curiosity about specific career fields.[23]

Characters and Content Learning

Research shows that when teachers contextualize lessons and activities based on students' experiences, interests, identities, and cultures, those who previously resisted academic content may respond more positively to that content. These students may also form personal connections to the content area, value these connections, and invest more time and attention in producing higher quality assignments.[24] Teachers can use materials where students identify with characters and circumstances as bridges to traditional and canonical materials and texts included in the curriculum.[25] Culturally responsive education materials also expose students to new ideas and different perspectives, help develop their confidence as learners, and enable them to discover relevance to characters and experiences that may not be reflective of their daily circumstances.[26] In 2018, results from a student survey published in the *Texas Journal of Literacy Education* indicated that while high school students value having their culture and experiences reflected in the characters and stories of materials, they also want to learn about people who have different circumstances, perspectives, and cultures.[27]

Characters and Social Groups/Self

In addition to helping students learn the content required by subject-area standards, educational materials—and in fact, media of all kinds, whether labeled educational or not—indirectly teach students about language, attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, and cross-cultural knowledge.[28] These materials also inform students about what society expects of them and others based on social identity markers, and how society values them based on these markers.[29] Scholars have defined this aspect of media as "societal curriculum," which includes learning about various cultural groups that range from positive to negative.[30] Media characters can influence children's development of their own racial-ethnic and gender group identity as well as their understanding of different races, ethnicities, and genders.[31]

Through the content and portrayal of characters, the media influences children's understanding of themselves and others, career expectations, and behaviors.[32] For instance, consider a 2006 study in the *Journal of Career Development*. It asked

high school students about their favorite media characters on television, finding that they often selected characters that reflect a similar social group affiliation (i.e., race, gender, etc.) as themselves—and that these characters can influence their own career aspirations.[33] One study with middle school students showed that students of varying gender, racial, and ethnic groups benefited from being exposed to diverse people engaged in STEM careers, which in some cases countered the stereotypes that certain people were neither interested in STEM disciplines nor contributed to the field.[34] All students should have opportunities to experience characters that reflect their social identity engaged in a variety of activities and professional pursuits.

However, while research shows the benefits of culturally responsive education materials as tools for engaging students and exposing them to different perspectives and experiences, some studies indicate there is an imbalance in portrayal. Studies of literature curricula, including research on a large national sample from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 1998–1999 (ECLS-K), found that more books depict White, male American characters and traditions, meaning White students and male students see more mirrors than windows. Individuals not of that racial and gender group have more windows than mirrors.[35]

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How Often Are Different Groups Presented in Educational Materials?

Given the research on educational materials, characters, and students' learning, are all students provided with enough windows to expose them to people and experiences that do not reflect their daily experiences? To explore this question, this report examines studies of character presentation in educational materials in two ways. First, what is the representation of groups? How many characters represent different racial, ethnic, and gender groups? Second, how are characters from different racial, ethnic, and gender groups portrayed?

While this report explores some social identity groups, there may be similar implications to be drawn for identity groups not listed. The studies included here will not be reflective of all materials used in each state, district, program, and classroom, nor capture every sub-group and cultural nuance. But the patterns and trends presented here in representation and portrayal in educational materials have implications for educators, policymakers, developers, and other stakeholders.

→ HOW RESEARCHERS IDENTIFY RACIAL, ETHNIC, AND GENDER GROUPS WHEN REVIEWING EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS AND OTHER MEDIA

While the articles, books, and studies cited in this report vary widely in scope and methodology, the authors use similar approaches to collecting data on the racial, ethnic, or gender identities of the characters they are analyzing.

How Researchers Determine Race and Ethnicity
When analyzing children's media and educational materials, scholars may use the term "race," "ethnicity," or both, and base the categories on those of the U.S. Census Bureau, with modifications in some cases.[36] These studies tend to use the similar categories regardless of the term [37]. Physical traits and cultural attributes are coded and used to identify characters' racial and ethnic groups, such as skin tone.[38] Based on these features, characters are commonly associated with one identity group and in a few cases more than one (e.g., African American, biracial, etc.).[39]

How Researchers Determine Gender
Many studies that analyze character gender representation tend to do so in binary terms, with some characters being categorized as non-gendered or gender-neutral.[40] To identify characters' gender, scholars typically use

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physical traits traditionally associated with a particular group as well as other traits like name, voice, and clothing.[41]

How Researchers Determine Intersectionality[42]

Few quantitative studies of instructional and educational media have examined the intersections of race, ethnicity, and gender in characters. Quantitative studies that have investigated children's media, generally, have used grammatical designation (he or she), character name, character voice, and gender-specific traits to identify gender and skin tone, hair color, and eye color to define race.[43]

Racial and Ethnic Groups Represented

Scholars have noted an underrepresentation of characters from diverse cultural groups in print books of all kinds, whether children's picture books or textbooks. [44] Several content analyses have indicated that, in children's literature, White characters are presented in books significantly more (about 90 percent of books in Sandra Hughes-Hassell & Ernie J. Cox's 2010 study on board books) than characters of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) communities (i.e., African American, Asian American, Hispanic, Alaskan Native, American Indian, Native Hawaiian).[45] Bilingual or Spanish language books have a similar trend, with concept books featuring a majority of White characters. Storybooks had a mixture of White and Hispanic characters.[46] Scholars estimate that characters representing more than one race may be presented in about 1 percent of books.[47]

In a 2019 study, the Cooperative Children's Book Center examined the frequency of children's books by and about BIPOCs published in the United States. They found that of the 3,717 books they received from U.S. publishers, 451 (12 percent) were about Black people or those of African descent; 328 (8.8 percent) were about Asians; 5 (0.13 percent) were about Pacific Islanders; 235 (6.3 percent) were about Latinx individuals; 43 (1.2 percent) were about Indigenous people; and 32 (0.86 percent) were about Arabs.[48] The remainder of those books were about White characters, brown-skinned characters with no identifiable cultural affiliation, or anthropomorphized characters, or they featured pictures of objects.

A study of middle-school health textbooks found 51 percent of images featuring BIPOCs (multiple racial groups) and 49 percent of images showing White people. [49] A 2020 analysis of award-winning books showed this breakdown of the frequency of portrayals: 68.5 percent White, 8.7 percent Black, 8.7 percent Asian, 4.3 percent Latinx, 2.2 percent American Indian, 2.2 percent Island born, 2.2 percent Middle Eastern, 1.1 percent unknown, and 1.1 percent multiple.[50]

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Additional studies of children's books and young adult literature have indicated a similar pattern of disparities in racial and ethnic character representations in books.[51] Research on U.S. history textbooks indicate White, European Americans are featured in over half of pictorials and illustrations. In some cases, it is more than 80 percent.[52] Representation of people from BIPOC backgrounds are rarely featured, with some ethnic groups featured as low as 1 percent.

These racial and ethnic representations do not reflect demographics given in the 2020 U.S. Census, where 61.6 percent of the population is identified as White, 18.7 percent Hispanic or Latinx, 12.4 percent Black or African American, 6 percent Asian, 1.1 percent American Indian and Alaska Native, 0.2 percent Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders, 8.4 percent some other racial population, and 10.2 percent multiracial.

There are fewer studies that quantify representation of different racial and ethnic groups in educational and instructional materials that are not books. One study examined classroom and school posters for purchase on websites and found that 13 percent of these were likely to be racially inclusive.[53] While there are limited studies on a variety of instructional materials, many studies on non-educational television programming, films, and commercials designed for children, tweens, and teens have indicated disparities in racial and ethnic group representation similar to that seen in books.[54]
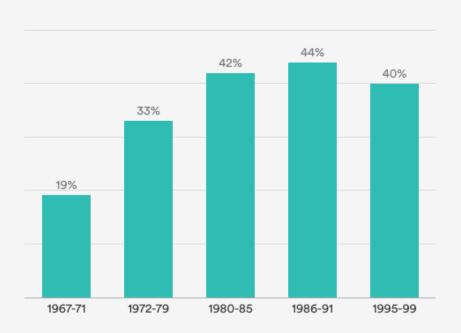
In sum, studies on books and other materials reveal that White characters are more prominent than BIPOC characters. The data suggest that it is likely that students who identify as White will see mirrors of themselves more often than students from BIPOC communities.

Gender Groups Represented

Before presenting an aggregate of findings, it is valuable to note that many studies of educational materials typically examine gender from a binary perspective (e.g., female and male), though there are a few studies that recognize gender diversity. Therefore, many of the studies included in this section may not provide findings for nonbinary gender groups.[55]

Since the late 20th century, scholars have indicated a gender disparity in character representation and limited representation of female characters.[56] Lenore T. Weitzman and colleagues' seminal study on 1967–1971 award-winning and runner-up children's books revealed there were 11 times as many illustrated human males featured than female characters. Of gendered animal characters, the ratio of male to female was 95:1.[57]

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Percentage of Female Characters in Children's Books over the Years

Source: Lenore J. Weitzman, Deborah Eifler, Elizabeth Hokada, and Catherine Ross, "Sex-Role Socialization in Picture Books for Preschool Children," American Journal of Sociology 77, no. 6, (May 1972): 1125–1150, https://doi.org/10.1086/225261, and J. Allen Williams, JoEtta A. Vernon, Martha C. Williams, and Karen Malecha, "Sex Role Socialization in Picture Books: An Update," Social Science Quarterly 68, no. 1 (March 1987): 148–156, https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/sociologyfacpub/8; and Stuart Oskamp, Karen Kaufman, and Lianna Atchison Wolterbeek, "Gender Role Portrayals in Preschool Picture Books," Journal of Social Behavior & Personality 11, no. 5 (January 1996): 27–39.

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Scholars have built on Weitzman's examination and typically studied a sample of books published in a five-year period. Findings indicate an increase in female, human representation: a 33 percent increase from books published between 1972 to 1979, a 42 percent increase from 1980 to 1985, and a 44 percent increase from 1986 to 1991.[58] A sample of books from 1995 to 1999 shows an equivalence of female (40 percent) and male characters (39 percent) as main characters. There was a slight variation in illustrated characters, 24 percent female to 31 percent male.[59] A 2006 study of popular children's books from 1995 to 2001 suggests males were twice as likely to be adult characters than females, with 23 percent more male child characters than female.[60]

Ten years ago, one study examined gender representation from 1938 to the end of the 20th century and found a fluctuation of gender representation of child central

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characters. At some points, males and females are close to equal; at others, males are featured about twice as much as females. There are few instances of females presented more than males.[61] Of the 120 main characters from these books, about 58 percent were male and 42 percent were female. In 2018, an analysis of more than 1,400 images in health textbooks, published in *Educational Studies*, showed men 46 percent of the time, compared to 54 percent for women.[62]

Studies show characters of gender-diverse communities are underrepresented and misrepresented, though little is known about the frequency of these characters within books published.[63] A 2020 study of award-winning books revealed 97 percent of them included male and female characters and no instances of nonbinary representation.[64] Scholars who have investigated LGBTQ-themed books found that 14 percent of primary characters in those books were transgender and 21 percent of secondary characters were transgender.[65]

Research into educational computer software identified a similar difference in gender representation. A study from the 1990s of gendered representation of characters in mathematical software for prekindergarten to high school grades showed 25 percent of the characters were female and 75 percent were male.[66] There was a gradual decrease in female characters between pre-K (about 40 percent representation) to fifth grade (about 26 percent), then another decrease between fifth to eighth grade (about 17 percent), and an additional decrease between eighth to 12th grade (about 13 percent). Later studies of software for early childhood grades indicated an increase in female representation. A 2001 study on early childhood literacy software found that 42 percent were female characters. Of main characters, 47 percent had no identifiable gender, 37 percent were male, and 16 percent were female.[67] An additional study examining main characters for three- to six-year-olds showed that 63 percent were male, 26 percent had no identifiable gender, and 11 percent were female.[68]

Scholars have also analyzed gender representation in other forms of educational and instructional materials. A 1999 study of major characters in educational television programming showed males had a higher percentage of representation (about 58 percent) than females (about 42 percent).[69] And a recent study analyzing posters for classroom walls showed, of those that presented people, 16 percent included depictions of people from a marginalized gender group. However, specific gender groups were not listed.[70]

Intersectional Groups Represented

Various studies have quantified characters representing intersectional identities based on race, ethnicity, and gender. A 1970s study of reading materials revealed 4 percent were male and from racial or ethnic minorities and 3 percent were

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female and from racial or ethnic minorities. A later study of children's literature by Melanie Koss of Northern Illinois University and Kathleen Paciga of Columbia College School examined the racial/ethnic and gender groups of 120 main characters and found that for White characters, 54 percent were male and 46 percent were female; for American Indian characters, 50 percent were male and 50 percent female; for Black characters, 80 percent were male and 20 percent female; and for Asian and Asian American characters, 75 percent were male and 25 percent female. At least one Latinx character was female. All Middle Eastern characters were male. The only Island-born character was female.[71] It is more likely, therefore, for intersectional characters to be racially and ethnically White than any other group.

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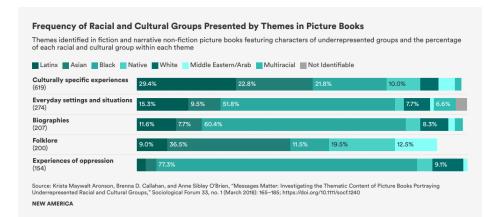## How Diverse are the Portrayals of Racial, Ethnic, and Gender Groups?

Studies presented in the previous section indicate the prevalence of characters who are White and/or male. Due to their prevalence, there are often diverse portrayals of these groups and those who are at the intersections of those groups (e.g., White males) showing them in different roles and their contributions to society in multiple fields.[72]

Since males are featured or represented the majority of the time in educational and instructional materials, they have more varieties of roles than all gender groups. To understand how non-male groups and those of marginalized racial and ethnic identities are portrayed, this section will include research on the representation of these groups, and the intersection of these racial, ethnic, and gender groups. There are multiple cultural and ethnic groups within each racial and ethnic group, and the examples presented are not exhaustive of all cultural groups [73].

Race and Ethnicity

Several scholars examine depictions of characters from multiple racial and ethnic groups within one study. Others analyze portrayals of one racial/ethnic group in depth. The research presented here includes both approaches.

Studies that Analyze Multiple Racial and Ethnic Groups

Frequency of Racial and Cultural Groups Presented by Themes in Picture Books

Themes identified in fiction and narrative non-fiction picture books featuring characters of underrepresented groups and the percentage of each racial and cultural group within each theme

■ Latinx ■ Asian ■ Black ■ Native ■ White ■ Middle Eastern/Arab ■ Multiracial ■ Not Identifiable

Culturally specific experiences (619)	29.4%	22.8%	21.8%	10.0%
Everyday settings and situations (274)	15.3%	9.5%	51.8%	7.7% 6.6%
Biographies (207)	11.6% 7.7% 60.4%			8.3%
Folklore (200)	9.0% 36.5%	11.5%	19.5%	12.5%
Experiences of oppression (154)	77.3%			9.1%

Source: Krista Maywalt Aronson, Brenna D. Callahan, and Anne Sibley O'Brien, "Messages Matter: Investigating the Thematic Content of Picture Books Portraying Underrepresented Racial and Cultural Groups," Sociological Forum 33, no. 1 (March 2018): 165–185; https://doi.org/10.1111/socf.1240

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Multiple studies that examine representation of characters from BIPOC communities in children's books report both authentic portrayals as well as stereotypical and limited portrayals.[74] In a 2018 study, Krista Aronson and

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colleagues analyzed 1,037 picture books that feature BIPOC characters and found common themes in these books:[75]

- *Culturally specific experiences* Of 619 characters, 29.4 percent Latinx, 22.8 percent Asian, 21.8 percent Black, 10 percent Native, 5.5 percent White, 4.8 percent Middle Eastern/Arab, and 1.9 percent multiracial

- *Everyday settings and situations* Of 274 characters, 51.8 percent Black, 15.3 percent Latinx, 9.5 percent Asian, 7.7 percent White, 6.6 percent multiracial, 2.6 percent Native, 1.1 Middle Eastern/Arab, and 3.3 percent not identifiable

- *Biographies* Of 207 characters, 60.4 percent Black, 11.6 percent Latinx, 8.3 percent White, 7.7 percent Asian, 4.4 percent Native, 2.4 percent multiracial, and 1.9 Middle Eastern/Arab

- *Folklore* Of 200 characters, 36.5 percent Asian, 19.5 Native, 12.5 percent Middle Eastern/Arab, 11.5 percent Black, and 9 percent Latinx

- *Experiences of oppression* Of 154 characters, 77.3 percent Black, 9.1 percent White, 4.55 percent Native, 3.2 percent Asian, 2.6 percent Latinx, and 1.3 percent Middle Eastern/Arab

The Aronson study also investigated interactions between characters of different racial and ethnic groups. When examining these cross-cultural interactions, they identified 187 characters. Of those characters, 32.6 percent were White, 31 percent Black, 16.6 percent Asian, 4.8 percent Middle Eastern/Arab, 4.8 percent Latinx, 3.2 percent Native, and 2.7 percent multiracial. Aronson and colleagues noted that in their sample of books White characters were featured more often than Native American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander, Middle Eastern, or biracial characters.

Scholars have also examined textbooks to learn how they portray different racial and ethnic groups. A study in 1975, for example, identified problematic images in reading materials: Native American males shown in the archaic role of Indian brave and medicine man, or Asian Americans styled as from several centuries ago.[76] In the 2018 *Educational Studies* study of health textbooks, Deckman and colleagues found it was common for the texts to take a "heroes and holidays" cultural approach, focusing on celebration and historical figures. At times, there were implications that some groups were not American (e.g., when chicken soft tacos are labelled "Mexican food" that "Americans" enjoy).[77] There was also an overrepresentation of Latinx people related to conflict topics, and though stereotypes and prejudice were mentioned, they were not directly addressed.

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Within books that center on multiracial and biracial characters, one study showed that they tend to focus on personal attributes of the characters (e.g., cultural celebrations, food, skin tones, expressions, etc.) and include topics such as family, pride in one's multiple heritages, self-expression, and grandparents.[78] In some cases, featured multiracial characters may be marginalized and their mixed heritage may be portrayed as a problem or the central plot of the story.[79]

Scholars who analyze educational media have noted that while there is some racial and ethnic diversity in digital games used in classrooms, progress is still needed. One study, for example, indicated that one common online platform hosts multiple educational games that include many White male and some White female protagonists and that stereotypes were still presented. For example, scientists tended to be White males.[80] At the same time, this study indicated some games featured racially and ethnically diverse characters performing a variety of roles.

Studies that Analyze Individual Racial and Ethnic Groups

To look at the complexity of portrayal of different communities, some scholars investigate, in depth, the representation of one ethnic or racial group. The racial and ethnic groups listed below are slight adaptations of the groups listed by the U.S. Census Bureau. Here is what scholars have found:

Native People

Scholars have noted the generally inaccurate representations of Native American, American Indians, and Alaskan Natives[81] in literature for children and youth. Learning spaces may still have books available with stereotypes and tropes of Native peoples or inaccurate information about their communities.[82] Often elements of individual tribal groups are mixed together, and Native peoples are inauthentically associated with Plains Indians (e.g., feathered headdresses, beaded shirts with fringe, etc.), depicted one-dimensionally, or shown as engaging in war-like behavior.[83] In some cases, characters from Native communities are depicted as being isolated. For example, these communities may be depicted as a place for spiritual enlightenment or places where outsiders should help solve the community's problems and/or assist in Native people's survival.[84] It is common for historical fiction and nonfiction to show distorted accounts or fully erase events of history—by excluding the federal relocation of Native Americans or inaccurately presenting the Indian Student Placement Services programs, for example—and to illustrate characters "playing" or dressing up as "Indians."[85]

Examinations of history textbooks conducted in the 1990s note the invisibility of Native peoples, both in terms of not mentioning them and in references to the continent or regions within as uninhabited or "empty."[86] Ryan Craig and Victoria

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Davis's study of Indigenous peoples in U.S. history textbooks revealed how depictions changed over time: older textbooks label Indigenous peoples as violent. Newer textbooks (those after the Civil Rights Movement) contextualize violence as a response to in-group tensions and outside forces. They also see depictions move from Native people portrayed as threatening and disorganized (which established that White settlers were needed for a more "organized" and "civilized" way of life) to being portrayed as racially inferior and in need of assimilation to be of benefit to society.[87]

In texts used to give information about Christopher Columbus and the Taino people, research showed most of them (98 percent) were composed from a European perspective. Fewer than half (38 percent) of books identify the Native people as Taino. In some cases where they were mentioned, elements of their culture were negated.[88] In portrayals of the Taino people, 54 percent oversimplified depictions (i.e., they lacked emotions or personality and served as background) and 23 percent used primitive depictions (i.e., they lacked Western or European standards of sophistication). A quarter, 23 percent, included respectful descriptions (i.e., they held a central or equal position to Spanish explorers). A small subset combined oversimplified and primitive and oversimplified and respectful depictions.

Along with examining how Native American, American Indian, and Alaskan Native people are represented in general learning materials, scholars have also examined how characters are portrayed in materials centering on these communities. An analysis of Nahua, Mexica, and Aztec children's books, for example, examined those written from the perspective of people from the community and those from a Western perspective, and noticed differences.[89] In those written from a Western perspective, researchers found errors and incorrect information about people and culture, references to human sacrifices even though there is no data that indicate this was a practice, stereotypes and racist depictions, communities shown as being extinct, and religious and spiritual ideas and other concepts based in European terms.

The *School Library Journal* listed books a few years that offer authentic and affirming depictions of Native peoples and given recommendations of these books in learning environments, because they have accurate cultural and historical information, fuller views of historical figures, contextualized people, and distinctions between individual tribal groups.[90] A dissertation on Nahua, Mexica, and Aztec children's books found that authors from Native communities used their Native language with translations and included oral stories.[91] Other scholars cited literature that uses fiction to capture historical information, such as a story about a friendship that references traditions of the Choctaw people and how they helped people of African descent escape slavery; they also highlighted the inclusion of present day stories that focus on relationships between family members.[92]

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Black and African Americans

Scholars have critiqued educational materials and curricula for presenting characters of African descent in secondary and subservient roles or with little agency.[93] An examination of children's picture books between the 1930s and 1990s shows that Black characters were portrayed in subservient positions (i.e., in menial jobs or enslaved), and in stereotypical activities (i.e., playing the banjo, eating watermelon, and sleeping while other characters are socializing).[94] Scholars have also noted inaccurate depictions of African American experiences, such as showing enslavement as a pleasant or benign experience.[95] Even contemporary picture books that feature African Americans may take place in historical times (e.g., during slavery, Reconstruction, the Civil Rights era) rather than in modern times. They may include stereotypical elements. These can be negative stereotypes for characters, like poverty, lack of intelligence, and dirty/filthy appearance or environments, or positive ones, like loyalty to family and family traditions.[96]

Since the late 1800s there has also been literature composed for African American children that presented more positive portrayals, such as perseverance, intelligence, and appreciation of experiences like dances, church activities, and picnics (though in some cases these books may have reinforced stereotypes).[97] In a study of award-winning books featuring African Americans, a dissertation of award-winning books featuring African Americans found the majority of the illustrations seem authentic, not stereotypical, and depicted African Americans as talented, industrious, gifted, valuing strong family connections, among other positive attributes. Most of the time characters in this literature were featured as individuals rather than as mere representations of their racial group.[98] A few years later another dissertation study made a similar point.[99]

Other studies showed culturally accurate portrayals of community and family life, folk tales, and Black culture. These are shown through things like an appreciation of hair texture and hair styling, jazz, woven sweet grass baskets, and Sunday dinners. Cultural distinctions within communities, such as connections to Caribbean culture, are made.[100] Characters may reveal less-known historical information. For example, a boy visits his grandfather's ranch, which gives information about African Americans settling in the western United States, or people host rent parties in the 1920s and 1930s to raise funds.[101] When issues of racism and oppression are introduced in these culturally authentic portrayals, there are details about the experience and how it manifests in daily life and explicit mentions of interracial and political issues.[102]

Educational materials and textbooks also portrayed negative and narrow portrayals as well as positive and affirming ones. When examining materials that support scientific, mathematical, and print literacies, a dissertation study found that African Americans are presented as having limited access to print, being

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illiterate, and not holding jobs that require extensive print-based literacy skills.[103] Often in textbooks, people of African descent are referred to in the context of enslavement, with little mention of those who challenged oppression related to race and Black identity.[104] Scholars have also noted how history textbooks tend to minimize or erase social, institutional, and racialized systems that played roles in the Middle Passage, parts of slavery, Reconstruction, and later periods in America. Acts of aggression towards African Americans are portrayed as if they are isolated events.[105] Information referencing African American resistance towards injustice is frequently situated in the Civil Rights and Black Power eras and it is minimal or nonexistent during different periods, like Reconstruction.

Researchers suggest using educational materials that depict variations in Black and African American family structures, customs, and traditions. Characters should be given a variety of skin tones and hairstyles and presented in different learning settings.[106] Classrooms should include materials that are culturally specific and have a strengths-based approach to illustrating African American culture so that Black and African American students enhance their connection to their heritage and all students build African diasporic literacy.[107]

Asian Americans

Scholars have indicated that Asian American characters in literature for children and young adults are more frequently associated with Northeast Asian cultures (particularly Chinese Americans), and less frequently with South Asian and Southeast Asian ethnicities.[108] One study noted it was common for the heritage of characters from East Asian communities to be specifically referenced (even if the representation was inauthentic in many cases), whereas those characters of South Asian and Southeast Asian heritage were generalized and rarely included. [109] A 2018 study of Asian Americans in picture books from 2007 to 2017 found the majority of them featured East Asian characters (67 percent). Southeast Asian (24 percent) and South Asians (10 percent) were presented less frequently.[110] This study and others have also shown improvements in portrayals of Asian Americans in books, the inclusion of culturally authentic characters and context, and a decrease in the "foreigner" image.[111]

While stereotypical descriptions may be less prevalent than before and there may be authentic presentations of cultural nuances, such as family dynamics when preparing a specific dish, for example, stereotypes and limited portrayals still may be present, as when Asian Americans are depicted as high-achieving.[112] Some representations perpetuate the "model minority" stereotype, present certain foods as not "American," and depict Asian Americans as non-English speaking immigrants.[113] Books that recount historical events often decontextualize those events, with little explanation of the systems that allowed injustices to occur, as when, for example, prejudice towards people of Chinese

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heritage is described with no mention of the Chinese Exclusion Act.[114] A dissertation on Korean Americans in picture books found it was common for themes and culture to be blended with other Asian American communities and for cultural aspects to be inauthentic.[115]

Scholars have also studied Asian American representation in curriculum materials. One dissertation showed that upper elementary classrooms included Asian American characters in main or supporting roles in only 8.3 percent of reading materials for third graders and even less, 5.8 percent, for fifth graders.[116] The overall portrayal of these characters was positive, with no cultural or physical stereotypes, and the accompanying lesson plan ranged in the four approaches to multicultural integration: contribution (31 percent), additive (48 percent), transformation (16 percent), and social action (0.2 percent).[117] With historical textbooks, scholars found Japanese and Chinese American communities were most commonly mentioned and visually depicted. In some cases, they were the only heritage groups portrayed.[118] Scholars have also noted an inconsistency in the depth of historical events given and inaccurate, incomplete, and omitted information. For example, there is minimal mention of Filipino, Chinese, Korean, and Southeast Asian Americans involvement in World War II, of Asian American participation in the labor movement and the Civil Rights Movement, or of how Asian Americans handled social barriers (i.e., poverty, racism, etc.).[119] At the same time, texts referred to the contributions of Asian Americans to the national economy and the economic and academic achievements of members of these communities.[120]

While there are problematic issues of character and cultural portrayals of Asian American communities, scholars have recommended the creation and use of those books that depict Asian Americans in a myriad of roles, with different interests and perspectives.[121] Texts like that show everyday and current experiences and contemporary clothing. They acknowledge the complexity and nuances of individuals and different heritages, and distinct physical qualities.[122]

Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders

In reviewing several children's books depicting Native Hawaiian characters, a librarian noted common portrayals of the "exotic Native" and hula-dancers.[123] Native Hawiians and their culture were often associated with the past.[124] This review also noted a connection between children's literature and tourism.[125]

Within schools in Hawai'i, Hawaiian studies programs have been established to teach language, geography, natural environment, and culture.[126] While these programs build Native Hawaiian student cultural connection, scholars have also critiqued these materials, especially the link between textbooks and the tourist industry. For instance, Julie Kaomea saw Native Hawaiians presented in

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Hawaiian studies textbooks as perceiving Captain Cook to be a deity, due his physical attributes, and as happy about his arrival, which establishes them as hospitable, happy to welcome tourists, and ambassadors of Aloha spirit.[127] Often texts omit historical events and violent acts towards Native Hawaiians, and may instead portray them as volatile people living in an oppressive social system.[128]

Scholars have suggested that stories that integrate language and cultural elements in accurate contexts and stories that might include oral storytelling traditions reflective of specific cultures would give a more authentic representation.[129] Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander characters that counter stereotypes and present nuanced people with accurate cultural connections[130] would expose students to characters and stories that are more reflective of actual experiences and perspectives.

Hispanic and Latinx Americans

Analyses exploring Hispanic and Latinx American characters revealed narrow portrayals, [131] even though some progress has occurred. For instance, some results indicated it was common for these characters to be domestic and factory workers, farmers, and dancers, and to be wearing traditional clothing (i.e., brightly colored skirts, serapes, etc.).[132] At the same time, Latinx and Hispanic characters were shown as valuing relationships with family, friends, and community members, teaching and pursuing education, and contributing positive roles in society. They were presented multi-dimensionally, as kind, cowardly, honest, and suspicious.[133] Book themes included immigration as a part of family history; connection to family; and cultural markers within the text include terms of address, food, décor, and music.[134]

One dissertation meta-analysis of research on educational materials found that Latinx and Hispanic Americans were often depicted negatively, with no favorable traits, in early textbooks, though there were exceptions.[135] There are few references to Spanish heritage and cultural elements, and in some cases cultural traditions, customs, and ways of living prior to U.S. occupation are not included. Non-Spanish heritages were often not included. These materials often gave the start of civil rights for the Hispanic and Latinx community as beginning in the 1960s, omitting labor and civil rights struggles before that time. Puerto Rico's relationship with the United States is depicted as an economic and political benefit to the Island.

Bárbara Cruz examined U.S. history textbooks for fifth grade, eighth grade, and 11th grade in 2002. In fifth and eighth grade textbooks, Latinx and Hispanic Americans were featured in less than 1 percent of the pictorials and rarely included in the history of the country, though more of their contemporary contributions were mentioned. They were portrayed as incompetent in military encounters and often connected to immigration and labor movements. Eleventh

grade textbooks featured Latinx and Hispanic Americans slightly more frequently, had similar portrayals as the fifth and eighth grade textbooks, and included more specific information, such as mentioning the debate about bilingual education.[136]

Researchers suggest using materials with engaging characters who offer complex depictions of Hispanic and Latinx people that show cultural nuances and language in context, present various dimensions of subcultures, and challenge how social and political structures reinforce stereotypes and discriminatory practices in daily life.[137]

Researchers appreciate characters who portray the issues of identity and biculturalism[138] as well as those that consider multiple factors outside of heritage that influence their portrayal and development, such as class; cultural orientation and expression; environment; and everyday experiences.[139] Scholars express a need for showing greater variation in occupations, contemporary concerns and activities, and roles and community involvement.[140] Outstanding literature preserves oral traditions and folklore; includes history, cultural achievements, and everyday life; and offers realistic fiction as well as fiction that incorporates imagination and fantasy.[141]

Middle Eastern Americans

Scholars have noted that portrayals of Americans of Middle Eastern descent range from problematic to positive to reflective of daily experiences. [142] Studies of books written by authors of non-Middle Eastern heritages included themes like ancient practices that continue in modern society, historical figures, and present-day wars and challenges of the Middle East region.[143] The majority of books placed characters within ancient practices and times or in navigating difficulties. [144] They also noted that those of Middle Eastern descent are portrayed as newly arrived to America rather than being a part of the country for generations. While stories of characters who immigrated can show the challenges of adjusting to Western society, they can position Arab culture as different from American culture, erase those families who have been members of society for decades, and reduce people to one experience and origin. Limited portrayals also risks having students think all Middle Easterners oppress women.[145]

Studies of children's books with Middle Eastern characters found common themes. Many of those books by authors who identified as being from this heritage featured religious practices and celebrations like preparation for the five daily Muslim prayers and holidays with families; connections between past, present, and different locations; folktales; and the value of family communities. [146] Scholars have noted that some of these works show characters of Arab heritage encountering situations that are common experiences for children and peers in their age group.[147] Characters capture nuances of that particular culture

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within the story, whether it takes place in contemporary or ancient times.[148] Some scholars described multicultural materials that feature Middle Eastern Americans' achievements in different fields that contribute to American life.[149]

Research so far shows that Middle Eastern Americans are rarely included in U.S. textbooks.[150] Textbook studies conducted prior to the 1990s revealed Arabs and those of Arab descent were commonly featured in the context of camels, the desert, caravans, and nomadism.[151] These characters are portrayed as illiterate, warlike, and unreasonably aggressive.[152] Textbooks vary in their depiction of Middle Eastern countries. They frequently connect those of the Middle East with Islam, and present inaccurate, incomplete, and dated information on topics like religion, regional conflict, social life, and politics. They feature Middle Eastern Americans, particularly Arab Americans, in the context of violent events, conflicts, and terrorism. And this group is often not apparent in textbooks until after WWII.[153] Textbooks refer to contributions of people from the Middle East more frequently as transmitters of knowledge rather than as originators of it.[154]

Middle Eastern Americans portray a dimension of the American experience, and should be included in past, current, and future narratives about America and integrated into school curricula and materials.[155] This includes characters who reflect life different experiences, such as immigration, third-generation, etc.[156] Researchers advocate for materials that show different perspectives and insights into Middle Eastern American culture and community and the conflicts and experiences of contemporary life.[157] Other scholars note the need for distinctions between countries, ethnic groups, cultures, and languages within the Middle East, between Arab and non-Arab countries within the region, and between Arab and Muslim people.[158]

Researchers Tami Craft Al-Hazza and Katherine T. Bucher offer help in a questionnaire educators can use to ensure they are selecting quality books, based on and reflective of the suggestions of additional scholars. The questionnaire includes points like seeking out accurate and updated information, facts, and language; authenticity of the culture; and genuine insights and reflection of daily, contemporary life.[159] Scholars have also suggested including contributions of the communities to various areas like medicine, astronomy, chemistry, and language. [160]

Gender

As described above, studies of educational and instructional materials show that males have been presented more often than other genders. This section will focus primarily on portrayals of non-male gender groups.

Early studies of children's literature revealed that roles and portrayals of adult female characters were often limited to "traditional" activities, such as preparing

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food, shopping, cleaning, doing laundry, and taking care of children. Female children were helping mothers with their activities, pleasing or serving their brothers, shopping, jumping rope, or playing with dolls and dress-up.[161] There were few portrayals of female characters in professional and non-home-related activities, and they were more likely to be portrayed as dependent, passive, and less active.[162]

One study that examined children's literature between 1938 and 2011 showed when female characters are the lead, they are more likely to be portrayed as passive, dependent, submissive, and inactive than explorative, independent, and active[163] Studies in 2015 and 2020 indicated a similar pattern of females depicted in roles like housekeeper, stay-at-home parent, person working indoors, and with passive and nurturing traits.[164] At the same time, when females were presented as main characters, they were at times spunky or enjoying a career as a scientist, countering earlier portrayals.[165]

Studies on the representation of transgender characters and gender nonbinary characters show that often the story line centers on the character's gender identity and in some cases as problem that is addressed.[166] Characters may perform a skill or action which leads them to being the hero or assert their value.[167]

Scholars of U.S. textbooks have noted the broadened portrayals of females and expanded inclusion of their contributions to society since the 1970s and the reduction of blatant sexism within texts.[168] At the same time, many of the portrayals either feature women as minor actors or exclude important figures.[169] Health textbooks for middle schoolers portray females commonly shown primping as a form of self-care, and in traditional gendered family roles.[170] When females were featured as people to study in these textbooks, they were presented in connection to their relationship with men and valued for their attractiveness. A study of U.S. history books published between 1956 and 2007 showed women's depictions in and mentions of their active participation in WWII war effort increased in textbooks over time, though there was limited mention of their contributions.[171] Even with the increased mention of women's contributions in textbooks, scholars have noted a need for more content composed and presented through the perspective of women.[172]

For other subject areas where there is a lack of diverse gender groups presented, like music, scholars suggest the incorporation of the social and political context to interrogate reasons for the exclusion of certain people.[173] Scholars have also challenged the binary perspective of gender within content areas like mathematics, and the lack of representation and inclusion of gender nonbinary and transgender people as contributors to the field.[174]

Studies of other types of educational and instructional materials reveal similar portrayals of different gender groups, though many of these studies are from

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more than 20 years ago and need updates. A review of software back in 2001 found female characters frequently portrayed as active, adventurous, and independent,[175] though some female characters conformed to passive gender stereotypes.[176] Educational television programs, according to a 1999 report, were more likely to portray female characters as dependent, deferential, and nurturing, though they also exhibited dominant and aggressive behaviors.[177]

Intersectionality

Scholars have noted there are differences in representation of characters who represent a combination of gender and racial or ethnic groups that are marginalized. Some narrow and stereotypical portrayals may reflect experiences women encounter, while other portrayals may be unique to a particular racial and ethnic group. For instance, in one examination of the portrayal of Arab people in children's literature, females were commonly depicted as overweight, covered, secondary in the scene, overtly sexualized, or passive pleasure-givers.[178] Studies of Latinx and Hispanic Americans in books found characters commonly defined by traditional male and female behavior, and there were no nonbinary characters presented.[179] Early studies of Latinx and Hispanic depictions found disproportionate representations of males characters to females, and while recent studies found an equal number of female and male characters, characters who are nonbinary are not portrayed.[180]

Christopher Busey at the University of Florida examined the representation of Afro-Latinas in history textbooks and found they were often featured before the 1900s. They were also connected to historical narratives of enslavement, which omitted or minimized anti-Blackness, violence towards Afro-Latinas, and slavery resistance, implied Black people caused their enslavement, and reduced their contributions to labor rather than lifting up their cultural, social, and intellectual contributions.[181] Modern references to Afro-Latina people positioned them as being problematic. In another study, scholars found that secondary textbooks at the remedial reading level align with multicultural education and reflect more cultures of BIPOC communities than the more advanced textbooks.[182]

Scholars who examined the intersection of race/ethnicity and gender, found there were no nonbinary characters available to analyze.[183] Research that examines transgender and nonbinary characters may not simultaneously look at race and ethnicity.[184]

Even though there are portrayals that are problematic, scholars have identified traits that are positive. For instance, children's books can portray characters that affirm aesthetics related to cultural and gender identity, like taking care of Black hair.[185] Scholars have also noted that characters may be presented positively, yet culturally inaccurately. Amina Chaudhri and Nicole Schau pointed out Native

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women protagonists who were shown as complex, with heroic traits (independent, intelligent, resourceful) rooted in a Eurocentric perspective. Traits that would be cultivated in their tribal community were omitted.[186] Jobia Keys's study of Doc McStuffins and Dora the Explorer revealed how both characters and their families present some instances of countering limited traits associated with social identity.[187] Her study also pointed out that while Doc's racial or ethnic affiliation is apparent as African American, Dora's Hispanic or Latinx heritage is not. This racial and ethnic ambiguity is not particular to Dora, but it has been critiqued as a presentation of the "generic Latino" or as part of the general "browning of characters" who have no particular heritage.[188]

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Conclusion

Research shows that the frequency and portrayal of social identities in educational materials in the United States has an effect on how and what students learn. This report examined more than 160 studies, which used different methodologies, to detect patterns in what students are exposed to through children's books, textbooks, software programs, and other educational materials.

While there has been some progress in representation of different racial/ethnic, and gender groups, characters who represent marginalized groups are still underrepresented. Several studies note progress made in materials, yet individual materials are not the same as widely used and distributed textbooks. Even when characters of diverse racial, ethnic, and gender groups are represented, these may not be accurate depictions. Some cases may reinforce stereotypes, limit portrayals and roles, and present inaccuracies.

This research review coalesces around the need for three things in educational materials:

- Create a sense of belonging: A fuller story of the United States, its people, and demographic subgroups is needed. For students to affirm they are part of learning environments and communities, demographic subgroups in the United States need to be woven into American history curricula and represented in educational materials.

- Develop cultural authenticity: Several of the studies noted the cultural background of content creators and whether that background was the same as that of the primary characters. When choosing and developing educational materials, examine not just the characters and activities but also the creator's ability to authentically represent complex depictions.

- Recognize nuanced identity: Details of stories, such as interactions and relationships between characters, names, clothing, and variation within groups, are important. Presenting character details can support students in identifying, relating, and connecting to a variety of careers, disciplines, and hobbies.

The research suggests that a lack of representation and narrow and stereotypical portrayals create missed opportunities for all students, preventing them from fully understanding how various racial, ethnic, and gender groups have been a part of and are a part of the American narrative. It creates missed opportunities for many students to have mirrors of themselves as well as many students to have windows that present fuller understanding of the complexities and nuances of

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people within different social groups. The incorporation of culturally responsive education materials not only supports students' understanding of self and peers, but it enhances their connection to learning and expands their imagination and awareness of what is possible.

Notes

1 The term "educational materials" is used throughout this report to refer to both educational and instructional materials, including children's picture books, textbooks, games, software, and other materials, used to teach students how to read and books, games, software, and other materials that teach academic subjects. The term "media " is used to refer to books, video games, television shows, movies, and more that students read, play, and watch inside and outside of school. Some of this media is not designed to be educational but may be used in learning settings.

2 Different types of studies that center the interests of different professionals are used in this study to help identify commonalities in the representation and erasure of groups and shows how representation may have changed over time.

3 The study is the author's dissertation for New Mexico State University, in the College of Education's Department of Curriculum and Instruction, to be completed in 2022.

4 Critical race theory is a legal framework not typically taught in K–12 settings but which has nevertheless been invoked in debates over what should be discussed in K–12 schools. For more information, see Jazmyne Owens' blog post, "Critical Race Theory and Schools: What is Really Going On?" *EdCentral*, July 29, 2021, https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/edcentral/critical-race-theory-schools-whats-really-going-on/

5 *Education Week* has been tracking the states in which legislators have developed specific bills to "attempt to regulate how teachers can discuss racism, sexism, and issues of equality and justice in the classroom" on its frequently updated page, "Where Critical Race Theory is Under Attack." Last updated November 9, 2021, the page can be found at https://www.edweek.org/policy-politics/map-where-critical-race-theory-is-under-attack/2021/06

6 *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 3rd ed. (New York: Teachers College, 2018).

7 Beverly S. Faircloth, "'Wearing a Mask' vs. Connecting Identity with Learning," *Contemporary Educational Psychology* 37, no. 3 (July 2012): 186–194, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cedpsych.2011.12.003; and Geneva Gay, *Culturally Responsive Teaching*. Gay's book refers to several studies that demonstrate that culturally responsive teaching enhances academic achievement in different disciplines and with students of diverse backgrounds.

8 Rudine Sims Bishop, "Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors," *Perspectives: Choosing and Using Books for the Classroom* 6, no. 3 (Summer 1990), https://www.readingrockets.org/sites/default/files/Mirrors-Windows-and-Sliding-Glass-Doors.pdf

9 Natalie K. Conrad, Yi Gong, Lillie Sipp, and Lillian Wright, "Using Text Talk as a Gateway to Culturally Responsive Teaching," *Early Childhood Education Journal* 31, no. 3 (March 2004): 187–192, https://doi.org/10.1023/B:ECEJ.0000012137.43147.af; Gay, *Culturally Responsive Teaching*; and Ted Kesler, "Teachers' Texts in Culturally Responsive Teaching," *Language Arts* 88, no. 6 (July 2011): 419–429, https://library.ncte.org/journals/la/issues/v88-6

10 See Jamie Campbell Naidoo, *The Importance of Diversity in Library Programs and Material Collections for Children*, a white paper written for the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) and adopted by the ASLC Board on April 5, 2014, available in Spanish and English at https://www.ala.org/alsc/publications-resources/white-papers/importance-diversity. See also Gay, *Culturally Responsive Teaching*; Django Paris, "Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy: A Needed Change in Stance, Terminology, and Practice," *Educational Researcher* 41, no. 3 (2012): 93–97, https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X12441244; Gloria Ladson-Billings, "Culturally Relevant Pedagogy 2.0: A.K.A. The Remix," *Harvard Educational Review* 84, no. 1 (March 2014): 74–84, https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.

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84.1.p2rj131485484751; and Django Paris and H. Samy Alim, *Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies: Teaching and Learning for Justice in a Changing World* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2017).

11   The term "his(her)(their)stories" in lieu of "history," acknowledges the role and perspectives of multiple gender groups in past events, narratives, and stories.

12   Jenny Muñiz, *Culturally Responsive Teaching: A Reflection Guide* (Washington, DC: New America, 2020), https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/policy-papers/culturally-responsive-teaching-competencies/

13   Sabia Prescott, *Supporting LGBTQ-Inclusive Teaching* (Washington, DC: New America, 2019), https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/reports/leveraging-open-educational-resources-queer-students/

14   See "Selecting Culturally Responsive Texts," one of several strategies for early literacy developed by Digital Promise's Learner Variability Project, based on research from 17 studies (including many also noted in this report), https://lvp.digitalpromiseglobal.org/content-area/literacy-pk-3/strategies/selecting-culturally-responsive-texts-literacy-pk-3/summary. Also see Sabine Siekmann, Joan Parker Webster, Sally Angass'aq Samson, and Catherine Keggutalinguq Moses, "Teaching Our Way of Life through Our Language: Materials Development for Indigenous Immersion Education," *Cogent Education* 4, no. 1 (September 2017): 1–13, https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2017.1362887

15   Shontoria Walker and Laveria Hutchison, "Using Culturally Relevant Pedagogy to Influence Literacy Achievement for Middle School Black Male Students," *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* 64, no. 4 (January/February 2021): 421–429, https://doi.org/10.1002/jaal.1114; and Gayla Lohfink and Juana Loya, "The Nature of Mexican American Third Graders' Engagement with Culturally Relevant Picture Books," *Bilingual Research Journal* 3, no. 3

(December 2010): 346–363, https://doi.org/10.1080/15235882.2010.529346

16   Faircloth, "'Wearing a Mask.'"

17   Elizabeth Bridges Smith, "Anchored in our Literature: Students Responding to African American Literature," *Language Arts* 72, no. 8 (December 1995): 571–574, https://www.jstor.org/stable/41482241

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