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Selecting ELL Textbooks: A Content Analysis of Ethnicity Depicted in Illustrations and Writing

Jeffrey LaBelle

Abstract

In an effort to respond to the need for culturally appropriate English Language Learning (ELL) resources for adolescent immigrants, the researchers gathered 64 textbooks actually in use in eight Milwaukee middle schools to analyze their content for the range of diversity of ethnicity depicted in illustrations and written text. The eight school settings selected provided a broad range of materials to analyze. In addition, these materials reflect both public and Catholic teachers' resource selection in predominantly Latino and Southeast Asian American classroom contexts. The settings were chosen with the advice of administrators and teachers as schools they perceived to be of greatest need for ELL curriculum and instruction development. Based upon their findings, the researchers draw some initial conclusions and recommendations for the selection of culturally appropriate textbooks that fit the cultural contexts of the learners. Finally, the study provides as appendices the bibliography of textbooks under analysis and sample coding instruments used to analyze the content of these textbooks.

Middle school teachers in Milwaukee, as well as other large American cities, struggle to identify ethnically appropriate and culturally representative texts for teaching English to immigrant students. At the conclusion of their linguistic and cultural analysis of textbook content, Case, Ndura, and Righettini (2005) asked. “Are there teachers ready and willing to see the text through a critical eye?” (p. 381). Their research unearthed the real difficulties teachers face in the selection of ELL texts appropriate to their classroom contexts. Besides dealing with the limited number of textbooks available for middle school ELLs, many instructors also lack information about the appropriateness of ethnic depiction in the illustrations and written material of these same textbooks. By appropriateness of ethnic depiction the researchers refer to the social and cultural fit of the ethnicity represented in the texts with the classroom instructor’s particular classroom context to ensure culturally appropriate and responsive pedagogy (Banks 1997; Cortés, 2000; Gay, 2000; Nieto, 1999). An analysis of the content of these textbooks can provide one source of data to help teachers select textbooks for middle school ELL students which would be suitable for and even mirror their ethnic contexts: Just how well do middle school ELL texts reflect appropriate ethnic diversity?

From a theoretical perspective, this study established a protocol for the ongoing assessment of ethnic depictions within ELL textbooks currently in use in middle schools, as well as their appropriateness for target audiences. Many classroom instructors rely on their own personal judgment or intuition to select texts for their students or simply depend upon the district-approved textbooks. Some may lack the knowledge and consciousness of the extent to which their textbooks represent a diversity of ethnicities. The researchers contend that a more critical analysis of textbooks would lend a broader and more detailed description of the ethnicities depicted, as well as raise the consciousness of educators in this regard. The results of

our study are intended to assist instructors to make more fully informed judgments in their intentional choices of ELL textbooks.

Theoretical Framework

As social mirrors of contemporary American society, textbooks ought to reflect the cultural and linguistic diversity that actually exists in the United States. Otherwise, they run the risk of depicting persons inappropriately and even of misleading students into forming skewed perceptions of those who make up part of our society (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2002). Adrienne Rich (1986) articulately described the impact of negative or deficient social mirroring upon an individual:

> When those who have power to name and to socially construct reality choose not to see you or hear you, whether you are dark-skinned, old, disabled, female or speak with a different accent or dialect than theirs, when someone with the authority of a teacher, say, describes the world and you are not in it, there is a moment of psychic disequilibrium, as if you looked into a mirror and saw nothing. (p. 199)

Sad to say, some textbooks have been found to be less inclusive than others in their representation of ethnicity (Banks & McGee Banks, 2001). In fact, many U.S. textbooks reflect a cultural bias or dominance that inhibits a truly desirable multicultural education (Gay, 2000,). One means by which educators can counteract this challenging issue is the integration of content across the curriculum. Such an integrative, multicultural approach to education requires the careful review and critical analysis of the content of textbooks to ensure the use of culturally appropriate and responsive pedagogy (Banks 1997; Cortés, 2000; Gay, 2000; Nieto, 1999).

This critical analysis of textbook content can reveal a peculiar hidden curriculum that fosters racial and ethnic prejudices, as well as "…unnecessary cultural, social and political barriers to personal dignity" (Giroux & Purpel, 1983, p. 279). Examining the content of

textbooks can ensure a balanced and fair depiction of people that appropriately portrays our multicultural society to support effective multicultural education. As Hernández (2001) said, “Implementation of a multicultural curriculum requires instructional materials that reflect the diverse character of American society” (p. 173). This diversity includes not only ethnicity but also a wide range of salient character traits such as independent, dependent, cooperative, competitive, etc. (Phye & Drees, 2001), which in turn interplay to confound and challenge instructors. As a matter of fact, teacher guidelines developed in 1979 by the United States Commission on Civil Rights repeatedly recommended that “teachers should attempt to provide students with accurate, fair, and objective representations of diverse groups in content, illustrations, and language” (Hernández, 2001, p. 194).

During the 1980s and 1990s, proponents of multicultural education centered their concern on diversity in educational materials. Most of these researchers focused their attention on biases, misrepresentations, or stereotyping in regard to race/ethnicity and gender. Their studies entailed the evaluation of resources across grade levels and various subject areas. For example, Porecca (1994) reviewed ESL textbooks and Graci (1989) evaluated language arts and foreign language textbooks. These studies among many others uncovered recurrent portrayals of minorities and women in racist and sexist depictions. Furthermore, they often cited errors of omission as a weakness in these textbooks. Additionally, they discovered that most of the textbooks were written from a White, Eurocentric viewpoint.

Although racial and gender biases may not appear to be as urgent as in past decades, researchers still need to continue to monitor textbooks for these issues. Racial, ethnic, and gender diversity persist as recurrent themes among prominent researchers to this day (Banks & McGee Banks, 2001; Gay, 2000; Hernández, 2001; Hughes, 2007; Nieto, 2002; Sanchez, 1997; Zittleman & Sadker, 2002). Clearly, concerns about diversity and discrimination have not

disappeared, nor have the omissions, biases, misrepresentations, and stereotypes that engender them.

Why should one analyze the content of textbooks for diversity? Surely, one goal is to eliminate these distortions, omissions, biases, and narrow perspectives of racial and ethnic representation (Nieto, 1999). Such an effort is essential to foster positive attitudes and beliefs among students as well as to promote and motivate positive self-perceptions and career aspirations (Banks & McGee Banks, 2001; Hernández, 2001). Educational materials that do not exhibit a balanced representation of cultural and linguistic diversity can disenfranchise students, take away their cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1997), and inhibit their progress toward academic success (Cummins, 1993; Delpit, 1995; Nieto, 2002). Hernández (2001) elucidates: "…the absence of characters and situations with which [learners] are able to identify may contribute to and reinforce feelings of insecurity, inferiority, or superiority depending upon an individual's group identity…" (p. 197). These attitudinal factors, in turn, can and do impact academic achievement, including that of middle school ELL students.

Research Questions

To guide our content analysis of ELL textbooks, the researchers posed the following questions: 1) To what extent do the ELL texts used in Milwaukee middle schools reflect appropriate ethnic diversity in illustrated depiction? 2) To what extent do the ELL texts used in Milwaukee middle schools reflect appropriate ethnic diversity in written depiction? 3) How are salient traits of character behavior distributed by ethnicity in both illustrated and written depiction in the ELL texts used in Milwaukee middle schools? 4) Are there any negative or oversimplified comments related to an ethnic group or ethnicity in the ELL texts used in Milwaukee middle schools?

Method

The research method employed in this study was content analysis, a mixed methodology which collects quantifiable data based upon coders' judgments of categories within a variable (Weber, 1990; Neuendorf, 2002; Krippendorff, 2004). The variable under consideration was ethnicity, which was organized into four parts to gather data in response to each of the four research questions. The four aspects of the variable were Ethnicity in Illustration, Ethnicity in Written Text, Ethnicity as Characterized, and Ethnicity Stereotyping. The researchers develop more detail regarding these data subsets in the results section.

The corpus selected represents only a portion of student textbooks in use at the time of the study. Hence, the results of this study cannot be generalized to all ELL textbooks. Rather the generalizability of this study is limited to the schools and textbooks under investigation, although some of the recommendations and conclusions may benefit schools and educators in other contexts in the United States who used the same or similar student textbooks.

Consulting Milwaukee middle school administrators and teachers who are experienced in ELL curriculum and instruction, the investigators surfaced their need for assistance in choosing appropriate ELL materials to teach immigrant students. They also helped us identify school contexts in greatest need of ELL curricular and instructional development. As a result, eight middle school ELL teachers from eight different school sites in Milwaukee contributed their lists of textbooks and workbooks for content analysis.

To select the corpus for content analysis, the research team first collected copies of all the 64 texts used in the eight classrooms. Then, they chose only those texts that were actual student textbooks, excluding teacher manuals, teacher editions, student workbooks, and trade books. This resulted in 33 representative books (Appendix A), chosen as suitable for the study based upon their scope, i.e., actual student texts in contrast to student workbooks or teacher editions.

Depending on how each textbook was organized (by chapters or units), the researchers conducted the content analysis on the third chapter or unit of each of the 33 representative textbooks as a systematic, convenience sample (Weber, 1990; Neuendorf, 2002; Krippendorff, 2004). The researchers gathered the data regarding ethnicity by means of a self-designed instrument (Appendix B) consisting of four parts, each designed to respond to each of the four research questions. These coding instruments were used to analyze the content of 33 textbooks for ethnicity in visual and written material. These instruments provided a data-gathering technique to help determine which textbooks might be more appropriate for a particular classroom context. Both researchers coded illustrative or textual content following the rubric under each of the four parts, further explained in the following section. Coding was based upon the judgment of our observation and interpretation of the photos, drawings, illustrations, or actual narrative texts within the corpus under consideration.

Measures

Our coding consisted of placing a mark by hand for each occurrence of the category indicated in the coding instruments when analyzing either illustrations or text for that particular category of ethnicity (see Appendix B for samples of this coding). In addition, the researchers conducted a pilot study to solicit feedback for validity. The panel for this pilot study consisted of three graduate students and three faculty members, which included both researchers in the study. This panel of field practitioners and academicians was asked to review the four coding instruments to determine if the instruments validly measure the content of a sample text for ethnicity. Feedback from the members of the validity panel was then incorporated into the final coding instruments (see Appendix B for samples) which were later used to conduct the actual content analysis reported here.

The panel expressed several concerns and recommendations to improve the validity of the instrumentation for ethnicity. These were incorporated into the techniques employed by the coders in analyzing the content. One of these pointed out that the concepts of race and ethnicity are often blurred. The panel members recommended exercising caution when drawing conclusions or making inferences from these categories. Another indicated the problem of deciding whether references indicated one or two occurrences, e.g., “sombrero” and “Guadalajara” in the same sentence in the example. Finally, another asked for clarification as to whether the coder should mark one occurrence for each person depicted or consider the photo as whole.

The two researchers then met to participate in a two-hour training session in which they practiced coding a sample corpus taken from a segment of the *Access English* text other than the third chapter or unit, since these third chapters or units would be analyzed in the actual study. During this practice coding, both coders occasionally experienced uncertainty in interpreting the ethnicity of characters in photographs, other illustrations, and written depiction. Rather than mislabel their ethnicity, they agreed to categorize such persons as “Ambiguous.” They did this recognizing the variation that can exist within an ethnic group, especially among those who might be considered Hispanic or Latino. Finally, they met weekly over the course of two months to discuss any further concerns in the interpretation of the coding instruments and to clarify any differences to ensure inter-coder reliability.

Procedures

Each researcher coded either 16 or 17 of the textbooks (for a total of 33) that formed the corpus by using the original copies of the textbooks, printed instrumentation sheets, and a pen to mark the occurrences of ethnicity depicted in chapter 3 or unit 3 of that particular textbook. They each analyzed the content for the depiction of ethnicity in all four aspects as mentioned

previously. Once they each finished an individual third chapter or unit of a textbook, they then moved on to the next textbook. The researchers completed this coding in a period of two months, in June and July, 2008.

The specific contents under consideration were the illustrations and written texts selected from ELL textbooks actually in use in eight middle school ELL classrooms in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Modeling our instrumentation upon a previous content analysis of multimedia language materials (Gautier, 2006), the researchers designed instruments to assist us in coding the depiction of ethnicity in the four aspects previously mentioned. They marked each occurrence of a depiction of ethnicity in the appropriate category on the instruments. After they had reviewed all the textbooks under consideration, they tallied the total number of occurrences of ethnic depiction and organized the data reports to display raw totals and percentages of depiction within each text, across textbooks, and by ethnicity.

The independent variable for purposes of this study was ethnicity. The researchers analyzed the content for both visual and written depiction of ethnicity, utilizing the categories provided by the U.S. Census Bureau. In addition, the corpus was analyzed for the dependent variable of salient traits of character behavior across ethnicities. Finally, qualitative data was collected in regard to negative or oversimplified depiction in both visual and written representation. The content analysis resulted in four subsets of data: Ethnicity in Illustration, Ethnicity in Written Text, Ethnicity as Characterized, and Ethnicity Stereotyping.

The researchers defined an ethnic group as a "…collectivity that shares a common history and culture, and common values, behaviours and other characteristics that cause members of the group to have a shared identity…Cultural characteristics, rather than biological traits, are the essential characteristics of an ethnic group" (Banks & Lynch, 1986, p. 198). Of course, in actual practice ethnic groups are often identified by the categories employed by the U.S. Census Bureau

which insisted that, by January 1, 2003, any demographic survey should be based upon "a minimum of five categories for race: American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, or White…The minimum categories for ethnicity will be Hispanic or Latino and Not Hispanic or Latino" (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000).

This final category is an attempt to include those residents and citizens who identify themselves by ethnicity rather than race, which further confounds the constructs of race and ethnicity. Further, it is important to note the wide variation of ethnic identification within the Hispanic or Latino population. The researchers deemed that these categories were suitable for the teachers and schools within the study based upon the demographic contexts of the schools, communities, and city within which they actually live. Although individual students may or may not self-identify with the categories as outlined by the Census Bureau, nevertheless these groups serve as general identifiers with which most residents can associate.

Following the U.S. Census Bureau's guidelines, the researchers coded the content of the corpus for Ethnicity in Illustration and Ethnicity in Written Text utilizing the six categories which follow in alphabetical order. It is important to note that, by their very nature, they represent a combination of racial and ethnic categories and are normally selected by self-identification. 1) American Indian or Alaskan Native (AI); 2) Asian: Asian Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, other Asians (A); 3) Black or African American (B); 4) Hispanic or Latino: Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, or other Hispanic or Latino (H); 5) Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander: Guamanian or Chamorro, Samoan, other Pacific Islander (PI); 6) White: Caucasian or European. (W).Ethnicity as Characterized analyzed the content of the corpus for salient traits across ethnicities. The coders employed the following 15 salient traits, frequently used to define character behavior: dependent, independent, cooperative,

competitive, directive, submissive, persistent, explorative, creative, imitative, nurturing aggressive, emotional, active, and passive. (Phye & Drees, 2001). This particular schema was chosen in order to provide a broad range of possibilities for characterization, even though some of the categories convey negative and positive connotations based on judgment of behavior. These categories may appear as static, essentialist qualities, which by themselves may require scrutiny in the future. However, they also define specific, identifiable traits by which people characterize behaviors and to which they apply specific value judgments. These can have a significant impact upon a certain ethnicity's depiction, and thereby influence the decision of a teacher to select a certain text.

Results

In reviewing the data sets for Ethnicity in Illustration, Ethnicity in Written Text, Ethnicity as Characterized, and Ethnicity Stereotyping, the researchers eliminated certain texts as outliers. The four reasons for eliminating these texts were: 1) lack of racial or ethnic specificity, 2) no reference to or textual depiction of people, 3) no visual depiction, or 4) no variation in ethnicity depicted (in the case of Ethnicity as Characterized). This cleaning of the data sets resulted in a composite data set representing 26 of the original 33 data sets for Ethnicity in Illustration (see Table 1), a composite data set representing 19 of the original 33 data sets for Ethnicity in Written Text (see Table 2), and a composite data set representing 18 of the original 33 data sets for Ethnicity as Characterized (S) (see Table 3) and 13 of the original 33 data sets for Ethnicity as Characterized (W) (see Table 4). Finally, only 9 of the original data sets for Ethnicity Stereotyping annotated any negative or oversimplified comments (see Table 5).

The following list indicates how the research team quantified the range of each category of Ethnicity in Illustration and Written Text. For purposes of this study these texts are divided into four categories: high diversity, some diversity, less diversity, and little diversity. The range

of each category was determined by the frequency and the percentage distribution of ethnic representation in a given illustration or text.

1. High diversity: Books with 4-5 ethnicities represented, and no more than 60% of one single ethnicity represented
2. Some diversity: 3-4 ethnicities represented, but some may have one group represented more than 60%, with others represented far less
3. Less diversity: 2-3 ethnicities represented, and/or a disparity between the ethnicities of 70% or higher
4. Little diversity: only two ethnicities represented and/or hugely disparate ethnic distribution percentages

TABLE 1

Range of Diversity in Illustration by Textbook

Title	Range of Diversity
Access American History	overemphasis on W
Access English	high range of diversity depicted
Access Math	high range of diversity
Access Science	high range of diversity, no H or W
America's Story	Hispanic predominant
Cause & Effect	overemphasis on B & W
Content Connection	overemphasis on B & W
English, Yes! Beginning	overemphasis on B & W
English, Yes! Intermediate	overemphasis on H
English, Yes! Introductory	limited visual depiction, W only
English, Yes! Transitional	overemphasis on W
ESL 4	some diversity, but no A, AI, or PI
ESL 5	some diversity, preponderance of W
Fact & Figures	emphasis of B

High Point	high range of diversity depicted, but no AI or PI
Living, Learning, Literature	overemphasis on W
Look, I Can Talk More!	overemphasis on W
Pizza Tastes Great!	limited ethnic specificity and emphasis on W
Sam and Pat 2	some diversity
Teen Scene	some diversity, but no AI or PI
Teen Stories	great range of diversity depicted, but no W
Turning Points 3	overemphasis on W
Turning Points 4	overemphasis on W
Voices in Literature, Bronze	overemphasis on W
Voices in Literature, Gold	high range of diversity, but emphasis on W, no PI H
Voices in Literature, Silver	some diversity, but no AI, H, or W

TABLE 2

Range of Diversity in Written Text by Textbook

Title	Range of Diversity
20th Century American Short Stories	high levels of ambiguity
A World of Fiction	high levels of ambiguity
Access American History	overemphasis on W
Access English	high diversity, but no A, B, or PI
Access Math	high diversity, but no AI or PI
America's Story	some diversity, but Hispanic predominant
Cause & Effect	very diverse, but overemphasis on A
Content Connection	overemphasis on A & H
English, Yes! Intermediate	overemphasis on H
ESL 5	little diversity, mostly W
Facts & Figures	high diversity, but emphasis on A and B
High Point	limited ethnic specificity, only A and H
Living, Learning, Literature	some diversity, but no AI, A, or PI
Look, I Can Talk More!	W only
Pizza Tastes Great!	high diversity, but emphasis on A, H, and W
Readings in Cultural Literacy	little or non-specific ethnicity. Overemphasis on W.
Teen Stories	some diversity, but no AI or W
Turning Points 4	high diversity, emphasis on A, H, and W
Voices in Literature, Bronze	high diversity, emphasis on AI, no B or PI
Voices in Literature, Gold	high diversity, emphasis on W, no PI or H
Voices in Literature, Silver	some diversity, but no AI, H, or PI

TABLE 3

Total Salient Traits as Characterized by Race/Ethnicity in Illustrations

Salient Traits	Am.Ind.	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Pac.Isl.	White	Others
Dependent		1	1	1		2	
Independent			2	1			
Cooperative	2	2	20	5	4	24	
Competitive		1		3			
Directive	1	1	6	1		5	
Submissive	1		6		3	4	
Persistent						5	
Explorative	3	1	5	5		17	1
Creative		5	9	1		11	
Imitative						2	
Nurturing	1		4	1	4	9	2
Aggressive			1				
Emotional	2	2	7	9		14	
Active	3	12	31	15	4	109	7
Passive	3	5	10	7		36	4

TABLE 4

Total Salient Traits as Characterized by Race/Ethnicity in Written Text

Salient Trait	Am.Ind.	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Pac. Isl.	White	Others
Dependent			1			2	
Independent	2		2			3	
Cooperative	4		1	2		7	
Competitive			4			5	
Directive	2	1	2	12		41	
Submissive		2	11	1		10	
Persistent		1	1	4		9	
Explorative			1	3		6	
Creative	2	5	3	3		11	1
Imitative							
Nurturing						2	
Aggressive	2	5	1			15	3
Emotional	2	3	1	1		32	
Active	4	17	12	20		55	
Passive	2	2	1	1		9	

TABLE 5

Total Negative or Oversimplified Comments in Illustrated and Written Depiction

Text	Negative or Oversimplified Comment
Access English	"Wrap their babies in American flags" (W)
	"Feed them mashed hot dogs and apple pie." (W)
	"Name them Bill and Daisy," (W)
	"…buy them blonde dolls that blink blue eyes…"(W)
	"…our fine American girl." (W)
America's Story	"They did not like living with the Spanish." (W)
	"They did not want to follow the Catholic religion." (W)
English, Yes!	
Intermediate	"Hector's family cannot make enough money to buy him a pair of shoes." (W)
	"He gets $25…What are you going to with all that money?" (W)
	"This cost me $12 bucks!" (W)
	"You have to do everything to impress the neighbors and the familia." (W)
Facts & Figures	"Poor desert African countries"(W)
	"Poor tropical countries" (W)
	"Do Africans understand farming?" (W)
Look, I Can Talk	
More!	Asian woman smiling demurely. (S)
Sam and Pat 1	Pat is depicted in stereotypical role for African Americans: cooking. (S)
Teen Stories	Hispanic kids playing soccer. (S)

	Pacific Islanders & Asians eating rice. (S)
	Black kids “working hard.” (S)
	Hispanic girl cares for children for $2.50/hr. (S)
	The only white girls in the books are shopping at mall and eating fast food (S)
Turning Points 4	“Since Maria doesn't have any money…” (W)
	“Natasha drove Mrs. Wong to …” (W)
Voices in Literature, Bronze	“We called them ‘Geronimo’ and ‘Chief.’” (W)
	“If you ever see La Siguanava, run away as quickly as you can.” (W)

The results of the data collection of Ethnicity in Illustration are reported from a descriptive statistical perspective for the total occurrences of ethnicity across texts. As one might suspect, the distribution across ethnicities in illustration varied greatly among these 26 texts. These ranges are listed in the right-hand column of Table 1 across from the name of the particular textbook under analysis.

The results of the data collection of Ethnicity in Written Text are reported from a descriptive statistical perspective for the total occurrences of ethnicity across texts. As in the case of illustrated depiction, the distribution across ethnicities in written depiction varied greatly among these 21 texts. These ranges are listed in the right-hand column of Table 2 across from the name of the particular textbook under analysis.

The results for the data set for Ethnicity as Characterized, by design, are more complex to report. These results entail 15 salient traits of character behavior by ethnicity and by text. This data set attempts to answer research question 3, how are salient traits of character behavior

distributed by ethnicity in both illustrated and written depiction in the ELL texts used in Milwaukee middle schools? These data sets were cleaned by eliminating those texts which had 1) no reference to or depiction of people, 2) no visual depiction, or 3) no variation in ethnicity depicted. This cleaning of the data sets resulted in a composite data set representing 18 of the original 33 data sets for Ethnicity as Characterized in Illustrations (see Table 3) and 13 of the original 33 data sets for Ethnicity as Characterized in Written Text (see Table 4).

This final data set for Ethnicity Stereotyping is qualitative in nature. It is aimed at answering research question 4, namely, are there any negative or oversimplified comments related to an ethnic group or ethnicity in the ELL texts used in Milwaukee middle schools? Here the research team chose to focus on only negative stereotyping, even though some stereotyping can be construed as positive: our primary concern was to point out those depictions that might project a negative image of a particular ethnicity. In response to this particular research question, the researchers report the verbatim results of the coding for negative or oversimplified visual and written depiction of ethnicity in the characters portrayed in the 33 texts analyzed. Of these texts, only 9 included visual or written depictions which were coded as negative or oversimplified. Within these 9 textbooks, the researchers noted from 1 to 5 occurrences as negative or oversimplified in either illustration or written text. These notations are subjective in nature because they rely on the judgment of the coders to determine the negativity or oversimplification of these illustrations or written comments. The results of this analysis of the content are listed in Table 5 which follows. The designation “S” refers to those depictions that are seen or visual; the designation “W” indicates written depictions.

Discussion

Our purpose in conducting this analysis was to assist teachers in easily finding texts which contain appropriate ethnic depictions for the ELLs in their classrooms. Without an

appropriate range of cultural or ethnic references in classroom materials, students may experience detrimental effects on their achievement in regard to English language learning. From the previous analysis of the data collected, classroom teachers can readily determine which textbooks are of most diverse in the ethnicity represented in illustrations and written text. However, they should be cautious about jumping to the conclusion that those particular textbooks are the best or most appropriate for their own classrooms. Other factors need to be taken into account. These include the ethnic composition of their particular classroom, the demographic context in which the students live, the language learning strategies involved, and the teaching methods employed by the instructor of record. In short, the representation of diverse ethnicities in a given textbook does not necessarily mean that textbook is the most appropriate one for a group of students. However, this information does indeed contribute to making a more informed selection of instructional materials for ELL classes.

In reviewing the ethnic diversity in illustration the researchers discovered that, in general, the ethnicities most frequently represented in illustrations were Asian, Black, Hispanic, and White. The textbooks that had significant instances of one of these groups typically also had high occurrences of the others. For example, *High Point* had the most instances in all of these variables, compared to the other textbooks. This range parallels the demographic makeup of the majority of ELL classrooms in Milwaukee. However, the texts that had high foci on the populous groups tended to under-represent American Indian and Pacific Islander groups, two groups with a represented population in Wisconsin schools. On a positive note, two textbooks analyzed, *ESL 5* and *Access Science*, had high representations of both these populations.

The following books contained the most diverse illustrated depictions of ethnicity: *Access American History, Access English, Access Math, Content Connection, ESL 5, High Point, Teen Scene, Teen Stories, Voices in Literature – Bronze, Voice in Literature – Gold*, and *Voices in*

Literature – Silver. Each of these books represented at least four different ethnicities in the illustrations in the sample chapter or unit. Most also had no more than 60% of one ethnicity represented. White was usually the most dominant ethnicity, but there were several exceptions.

A few texts included high levels of ambiguous, or ethnically neutral, visual depictions. *Access English, Content Connection, ESL 5, and Voices in Literature - Bronze* had > 5% ambiguous graphics. *Facts and Figures, High Point, Sam and Pat 2, Turning Points 3,* and *Voices in Literature – Silver* had > 10% ambiguous. *Pizza Tastes Great!* and *Teen Scene* represented 25% or greater ambiguity in illustrations. Such high levels of ethnic ambiguity in text may be either desirable or undesirable for teachers, depending upon the demographic makeup of their particular classrooms, schools, and neighborhoods.

The textbooks not mentioned above contained extremely high levels of one or two populations, no illustrations of any kind, or only depicted a few ethnicities. For teachers with homogeneous groups of learners, texts with notably high depictions of a particular ethnicity may be desired. However, the contexts in which these textbooks are currently used tend to be ethnically quite diverse.

In regard to ethnic diversity in written depiction, as one might expect, the textbooks that generally demonstrated high levels of diversity in the illustrations had the same levels in their written depictions. The *Voices in Literature* series and the *Access* series had high levels of diversity with depictions varied for Whites, Hispanics, Blacks, American Indians, and Asians, as did *Cause and Effect, Facts and Figures, Pizza Tastes Great!, Turning Points 4,* and *Teen Stories.* All of these latter books had instances of at least three different ethnicities depicted in the written text. In particular, it should be noted that *Teen Stories* had depictions of many ethnic groups present in Milwaukee area schools. *20th Century American Short Stories* and *A World of Fiction* had high levels of ambiguity. In regard to ethnicity depicted in written text, ambiguity

was construed as references to people without any specific ethnic markers, and names that were not generally perceived to be limited to one ethnic or racial group.

In regard to how the salient traits of character behavior are distributed by ethnicity in both illustrated and written depiction in the ELL texts used in Milwaukee middle schools, the researchers deemed that merely stating a particular text had high levels of a particular group depicted could have a profound negative impact on the target audience due to the value judgments attributed to certain character traits with which these groups are portrayed (Banks & McGee Banks, 2001; Hernández, 2001). Because of this, the researchers took those texts previously determined to have high occurrences of ethnic depiction, and analyzed which of the 15 salient characteristics the various ethnicities exhibited in each text. In *Access History*, Whites were predominantly active, and also directive, whereas Blacks, American Indians, and Hispanics were represented mostly as passive and emotional. Likewise, in *Access English*, White persons were found to be cooperative and active, Blacks submissive or passive, and Asians imitative and emotional. The discrepancies here might raise concern for some teachers. However, the *Access Science* book demonstrated all identified groups as explorative, which would appear to be quite appropriate for the given subject.

Voices in Literature Gold had a large number of Whites, most of whom were active, directive, or emotional in writing, and passive in visual depictions. Of the other groups represented, in writing, Asians had a noticeably high number of aggressive and active portrayals, and Hispanic persons, a large number of directive roles. *Voices in Literature Bronze* had the most representations of Whites and they were scattered around seemingly positive depictions such as active and nurturing, as well as apparently negative depictions such as aggressive, submissive, and dependent. In contrast, the other groups were very scattered, mostly in aggressive, cooperative, or active roles. *Cause and Effect* depicted five different ethnic groups,

all in mostly creative ways. In regard to the salient traits in *Pizza Tastes Great*, nearly all were applied to Whites, in largely "positive" categories. *Turning Points 4* depicted four groups, all as mostly active, Whites overwhelmingly so. Neither *Facts and Figures* nor *A World of Fiction* had any recorded salient traits.

Teen Stories had possibly the most diverse and varied depictions. The only group not represented was American Indians. Asians were portrayed as cooperative, active, and dependent; Blacks as emotional, cooperative, and active. Hispanic persons were largely active, competitive, explorative, and nurturing; Pacific Islanders were equally depicted in cooperative, nurturing, and active roles, while Whites were only seen as emotional or creative. Although *20th Century Short Stories* could be noted for its ambiguity in the visual and written depiction in general, the written depictions of Whites in particular were overwhelmingly directive and emotional, while the only other distinguishable group, Blacks, was portrayed only as submissive. The chapter or unit selected for review as a systematic, convenience sample may have been unique to the book and skewed these findings: additional content analysis would determine if these findings are representative of the book as a whole.

Finally, in regard to the fourth research question, since 9 of the 33 textbooks had some negative or oversimplified comments, the researchers expressed some concern regarding those particular texts. On the other hand, they judged the majority of the textbooks analyzed (22 of the 33) relatively free of such stereotypical depiction. This is quite encouraging for authors and publishers, as well as ELL teachers. It is important to stress that this content analysis only represents the third chapter or unit of each of the 33 texts. Therefore, teachers would do well to use caution and discretion when employing texts with an eye to illustrations and written depictions which might be construed as negative or oversimplified. In fact, because the occurrences of stereotyping within the 9 textbooks are relatively few, teachers themselves would

probably be the most effective in reviewing the content of the illustrations and written depictions in their particular textbooks before teaching a lesson.

From a theoretical perspective, the results of this study provide the academy with a critique of 33 textbooks actually in use in ELL middle school classrooms. In addition, this research promotes the ongoing assessment of textbooks for racial and ethnic prejudice in illustrated and written depiction. Although these concerns have been treated rather extensively in the past, constant vigilance is necessary to ensure that schools continue to foster diversity and inclusivity in the choice of resource materials. Finally, this study provides a theoretical framework for a critical analysis of textbook content in regard to the depiction and characterization of ethnicity.

From a practical perspective, the results of this study provided the classroom instructors with feedback regarding textbooks used in their individual classrooms. Based upon the information and interpretation of the depiction of ethnicity, these eight classroom teachers can review their choice of textbooks to more appropriately reflect the ethnic context in which they are situated. In addition, the background of this study provided in the review of literature, as well as the extensive bibliography of ELL middle school textbooks in use in other schools, provides these eight teachers with more possible resource materials to assist their immigrant ELL students. In the final section of this article, we will address the particular actions Milwaukee teachers should take in regard to their choice of ELL textbook and supplemental materials.

On a final note, the researchers hope that their forthcoming studies on the content analysis data for situational context, language learning strategies, and language teaching models will respond to concerns about how to assess the linguistic demands of middle school ELL students. Nevertheless, the ongoing challenge of how publishers might respond to the results of this content analysis remains: to improve the depiction of ethnicity and provide culturally

appropriate content in ELL textbooks. However, the decision of which texts to use ultimately rests with the classroom teacher. And this leaves us with the poignant question that Case, Ndura, and Righettini (2005) posed: Do teachers exist who are capable and motivated enough "…to see the text through a critical eye?" (p. 381). Certainly those educators who are so inclined would do well to make use of the coding instruments and results of this study in choosing ELL textbooks with a critical eye for diversity of ethnicity.

Limitations of the Study

Since content analysis involves no human subjects, this particular study has no specific population of participants under investigation. However, it must be noted that the corpus selected for this content analysis represents only a selection of 33 student textbooks in use at the time of the study in eight middle schools in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Since the corpus did not include all middle school ELL texts currently available in publication and use in the United States, the results of this study cannot be generalized to all ELL textbooks. Rather, the transferability of this study is limited to the schools and textbooks under investigation. Nevertheless, the conclusions and recommendations indicated here may benefit schools and educators in other contexts in the United States who use the same or similar student textbooks. Additionally, this study was tailored to the specific demographics and materials in Milwaukee area schools to benefit the instructional practice of the participating teachers. Some demographic and bibliographic modifications to this study may need to be made in order to replicate it in other populations.

Although the researchers were meticulous in the collection of data and its analysis, our findings can in no way purport to represent the entire corpus of ELL middle school textbooks available on the market. Further, the researchers can make no claim in regard to the application of these conclusions to such textbooks in general. By using a systematic convenience sample of only one chapter or unit per textbooks, the researchers may have overlooked other ethnic data in

the texts analyzed. Still, the theoretical scope of the study was to provide a template or protocol for future use by practioners to analyze other textbooks, or to probe more deeply deeper the ethnic appropriateness of a single ELL textbook. This is one of the clear limitations of this study as defined by its very scope and design. The coding of ethnicity in this study was based upon associations made by the coders. Our judgments are subject not only to human error, but also to our particular perceptions and interpretations. Hence, the study should not be construed to be an entirely empirical or quantitative analysis of the data collected.

Furthermore, ELL teachers should be cautious to jump to the conclusion that those particular textbooks are the best or most appropriate for their own classrooms. Other factors need to be taken into account. These include, but are not limited to, the L2 learning strategies of their particular students, the situational context in which the students live, and the teaching methods employed by the instructor of record. In short, the representation of ethnicity in a given textbook does not necessarily mean that a particular textbook is the most appropriate one for a group of students.

Recommendations for Further Research and Practice

Further study is needed to determine what occurs when learners actually attempt to use these recommended textbooks. The scope of the present study was to set up a protocol for analyzing the textbooks themselves in regard to the stated criteria. The next stage of research would include observations in actual instructional settings to collect information about the effectiveness of these same textbooks in real pedagogical practice. In addition, more research is needed to study how ethnicity is affected by a variety of factors including L2 learning strategies, situational context, and language teaching methods. It would be beneficial not only to research these factors separately, but also to assess how they interact to enhance or detract from ethnicity. To that end, in separate studies, the researchers have set about to analyze the content of these

same 33 textbooks for these other three factors. It is our hope that the combined results of these studies will further our goal of providing middle school teachers with more criteria to assist them in the selection of ELL textbooks they deem appropriate for their particular classrooms.

Some questions remain unanswered at the conclusion of this study. For example, future research that combines all three of these approaches might surface a more holistic view of the ways in which learning strategies and teaching strategies interplay.

Finally, because the present study did not solicit reactions from the L2 learners themselves, it would be enlightening to investigate how students of different ethnicities might respond to these textbooks. Such qualitative research might generate some unique insights to guide further investigations.

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Appendix A

Textbooks Analyzed

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Ackert, P., Giroux de Navarro, N., & Bernard, J. (1999). *Cause & effect: Intermediate reading practice*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle Publishers.

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McCloskey, M. L., & Stack, L. (Eds.). (1996). *Voices in literature bronze*. Boston, MA: Heinle.

McCloskey, M. L., & Stack, L. (Eds.). (1996). *Voices in literature silver*. Boston: Heinle.

McCloskey, M. L., & Stack, L. (Eds.). (1996). *Voices in literature gold*. Boston: Heinle.

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Twain, M. (1993 ed.). *The adventures of Tom Sawyer*. Essex, England: Longman Group UK Limited.

Appendix B

Sample of Coding Instruments

ETHNICITY

CODER: _____ **DATE _____**

BOOK TITLE: _____

Part 1: Place a tally mark in the table for each instance of an ethnic group appearing in pictures or graphics in the selected text. Groups of people should be counted as one instance. If two words are indicators of an ethnic group in the same sentence or paragraph, consider them as one instance.

Examples:

1. *A student in a sombrero is giving a presentation to his class. His poster board has "Guadalajara" written on it.*
2. *A picture of two African American boys and two Caucasian boys who are in a group, playing basketball.*

You would record your observations as demonstrated in bold below.

Ethnicity	Your Observations
American Indian/Alaska Native	
Asian	
Black, African, or African American	**I I**
Hispanic/Latino	**I**
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	
White	**I I**
Other (specify)	
Ambiguous	

Part 2: Place a tally mark (**I**) in the table for each reference to an ethnic group category, through direct reference, or through names, in the text (written data only). If a word or phrase is used repeatedly in the same paragraph, it should be considered as one reference. Coder needs to make a judgment based upon the context as to the ethnicity of the reference (since some proper names may be indicators of various ethnicities).

Examples:

1. *Liam called his friend Juan.*
2. *Sudjeet, Ranaa, and Patel enjoy going to hockey games.*

You would record your observations as indicated in bold in the table below.

Ethnic Group Category	**Your Observations**
American Indian/Alaska Native	
Asian	**I I I (Sudjeet, Ranaa, and Patel)**
Black/African/ African American	
Hispanic/Latino	**I (Juan)**
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	
White	**I (hockey games)**
Other (specify)	
Ambiguous	

Part 3: Whenever you can identify them, please place a tally mark (I) in the table below and report the salient trait(s) exhibited by each person or character, per ethnic group category, encountered in this selection (graphic and written data combined). You may report more than one trait for each person or character. Indicate whether this salient trait was portrayed in something you saw (S) or read (W). If a group of people is depicted, choose the dominant trait for the entire group.

Examples:

1. *A photograph of a Black boy jumping off of a picnic table accompanies a passage.*
2. *You read the following sentence in a passage: "The two Mexican American soldiers fought with courage and won."*

You would record your observations as indicated in bold in the table below.

	Mark each salient trait by ethnicity: AMERICAN INDIANS, ALASKAN NATIVES/ASIANS/BLACKS, AFRICAN AMERICANS/ HISPANICS, LATINOS/ PACIFIC ISLANDERS/WHITES/OTHERS
Dependent	S W
Independent	S W
Cooperative	S W
Competitive	S W **I I (winning) (HISPANICS)**
Directive	S W
Submissive	S W
Persistent	S W
Explorative	S W
Creative **Imitative**	S W S W
Nurturing	S W
Aggressive	S W **I I (fighting) (HISPANICS)**
Emotional	S W
Active	S **I (jumping off table) (BLACKS)** W **I I (fighting) (HISPANICS)**
Passive	S W

Part 4: Please record in the table below any instances of negative or overly simplified comments related to an ethnic group or ethnicity encountered during the reading of this selected passage. Indicate whether this was something seen (S) or written (W).

Use another sheet if necessary.

Examples:

1. *You see a group of people who look like gangsters/thugs. They are all African American.*
2. *In a sentence in a grammatical exercise, you read "Chinese parents value education more than American parents."*

Record your answers as indicated in bold in the table below.

Type of Comment	Negative or Oversimplified Comment
S	**African Americans portrayed as street thugs/gangsters.**
W	**"Chinese parents value education more than American parents."**