



Equity Audits of Ethnicity in Three Transitional Series: Moving Toward Diverse Series Books for Today's Young Readers

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Abstract

This manuscript explores representations of protagonists of various multicultural backgrounds in three transitional series. Prior studies, such as Gangi (2008) and Green and Hopenwasser (2017), exposed the deficiencies of multicultural literature in elementary classrooms, particularly among transitional series books. Green and Hopenwasser emphasize the developmental importance of equal representation in transitional books with characters of diverse ethnicities, because they act as mirrors and windows for students to learn, grow, and reflect. These studies argue that in order to allow children to see themselves and to develop a positive self-image in primary grades, it is critical for teachers to be thoughtful while choosing series books. For the purposes of this study, to explore ethnic and racial representations of protagonists with the actual demographics of third graders, researchers conducted an equity audit on three transitional series, published across different decades and commonly found in elementary classrooms. Equity audit data show multicultural representations lacking. In order for children to see healthy role models who mirror their own racial and ethnic contexts, authors describe the importance of teachers choosing series with strong, diverse protagonists to include in their classroom libraries.

Introduction

The assimilation of the multiplicity of ethnicities in American school systems has come a long way from times of segregation with much variety among its 323.1 million people. Racial and ethnic enrollment in public elementary schools increased steadily from the early 2000s. From

2004-2014, enrollment experienced a 75% increase of Hispanic, African American, Pacific Islander, and Asian students. By 2014, less than 50% of students enrolled in elementary schools in the U.S. identified as Caucasian, a 58% decrease from 2004. In 2017, the demographics of elementary students in the U.S. representing a minority background surpassed the demographics for students from Caucasian backgrounds (52% of the population vs. 48% of the population), reinforcing the reality of diversity, especially within public schools (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018).

Especially now, offering elementary students books reflecting acceptance and inclusiveness is important for developing a healthy self-identity in young children. Derman-Sparks and Edwards (2010) contend that bias is built into the institutions that serve young readers with one solution being to provide literature reflecting today's diversity. They believe diverse characters in books can engender respect, open discussions surrounding cultural contexts, even in neighborhood schools with homogenous populations, encouraging healthy development:

Inequity of resources, and the biases that justify that inequity, have an enormous impact on children's lives. It is important to remember that it is not human differences that undermine children's development but rather unfair, hurtful treatment based upon these differences. One major dynamic of advantage and disadvantage that especially affects early childhood practice is that of the 'visibility' or 'invisibility' of certain kinds of people or cultures in a program. Too many early childhood materials focus on children and families who resemble the stereotypes of American culture... (p. 3)

Therefore, multicultural transitional series literature with well-established ethnic protagonists allows students to explore worlds both identical and different from their own (Ausdale & Feagin, 2002). In particular, series books offer students opportunities to vicariously experience the world with characters across a multiplicity of books. Thus, in order to identify patterns or trends, an equity audit of a three transitional series for young students was performed. Comparisons across the three publication dates, ranging from 1940 to present provide interesting insights. Lastly, in order to encourage positive development for young readers, authors recommend current multicultural series books for young readers.

Review of Related Literature

Multicultural literature is defined as "books by and about people of color and First Nations." (Cooperative Children's Book Center [CCBC], 2019a). All children deserve to read books with underrepresented groups, including race, ethnicities, exceptionalities, and diversity outside the mainstream. Multicultural books include all genres, fiction, nonfiction, all formats, as well as transitional series books for young readers. Focusing on series books, Green and Hopenwasser (2017) describe transitional series books as straightforward, predictable, and comprehensible literature, usually for kindergarten through third grade students. Children engaged with transitional series will read for pleasure as an adult (Green & Hopenwasser, 2017). In the last five decades, the protagonists of transitional literature moved away from the cookie-cutter mold of an Anglo-Saxon, suburban, American character between the ages of nine and 13 (Szymusiak & Sibberson, 2001). By the late 1980s, the multicultural educational movement, a push for equal rights that relates to schools and schooling (Bishop, 1997, p. 2), allowed for the inclusion of diverse, complex characters in literature. According to Rudine Bishop (1997):

Protagonists in literature have slowly been socially and culturally reformed to include characters of Latinos, American Indians, Asian Americans, the disabled, gays and

lesbians, and the elderly; all of whom felt victimized, oppressed, or discriminated against in some way by the dominant majority. (p. 3)

Mirrors, Windows, Sliding Glass Doors

With an influx of immigrants attending U.S. schools, it is especially important for students of all backgrounds to engage in opportunities to grow, learn, and reflect on themselves and others around them, in and out of school (Tschida, Ryan, & Ticknor, 2014). With elementary schools in the U.S. becoming increasingly diverse, transitional series can provide a vehicle for all students to reflect upon themselves and others for healthy self-identity and growth. In fact, multicultural series literature can act as “*mirrors and windows*” (Bishop, 1990; Green & Hopenwasser, 2017). Exposure to literature can become a shared experience, allowing students to reflect on their own perspectives and individual backgrounds before looking at others. As children learn about themselves and others, they explore differences and similarities that allow them to learn to appreciate both their own and others’ cultures (Lowery & Sabis-Burns, 2007). Because traditionally children’s literature contained more white characters, students within this dominant culture view themselves and their lives as being “normal” and view other people of different ethnicities as “exotic” (Bishop, 1997). Moreover, minority students who do not see any reflections of themselves, or who see stereotypical, distorted, inaccurate, or comical depictions of themselves, may grow to view themselves of little value, stunting personal growth.

In 1990, Rudine Sims Bishop coined the term “sliding glass doors” to describe outlooks of diversity gained from children’s books, noting these fluctuating phases:

Books are sometimes windows, offering views of the worlds that may be real or imagined, familiar or strange. When lighting conditions are just right however, a window can also be a mirror. These windows are also sliding glass doors, and readers have only to walk through in imagination to become part of whatever world has been created or recreated by the author. (p. ix)

Sliding glass door books allow openings for vicarious adventures beyond their own experiences. The growing diversity in the U.S. contrasts with 73.3% of protagonists as Caucasian; therefore, it is crucial these “sliding glass doors” become more frequent (CCBC, 2019b).

The Influence of Children’s Books

With current demographic shifts due to the influx of immigrants and refugees (Bigler, 2002), daily needs for cross-cultural understandings may be eased through available and accurate literature. What children read influences how children view themselves, and when children encounter relatable characters, their comprehension and motivation to read improve (DeNicolo & Franquiz, 2006; Lind & Thomsen, 2018). When students select books that engender empathy and engagement by including characters of varied cultural backgrounds, children’s books can be used as a tool for developing personal identity and challenging stereotypes (Singer & Smith, 2003). At times, teachers appear inadequately prepared to mediate the unique challenges students from different cultural backgrounds daily encounter; Robinson (2013) found that interactive multicultural readings encourage students’ critical responses and important identity connections between themselves and characters. More importantly, for the current study, the appeal of series for young children can result in cumulative influences that book upon book within one series can engender (Greenlee, Monson, & Taylor, 1996).

Statement of Purpose and Related Methods

This research intends to examine the representations of protagonists among three popular third grade transitional series. Using equity audits as the analysis measure, researchers describe equity audits as “a review of inequalities within an area or of the coverage of inequality issues in a policy, program, or project, usually with recommendations as to how they can be addressed” (Defined Term, n.d, n.p.). Similar to the equity audit administered by Green and Hopenwasser (2017), this research focused on the first five books of three popular third grade series to compare representations of ethnicities in each book. Gangi (2008) found less than 5% of recommended series were considered multicultural. The audit was compared with current third grade demographics to compile a list of appropriate multicultural transitional series literature to promote positive development for all children. With consultation from *New York Times Best Sellers List* and *Goodreads Must-Have Series for ages 6-12*, three transitional series published across three different time periods were chosen to be audited based on continued popularity and likelihood to be in classroom libraries. From the series in those lists, *The Boxcar Children* series by Gertrude Chandler Warner, *The Bailey School Kids* series by Debbie Dadey, and *Franklin School Friends* series by Claudia Miller were identified to represent the changing demographics (1960-2016). Published from the current decade back to the 1940s, these books also offered comparisons of similar sets of protagonists: *The Boxcar Children* (two boys and two girls), *The Bailey School Kids* (two boys and two girls), and *Franklin School Friends* (two boys and three girls). Each book (of between 80 and 125 pages) contains a new plot or “adventure,” whether solving a problem or overcoming a challenge, and focused on one protagonist with all main characters involved in some aspect.

These series were also chosen based on publication dates; the span in which they were written shows the changing demographic and portrayal of racial and ethnic characters. The first five *Boxcar Children* books were published between 1942 and 1960, during a time when segregation between African Americans and Caucasians evidenced a rise. The first five *Bailey School Kids* series books, published between 1991-1992, were written during an ongoing debate of whether genes, environment, or ethnicity caused academic gaps among races. The five *Franklin School Friends* series books were published between 2014-2016 when growing diversity was valued and sought to eradicate ongoing racial stereotypes. These series allowed many comparisons when conducting, comparing, and contrasting equity audits.

Early on, the researchers read and discussed *10 Quick Ways to Analyze Children's Books for Racism and Sexism* (Council for Interracial Books for Children [CIBC], 1998). Also, the authors discussed scores on the *Harvard Implicit Association Tests (IATs)* (Harvard, 2011). This psychological assessment points out implicit bias in our associations. With reported only “slight automatic preferences” for each researcher, these precautions worked to keep the equity audits clear of potential bias.

These equity audits appraised front covers, protagonists, family dynamics, stereotypes, ethnicity, and any secondary characters, the focused queries from CIBC (1998) aide consistent, clear analysis. After reading and analyzing the 15 books (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007), the first author carefully recorded details and discussed findings with the second author. Any discrepancies or vague wording were clarified in weekly meetings.

Equity Audit Findings

First, *The Boxcar Children* remains in many classroom libraries despite original publication dates of 1942-1960. This is one of the oldest and most popular series found in a third-grade classroom library (Anthony, 2018). Although original *Boxcar Children* (Warner) ended publication in the 1960s, through Scholastic, this series continues to be ghost written in 2018. However, since most third-grade libraries include these books from the original series, the equity audit was conducted, focusing on four brown-haired, Caucasian protagonists. In the first book, *The Boxcar Children*, the orphaned children prove intelligent, scrappy, and self-sufficient by making a new life for themselves in a boxcar in the woods. See Figure 1 for the details of analysis in regard to these four protagonists: □ Henry (M/14): Calm, hardworking, very protective of his siblings, Jessie (F/12): Motherly, tidy, organized, Violet (F/10): Sensitive, shy, skilled (at sewing), and Benny (M/6): Energetic, cheerful, loves everyone and everything, especially food.

Figure 1: Compiled data sheet for *The Boxcar Children*

<i>The Boxcar Children</i> by Gertrude Chandler Warner					
Book Title:	Front Cover:	Protagonist Traits:	Family Dynamics:	Stereotype:	Ethnicity:
<i>The Boxcar Children</i> Introduction of Henry, Jessie, Violet, and Benny Alden, the main protagonists	-Four young, pale-skinned, brown-haired children dressed in clean, brightly colored clothes, looking hurried and scared. -They are climbing into a boxcar	-Henry, the oldest at 14, is calm, hardworking and is very protective of his siblings -Jessie, 12 years old, motherly, tidy, and organized -Violet, 10 years old, sensitive, shy, and skilled at sewing -Benny, 6 years old, loves food, very energetic, and cheerful	-The four children are orphaned and live together for a majority of the book. -They eventually move in with grandfather at the end of the book and live with him for the rest of the series.	-common stereotypes of orphans as resilient and scrappy, something the Alden's are -Their grandfather is also extremely wealthy, another stereotype to orphans	Caucasian
<i>Surprise Island</i> Introduction of the Alden's cousin Joe Alden	-Four young, pale-skinned, brown-haired children dressed in clean summer clothes -They are climbing out of a boat	-Joe Alden is young, adult friendly, very into the outdoors and enjoys spending time with his cousins	The children still live with their grandfather, whom Joe is visiting	N/A	Caucasian
<i>The Yellow House Mystery</i>	-Four pale-skinned, brown-haired children dressed in clean,	-Alice is a kind young woman who marries Joe and	The children still live with their wealthy grandfather	N/A	Caucasian

Introduction of the Alden's cousin Alice, Joe's wife	brightly colored clothes -Henry and Jessie appear older here, while Benny and Violet look the same	becomes the Alden's cousin			
<i>Mystery Ranch</i> Introduction of the Alden's great-aunt Jane Alden	-Depicts an older Jessie and Violet, dressed in sweaters and long pants - Clearly in a western town, driving a horse-drawn carriage	-At first, Aunt Jane is cranky, bossy, and unkind -Her disposition is eventually sweet and smart, and she treats the Alden's well	The children live with their Aunt Jane Alden for a while, as she is sickly and in need of care	N/A	Caucasian
<i>Mike's Mystery</i>	-Five young children dressed in clean clothes appear to be watching two dogs race one another	N/A	The children are once again living with their grandfather	N/A	Caucasian

The Bailey School Kids, the second series (1991-1992), was published at a time emphasizing multicultural education reform (Banks, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 1995). This series features a nonstereotypical, African American protagonist and three other Caucasian protagonists who whimsically experience crazy times. Most libraries continue to include this series. Throughout the book series, consistent characteristics of the four protagonists reveal: Liza (F): the timid peacemaker, avoids hurting others; Howard (M): enjoys school, a logical, level-headed, intelligent thinker; Melody (F/AfrAm): brave, competitive, athletic; and Eddie (M): mean-spirited (to non-friends), boisterous, dramatic. Figure 2 provides the analysis for this series.

Figure 2: Data Sheet 2 for *The Bailey School Kids*

<i>The Bailey School Kids</i> by Debbie Dadey					
Book Title:	Front Cover:	Protagonist Traits:	Family Dynamics:	Stereotype:	Ethnicity:
<i>Vampires Don't Wear Polka Dots</i>	- A traditional classroom setting, teacher is pale-skinned, class consists of 8 children, mostly depicted as Caucasian with	- Liza: the peacemaker of the group, doesn't like Eddie's ideas that usually result in hurting others. She's sensitive, scared around strangers, and whimsical	-Liza: Mother, father (plumber), and sister (high school). She also has a grandmother. - Howard (Howie): mom, two sisters, and dad (Aeronautics tech	N/A	Caucasian African-American

	<p>blond, red, or brown hair.</p> <p>- There is one boy and one girl with brown skin and black hair</p>	<p>- Howard (Howie): enjoys school, logical, level-headed and intelligent</p> <p>- Melody: brave, sporty (plays soccer) and extremely competitive</p> <p>- Eddie: comes across as mean, makes fun for believing in monsters. Creates drastic plans to dismiss monsters.</p> <p><i>At the beginning of this book, the reader can clearly see Melody/Liza & Howie/Eddie are pairs of best friends.</i></p>	<p>station worker) <i>Parents are divorced</i></p> <p>- Melody: Dad (Contractor), Mom (Lawyer), Aunt, great-aunt and cousin live nearby</p> <p>- Eddie: Grandmother, Father, little sister. Mom is deceased. He has an aunt who lives nearby.</p>		
<i>Werewolves Don't Go to Summer Camp</i>	<p>- Four kids and a man are sitting around a campfire under a starry night with full moon. - The man is Caucasian, with brown hair, a full beard, wearing jeans and a T-shirt.</p> <p>- Two kids, a girl and boy, (Liza and Howie) are Caucasian with blond hair.</p> <p>- (Melody), the other girl, is African-American with black hair. - Eddie, the other boy, is Caucasian with red hair. They are all wearing similar clothes to the man.</p>	<p>Same as above</p> <p>Liza: Sensitive about the fact that she can't swim</p>	Same as above	N/A	Caucasian African-American
<i>Santa Claus Doesn't Mop Floors</i>	<p>-A brick hallway with a paperchain decorating the wall.</p> <p>- A man with white beard, muscled legs, and potbelly (like</p>	Same as above	Same as above	N/A	Caucasian African-American

	<p>Santa), mops the floor.</p> <p>-Three kids in winter clothes (Eddie, Howie, and Melody) are watching.</p> <p>- Eddie: red hair, Caucasian</p> <p>-Howie: blond Caucasian</p> <p>-Melody: African-Am., black hair</p>				
<i>Leprechauns Don't Play Basketball</i>	<p>-A basketball court, (or maybe school gym).</p> <p>- A old man with white hair, sideburns, dressed in a green bow tie, red tracksuit, and purple sweater vest is shooting backwards hoops.</p> <p>- Two girls, Melody and Liza, and one boy, Eddie, are watching him</p> <p>Liza: Caucasian, blond hair. - Howie: Caucasian with blond hair</p> <p>- Melody: African-American with black hair</p>	Same as above	Same as above	N/A	Caucasian African-American
<i>Ghosts Don't Eat Potato Chips</i>	<p>An old attic, or upstairs room. An old, transparent looking man with white hair and mustache, dressed in a white shirt, brown suit, red bow tie, and brown hat. Howie, Melody, and Eddie are upstairs, look shocked at Howie's floating potato chips</p> <p>Eddie: red hair, Caucasian</p>	Same as above	Same as above		Caucasian African-American

	- Howie: blond, Caucasian -Melody: African- Am., black hair				
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Franklin School Friends (2014-2016), the most recent transitional series analyzed, portrayed five protagonists: three Caucasians, one African American, and one Asian American. Unlike the other two series, each book highlights one protagonist with a specific dilemma. Along with quite distinctive outward appearances, some stereotypical portrayals are included, such as the Asian American excelling academically. Below, Figure 3 presents details of the analyses. The protagonists' distinguishing characteristics are Kelsey Green (F/8): loves reading, dislikes math, extremely competitive; Annika Riz (F/8/Caucasian): Loves math, loyal, caring friend; Izzy Barr (African Am/F/9): Talented athlete, plays softball and runs track, very friendly; Simon Ellis (Asian Am/M/8): Enjoys school, excels in spelling, and wants to fit in; and Cody Harmon (M/9): Polite, enjoys animals, and dislikes school.

Figure 3: Data Sheet for *Franklin School Friends*

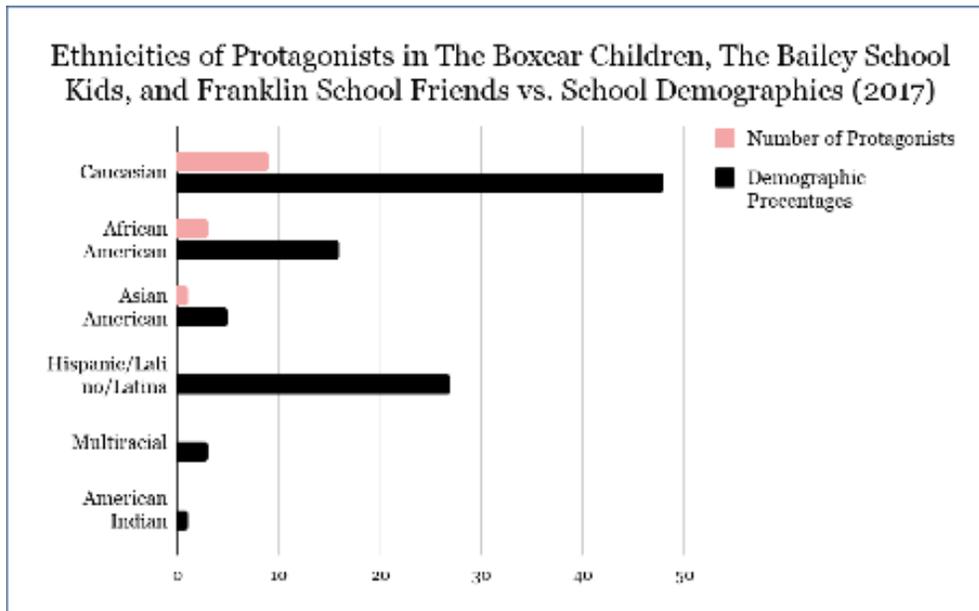
<i>Franklin School Friends</i> by Claudia Mills					
Book Title:	Front Cover:	Protagonist Traits:	Family Dynamics:	Stereotype:	Protagonist Ethnicity:
<i>Kelsey Green, Reading Queen</i>	Pale skinned girl with brown shoulder-length hair, & her nose in a book	- LOVES reading: reads during math class - Dislikes math -Competitive	Dad, Mom (Stay at Home), Brother (8th Gr), Sister (High School)	N/A	Caucasian
<i>Annika Riz, Math Whiz</i>	Pale skinned girl with blue eyes, & long, blonde braids, filling out a Sudoku page	-LOVES math: will do Sudoku during recess -Will whisper math answers to her friends to help avoid humiliation	Dad (High school math teacher) - family cook Mom (Tax accountant) Prime (Family dog)	Refutes the stereotype: "blonde girls are dumb," as Annika loves math, and is a math genius	Caucasian
<i>Izzy Barr, Running Star</i>	Girl with short, curly, braided brown hair, medium brown skin, & brown eyes; running	-LOVES sports, does track & field and softball,	Dad (Foreman of Factory) Mom (Hospital Nurse)	Enforces the stereotypes that African American girls are better athletes and of absentee African American fathers	African American

		<p>encouraging to others</p> <p>-Hides her feelings about her dad missing her games</p>	Dustin (Older half- brother)		
<i>Simon Ellis, Spelling Bee Champ</i>	Boy with short brown hair, blue eyes, and pale skin; holding a pencil and backpack	<p>-Enjoys all aspects of school, and excels in spelling</p> <p>-Plays the violin</p> <p>-Will do poorly on schoolwork in order to impress his friends</p> <p>-Extremely competitive</p>	<p>Dad (very educated, plays the cello)</p> <p>Mom (also highly educated, is an author)</p>	Enforces the stereotype that Asian American students are smarter and better at school subjects than others	Asian American
<i>Cody Harmon, King of Pets</i>	Pale skinned boy with short brown hair styled in a cowlick, & hugging a dog	<p>-Dislikes school and homework</p> <p>-Enjoys helping dad on their farm</p> <p>-LOVES animals: takes care of all pets and farm animals</p> <p>-Polite: Yes, Sir</p>	<p>Dad (Farmer and truck driver)</p> <p>Mom (Stay at home mom)</p> <p>Rex (pet dog)</p> <p>Mr. Piggins (Cody's Pet Pig)</p>	Enforces stereotype that farm children are poorly educated or dislike school	Caucasian

Comparing equity audits across three series.

Figure 4 compares the equity audits of ethnicities among protagonists in *The Boxcar Children*, *The Bailey School Kids*, and *Franklin School Friends* in comparison to the reality of school demographics. In *Boxcar Children* (1942), the ink illustrations are depicted as Caucasian, which ignores the segregated worlds of students of color of the past and the present. In *Bailey School Kids*, one of the four protagonists is portrayed non-stereotypically as African-American, while in *Franklin School Friends*, two of the four protagonists are of different ethnicities (Asian American; African American), yet characterized through stereotypes. All these books are available to children, yet the lack of diversity is apparent.

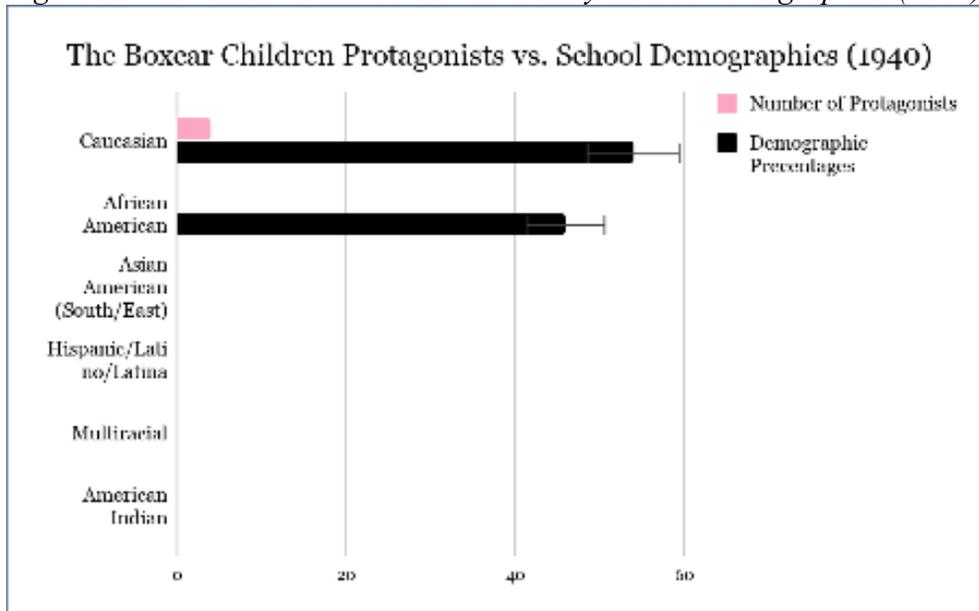
Figure 4: Protagonists and ethnicities across all series and 2017 school demographics



Chronological comparisons

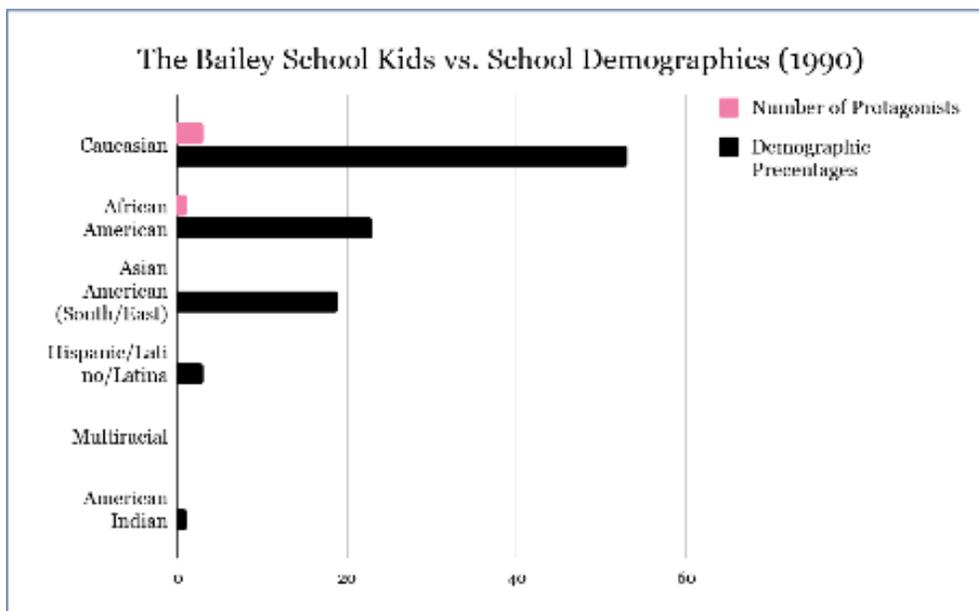
To afford chronological context for these equity audits, the demographics of each publication period is compared to the characters' ethnicities within the series. Clearly, the diversity of protagonists in transitional series does somewhat increase in concert with the reality of diverse school populations. First, Figure 5 shows actual 1940s' elementary school ethnic demographics, with only Caucasian (54%) and African Americans (46%) counted. Students in segregated schools had no exposure in school or in literature to other ethnicities as shown in the *Boxcar* (Figure 5).

Figure 5: *The Boxcar Children vs. Elementary School Demographics (1940)*



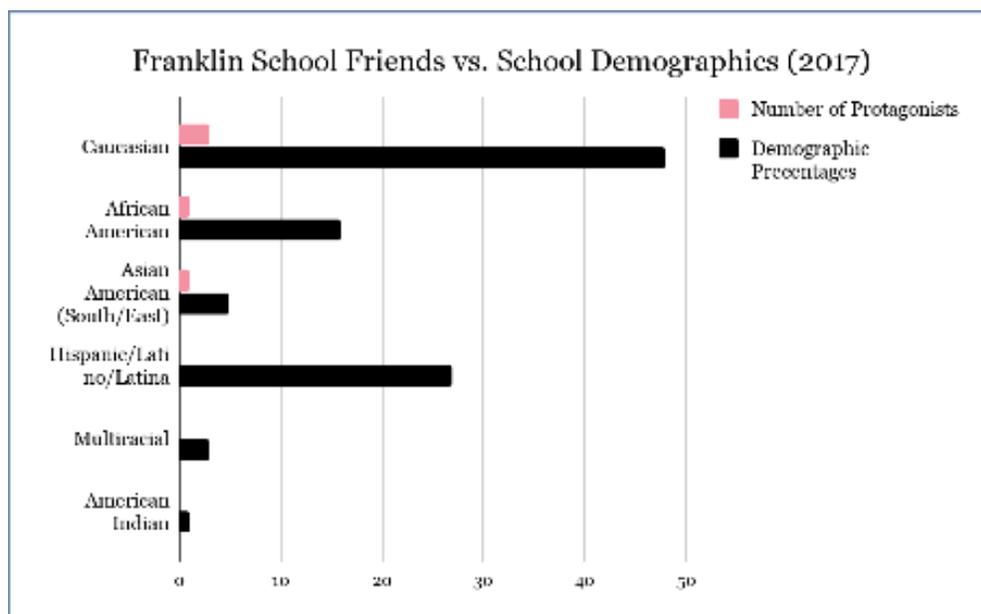
Next, Figure 6 presents elementary school ethnic demographics in the United States in 1990s; at the time of *The Bailey School Kids* series, demographics show Caucasian (53%), African American (23%), Asian/Pacific Islander (19%), and Hispanic (3%). The population slowly shifted to include more minorities. The protagonists of *Bailey School Kids* evidence more diversity than *Boxcar Children*, with one African American protagonist. *The Bailey School Kids* did not include any Asian or Hispanic characters, not in alignment with school demographics.

Figure 6: *The Bailey School Kids vs. elementary school demographics (1990)*



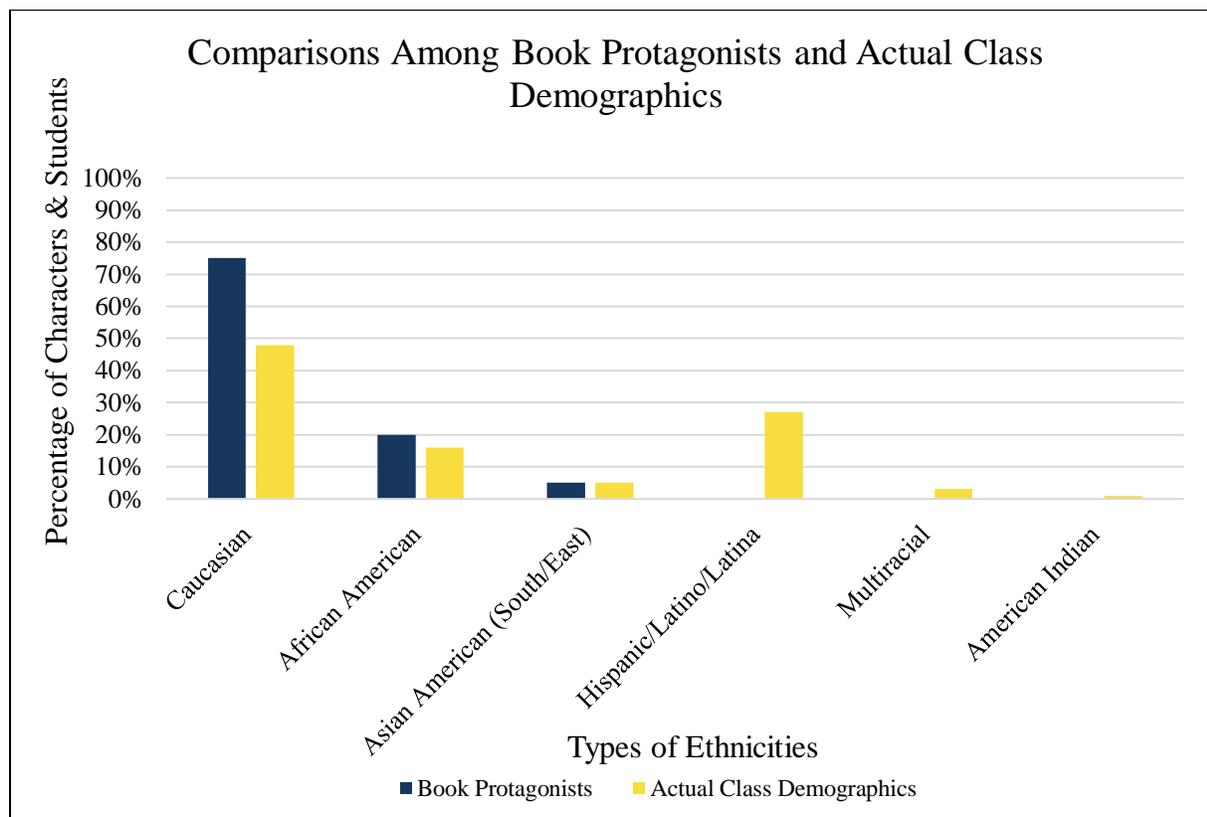
Lastly, Figure 7 offers elementary school ethnic demographics from 2017, at the time of the *Franklin School Friends* series, and shows increased diversity: Caucasian (48%), Hispanic (27%), African American (16%), Asian/Pacific Islander (5%), with multiracial (3%) and American Indian (1%) added. For the first time, five different minorities comprise the majority of U.S. students attending elementary school; Caucasian students become the new minority. African American students no longer represent the largest minority; Hispanic students emerge due to an influx of immigration. The increase from 3% (1990) to 27% (2017) also subsumes larger English Language Learners (ELLs). The introduction of multiracial demographics supports further evidence to include authentic multicultural literature.

Figure 7: *Franklin School Friends* vs. school demographics (2017)



Both an African American and Asian American character are included in *Franklin School Friends*, yet evidencing stereotypical portrayals. Also, though Hispanic students are the largest minority in reality, no relatable characters were included. *Franklin School Friends* series indicate fun, yet the books are not the most relevant transitional series for sharing with students. Especially considering the shift toward “minority majority,” students miss vicarious and relatable opportunities to engage with multicultural characters. Figure 8 compares the protagonists in these three series against the reality of today’s diverse demographics.

Figure 8: Comparisons among all book protagonists and actual class demographics



Concluding remarks

As the population in the U.S. continues to diversify and grow, it is essential children's series embrace multicultural literature to include diverse characters; however, a majority of popular elementary series continue to thwart the healthy construction of identity for underrepresented students. Therefore, teachers make strategic efforts to offer series books with realistic images of all ethnicities, families, communities, and cultures in order to meet the needs of today's diverse demographics (Davis, Brown, Liedel-Rice, & Soeder, 2005; Tschida, Ryan, & Ticknor, 2014). Therefore, Appendix A recommends current transitional series that afford relatable, often multiracial protagonists and characters. With complex, multicultural protagonists ranging from multiracial, Jewish, and Pakistani-American, all students are exposed to windows, mirrors, and sliding doors to compare and contrast cultural awareness, learn to take other perspectives, and build knowledgeable understandings across cultures. Children's books, extrapolated to the cumulative effect of reading and rereading engaging series books with multicultural characters, offer the kind of relatable characters to diverse students in our classes, essential for personal identity (Singer & Smith, 2003; Stephens, 1996), cross-cultural understandings and empathy (Lowery & Sabis-Burns, 2007; Stephens, 1996), and overall well-being (Lind & Thomsen, 2018; Spencer & Markstrom-Adams, 1990; Tschida et al., 2014). These developmental benefits of utilizing transitional series books are only possible when literature is shared that celebrates our wide range of diversity.

Appendix A

Recent Multicultural Transitional Series for Young Readers

***Get Ready for Gabi!* (Suitable for ages 7-10) Protagonist:** A third-grade **mixed Puerto Rican and Jewish girl** who speaks Spanish at home with her family, and English at school with her friends. She speaks Spanglish when upset.

Montes, M. (2003). *A Crazy Mixed-Up Spanglish Day, Get Ready for Gabi!*. Scholastic.

Montes, M. (2003). *Who's That Girl? Get Ready For Gabi!*. Scholastic.

Montes, M. (2004). *No More Spanish! Get Ready For Gabi!*. Scholastic.

Montes, M. (2004) *Please Don't Go! Get Ready For Gabi!*. Scholastic.

***Sophie Washington Series* (Suitable for ages 7-12)* Protagonist:** A fifth-grade **African-American girl** from Texas, characterized by two thick black braids sticking out of the side of her head.

Ellis, T. (2013). *Queen of the Bee, Sophie Washington Series*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing.

Ellis, T. (2014). *The Snitch, Sophie Washington Series*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing
First Place Purple Dragonfly Book Award Winner.

Ellis, T. (2018). *Things You Didn't Know About Sophie, Sophie Washington Series*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing.

Ellis, T. (2018). *The Gamer, Sophie Washington Series*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing.

Ellis, T. (2018). *Hurricane, Sophie Washington Series*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing.

Ellis, T. (2018). *Mission Costa Rica, Sophie Washington Series*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing.

***Jaden Toussaint, the Greatest* (Suitable for ages 5-10)* Protagonist:** A five-year old **African-American** boy genius from New Orleans, characterized by his short stature, big brain, and even bigger afro.

Dumas, M. (2015). *Jaden Toussaint the Greatest Episode 1: The Quest for Screen Time*. Plum Street Press.

Dumas, M. (2016). *Jaden Toussaint the Greatest Episode 2: The Ladek Invasion*. Plum Street Press.

Dumas, M. (2016). *Jaden Toussaint the Greatest Episode 3: Muffin Wars*. Plum Street Press.

Dumas, M. (2016). *Jaden Toussaint the Greatest Episode 4: Attack of the Swamp*. Plum Street Press.

Dumas, M. (2017) *Jaden Toussaint the Greatest Episode 5: Mission Star-Power*. Plum Street Press.

***Bobby vs. Girls* (Suitable for ages 7-10) Protagonist:** A shy, studious, skateboard-loving **Chinese-English/German/French** boy who enjoys going to school and keeping to himself.

Yee, L. (2010). *Bobby vs. Girls (Accidentally), Bobby vs. Girls Series*. Scholastic Paperbacks.

Yee, L. (2012). *Bobby the Brave (Sometimes), Bobby vs. Girls Series*. Scholastic Paperbacks.

Yasmin Series! (Suitable for ages 5-8) Protagonist: A spirited **Pakistani-American** second grader with a BIG imagination who thinks creatively and loves her family's traditions, from her Baba's beard to her Mama's hijab.

Faruqi S. (2018). *Yasmin the Explorer, Yasmin Series*. Picture Window Books.

Faruqi S. (2018). *Yasmin the Fashionista! Yasmin Series*. Picture Window Books.

Faruqi S. (2018). *Yasmin the Painter, Yasmin Series*. Picture Window Books.

Lola Levine Series (Suitable for ages 8-12) Protagonist: A **Jewish-Mexican American**, Spanish-speaking soccer player who learns to balance her mixed-up lives at school and at home.

Brown, M., & Dominguez, A. (2016). *Lola Levine Is Not Mean!* Little Brown Books.

Brown, M., & Dominguez, A. (2016). *Lola Levine Drama Queen*. Little Brown Books.

Brown, M., & Dominguez, A. (2016). *Lola Levine and the Ballet Scheme*. Little Brown Books.

Brown, M., & Dominguez, A. (2017). *Lola Levine Meets Jelly and Bean*. Little Brown Books.

Brown, M., & Dominguez, A. (2017). *Lola Levine and the Vacation Dream*. Little Brown Books.

Brown, M., & Dominguez, A. (2016). *Lola Levine Is Not Mean!* Little Brown Books.

Simply Sarah (Suitable for ages 6-8) Protagonist: A young **Caucasian** girl who lives on a bustling New York city block and goes on crazy adventures. She meets all sorts of people from **African-American, Chinese, and Mexican** backgrounds.

Naylor, P. (2009) *Anyone Can Eat Squid!, Simply Sarah*. Las Vegas, NV: Two Lions.

Naylor, P. (2010) *Patches and Scratches, Simply Sarah*. Las Vegas, NV: Two Lions.

Naylor, P. (2012) *Cuckoo Feathers, Simply Sarah*. Las Vegas, NV: Two Lions.

Naylor, P. (2013) *Eating Enchiladas, Simply Sarah*. Las Vegas, NV: Two Lions.

Jasmine Toguchi (Suitable for ages 6-9) Protagonist: A **Japanese-American** girl who just wants to make mochi with her family, but they have other plans for a third-grader like her.

Florence, D. (2017). *Jasmine, Toguchi, Mochi Queen*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Florence, D. (2017) *Jasmine, Toguchi, Super Sleuth*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Florence, D. (2018) *Jasmine, Toguchi, Drummer Girl*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Florence, D. (2018) *Jasmine, Toguchi, Flamingo Keeper*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

**Denotes transitional series that are ongoing*

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