

ABSTRACT

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Title: Examining the Racial and Ethnic Diversity of Children’s Literature in Bridgeport Public Elementary School Libraries

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For many years, diverse characters have been underrepresented in children’s literature. Studies have demonstrated the importance of children seeing depictions of themselves and others within the texts they read. A lack of diverse books can detrimentally impact both those who are represented and those who are not. This study examined the prevalence of racially and ethnically diverse main characters in the picture books available to students attending three public elementary schools in Bridgeport, Connecticut. The titles of over 600 books were collected, and the racial or ethnic category of the main character was examined and recorded for each. This information was then compared to the student demographic information for both the individual schools and the district to determine whether the students in these schools have adequate opportunities to see both themselves and their peers represented through the books available to them in their school libraries. Results showed that each of the three school library collections contained a majority of books depicting White main characters. While school demographic information records Black and Hispanic as the two most represented racial and ethnic categories within Bridgeport Public Elementary Schools, these two categories were severely underrepresented in the book collections of the three schools examined. These results, which are consistent with nation-wide children’s literature publication trends, suggest a need for further analysis and diversification of book collections in Bridgeport public elementary schools.