



Intersections of Race and Bullying in Children’s Literature: Transitions, Racism, and Counternarratives

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Abstract

In classrooms, reading and responding to literature has been identified as a powerful method for dealing with critical social issues, including bullying and racism. The purpose of this article is to analyze children’s literature published from 1997 to 2017 that highlights the intersection of bullying and racism. Our article begins with a description of how critical race theory is foundational to our understanding and how research on bullying illuminates our analysis of children’s literature. Using critical content analysis, we analyze relevant picturebooks to address how racism can influence bullying behavior. Finally, this article concludes with implications for classroom practices and ideas for future directions.

Keywords Children’s literature · Critical race theory · Bullying · Critical content analysis

Bullying is a convenient way for institutions to acknowledge the *fact* of the conflict within their walls without having to face the *meaning* of that conflict (Loach and Bloor 1995, p. 18 italics original).

Children’s literature can play a role in facilitating important conversations, encouraging people to explore how “systems of meaning and power affect the lives they lead” (Leland and Harste 2000, p. 507). In classrooms, reading and responding to literature has been identified as a powerful method for dealing with difficult topics (Bargiel et al. 1997; Dutro 2008). Picturebooks which focus on the most fundamental emotions and experiences of life provide opportunities for children to consider their own feelings and responses about a topic (for instance, see Sipe and Bauer 2001; Short 2011). We believe that turning to a book can be a powerful and effective method for engaging with children in exploring topics that might be considered “difficult”.

Childhood aggression, specifically bullying, is considered a critical social and educational problem (Cook et al. 2010) and there is an increase in the number of children’s picturebooks pertaining to this important topic (Wiseman

and Jones 2018). Research exists on bullying programs and interventions with children (e.g., Ansary et al. 2015); however, current research on bullying fails to explore and acknowledge the influences of larger societal forces such as racism, ableism, sexism and homophobia in understanding relationships of power and dominance among children (Felix and You 2011; Meyer 2007). In order to understand these relationships among children, we find it essential to consider anti-Semitism and Islamophobia as additional societal forces. As scholars of children’s literature, we have found that this gap, particularly related to how racism affects social interactions and bullying, exists in picturebooks that address bullying.

The purpose of this article is to analyze children’s literature that address both bullying and racism from a critical perspective. Our article begins with a description of how critical race theory (CRT) is foundational to our understanding and how research on bullying illuminates our analysis of children’s literature. Using critical content analysis (Johnson et al. 2016), we analyze relevant picturebooks to address how racism can influence bullying behavior. The question we seek to answer is: How do children’s picturebooks depict the intersections of bullying and racism?

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Theory and Research

Critical Race Theory

In schools, as well as other contexts where children play, learn, and live, race is central to interpersonal relationships and educational or social opportunities. CRT, the theoretical lens that informs our study, has been defined as an interdisciplinary approach to consider education from the perspectives of people of color (Solórzano and Yosso 2000) and recognizes how children's experiences are affected by their racial identity. These racialized experiences affect children's well-being (Rodríguez and Kim 2018; Yenika-Agbaw 2014). CRT posits that race is socially constructed (Gilborn 2015) and acknowledges how the role of White supremacy affects what people of color have encountered and still continue to encounter; these struggles affect both their freedom and equality (Chaudhri and Teale 2013; Ladson-Billings 1998; Ladson-Billings and Tate 1995). Further, CRT recognizes that "the majority of racism remains hidden beneath a veneer of normality and it is only the more crude and obvious forms of racism that are seen as problematic by most people" (Gilborn 2015, p. 278). CRT emerged from legal scholarship and was introduced into educational research to explain how policies and practices create racial oppression for children of color (Ladson-Billings and Tate 1995; Michael-Luna 2008).

CRT highlights the ways that interactions in the classroom and community can create more inclusive learning opportunities, particularly for those who have been silenced or marginalized in school settings due to racism (Solórzano and Yosso 2000; Yenika-Agbaw 2014). While CRT has been used to understand White savior or dominant narratives for specific cultural groups (i.e., Asian Critical Race Theory/Asian Crit or Latin Critical Race Theory/LatCrit), we take a broad approach by applying CRT across different cultures to elucidate hegemonic structures in various contexts. Addressing the role of race, particularly how it intersects with social and personal interactions, is one way that we see to present anti-racist pedagogy in the classroom (Mosley 2010). In many classroom contexts, teachers are not comfortable raising issues related to race because they have the perception that exploring topics such as identity and privilege as related to racial and cultural identity can make both teachers and learners vulnerable (Dozier et al. 2006; Falter and Kerkhoff 2018). Therefore, we see the need to connect theory to practice using a CRT lens in order to create more inclusive learning opportunities for children who have been silenced or marginalized and consider whether experiences depicted within picturebooks are authentic (Rodríguez and Kim 2018).

Two important aspects of CRT framed our understanding of children's literature. First is the notion of

counterstories or counternarratives (Ladson-Billings 1999). Counternarratives provide one way of recognizing voice, naming people's reality, and providing alternatives to subversive and hegemonic ideologies (Yenika-Agbaw 2014). Second is the concept of microaggressions, which are defined as subtle and unconscious forms of racism that perpetuate discriminatory behaviors (Solórzano et al. 2000). Racial microaggressions are insidious comments and actions coming from discriminatory practices that alienate and harm students of color. These may be initiated by adults and children, teachers and students. We note that there are multiple forms of inequalities that affect children's participation in different contexts across time, including inequalities that exist due to discrimination based on race, class, and sexual identification, among other factors (Gilborn 2015). These systemic everyday acts of racism include: both verbal and non-verbal assaults carried out in subtle, automatic or unconscious forms; assaults that are based on an individual's race, gender, class, sexuality, language, immigration status, phenotype, accent, or surname; and assaults that result in psychological, physiological, and academic burden (Kohli and Solorzano 2012; Ledesma and Solorzano 2013; Pérez Huber and Cueva 2012; Pierce 1970, 1995; Solorzano and Pérez Huber 2012). Such racial microaggressions occur in contexts such as schools, putting the individual child in a precarious position where they must respond to interpersonal and institutional behaviors (Kohli and Solorzano 2012; Solorzano and Pérez Huber 2012).

In order to name and describe racism, we highlight racial microaggressions as forms of everyday racism (Pérez Huber and Solorzano 2015). In addition, we consider it valuable to further establish that *macroaggressions* correspond with the ideological foundation which pertains to institutional racism (Pérez Huber and Solorzano 2015). Macroaggressions are "the set of beliefs and/or ideologies guided by White supremacy that justify actual or potential structural arrangements that legitimate the interests and/or positions of a dominant group over non-dominant groups" (Pérez Huber and Solorzano 2015, p. 232). White supremacy serves as an ideological foundation that pertains to institutional racism and enables racial microaggressions that are carried out against individuals who are at racial margins (Pérez Huber and Solorzano 2015).

Conversations regarding racism and diversity are needed to provide insight into the role of White supremacy, to bring forth understanding of micro- and macroaggressions, and to foster awareness of how this affects children in educational settings. Literature can be used as a way to discuss exclusionary practices and privilege for children and adults when teachers or educators facilitate conversations regarding race and diversity (Yenika-Agbaw 2014). Discussions using children's and young adult literature can provide opportunities

for pre-service and in-service teachers to reflect on race and culture. Responses to literature are often starting points for deeper conversations related to institutional racism in education (Falter and Kerkhoff 2018; Mosley 2010). CRT serves as an important lens to explore how racism and culture are revealed in children's literature (Yenika-Agbaw 2014).

Adopting a CRT framework provides a commitment to social justice by “naming racist injuries and identif[y]ing their origins” (Solozano et al. 2000, p. 63). For example, racial microaggressions might be based on phenotype, which refers to the observable characteristics of a person, such as skin color or wearing a hijab (Kohli and Solorzano 2012; Ledesma and Solorzano 2013; Pérez Huber and Cueva 2012; Pierce 1970, 1995; Solorzano and Pérez Huber 2012). Therefore, addressing these issues involves specifically describing and naming the experience of microaggressions, bullying and harassment. Framing understandings of children's literature with a CRT lens has the potential to show children that they are not alone in being marginalized, it's important to hear arguments and experiences of those who have endured racism; and, all children should speak up and speak out against injustices (Solozano et al. 2000).

Related Research on Bullying and Race

Bullying is defined as a conscious and willful act of aggression or manipulation by one or more people against a targeted person or people in either physical or emotional ways (Entenman et al. 2006; Gregory and Vessey 2004). Bullying is commonly defined as persistent threats, aggression, or violence; however, it has been proposed that we need to connect the idea of bullying with harassment to understand the complexities of social dynamics in schools (Meyer 2007, 2008, 2014). Meyer (2014) defines harassment as any biased behavior that negatively impacts a target or an environment (p. 218). Harassment can be considered similar to bullying because it refers to an intentional negative treatment that is directed at the individual (Meyer 2014). Both the notion of bullying and harassment refer to behaviors that are negative and directed towards students and can affect opportunities and experiences at school (Felix and You 2011). Victims of bullying or harassment often experience decreased school performance and have lower self esteem (Peguero and Williams 2013).

Race is relevant to both bullying and harassment in schools because children who face race-based aggression and discrimination experience a negative and unaccepting school culture. Racism undergirds interpersonal relationships and can be the root cause of bullying and harassment since it affects which children are targeted and attributed to negative behaviors. For instance, research on Black and Latino students demonstrates that when they do not conform to stereotypes, these students experience increased bullying

victimization in schools (Peguero and Williams 2013). Furthermore, research has demonstrated that Black students are more likely to be viewed as bullies by both teachers and peers (Markham et al. 2006; Peguero and Williams 2013).

Children's literature provides a way to raise issues with children who impose their hegemonic attitudes or are affected by bullying based on racism. Since research has documented how important it is for bystanders to speak out (Ansary et al. 2015), we feel that classroom conversations that happen regarding racism, harassment, and classroom environments are imperative for teachers to address. Sharing stories that focus on this topic can facilitate important conversations, discussions, and responses that we hope can be a starting point for acknowledging these critical issues and supporting children who experience this treatment.

Methods

This study relies on a database developed by Angela and Jill that identified picturebooks about bullying from January 1997 to February 2017 (Wiseman and Jones 2018). Using NoveList Plus (EBSCO 2017), a literature search engine that categorizes children's literature by topic and age range, we identified picturebooks related to bullying that have been published and distributed in the United States in the last 20 years. In addition, Angela searched for the same terms at the International Youth Library in Munich, Germany, using the library database. The initial search terms used were “bullying, bully, teasing, or fighting” and fiction texts and selected the “apply related words” option to ensure a comprehensive search. There were 698 books listed as matches. By reading the summaries and often the texts themselves, we determined that 150 books about bullying met our selection criteria.

We analyzed this dataset to create a subset of picturebooks that address the intersections of bullying and racism, focusing on racial identity and bullying incidents that related to human characters. We excluded animal characters because the connection to race was less direct, even though we recognize that those characters may have certain characteristics that result in negative treatment. Our initial subset consisted of three books and we concluded, due to the limited way that bullying is defined, there might be books that were not labeled under the same search terms. Therefore, we extended our search beyond those keywords. Furthermore, we identified additional books by searching topics such as “racism” and “bullying and race” on blogs, Amazon searches, and Google. For instance, we identified one of our exemplar books, *First Day in Grapes* (Perez 2002), through a blog and the use of the following additional keywords: first day of school, migrant labor, Mexican Americans, and schools. After identifying 11 books, we read each book and

eliminated those that depicted bullying and incidents of racism outside of U.S. contexts, such as *Desmond and the Very Mean Word* (Tutu 2012), which takes place in South Africa. After reading and analyzing these 11 texts, we determined six texts that fit our criteria (see Table 1).

We used critical content analysis to analyze the identified texts for the purpose of understanding underlying messages with a particular focus on issues of power in social practices (Johnson et al. 2016). In an effort to challenge conditions of inequality by understanding, uncovering, and transforming, a critical stance focuses on locating power in social practices by addressing conditions of inequality that are embedded in society (Rogers 2004). Our literary analysis focused on the ways racism operates in various contexts and in a child's daily life. We also considered how racism affects characters; particularly how racism affects those who may be challenging discrimination and overcoming disadvantages (Barron 2014).

The figure listed below (see Fig. 1) outlines our steps of analysis that are foundational to critical content analysis and closely follows the steps outlined by Johnson et al. (2016). First, we took on the role as readers by immersing in the story and “living within”. We read each picturebook twice (uninterrupted at first and then a second time, which enabled us to take notes). Second, we engaged in the thematic analysis of each picturebook by selecting a critical theory that seemed to have the most effective lens from critiquing each text (Johnson et al. 2016). Our theoretical framework was informed by CRT and critical theories; we considered issues of racism and power by inquiring whose story is told and/or from whose point of view, who has power and/or agency, and how the story is resolved. Third, we engaged in a descriptive analysis (e.g., Rogers 2004) of each text by noting textual and visual elements, such as grammar (e.g., gestural, spatial, linguistic, visual design modes and patterns) and functional linguistics (e.g., genre, discourse, and style). Finally, we implemented a critical analysis of each picturebook by considering how genre, discourse, and style work together to establish meaning. Then, we continued the iterative process of thematic, descriptive, and critical analysis by discussing discrepancies and confirming themes.

While we recognize that institutional racism and historical discrimination often lead to bullying situations, our identification and analysis of picturebooks focused on personal interactions that fit the definition of bullying and persistent aggression focused on an individual or larger institutional systems. In addition to examining each selected picturebook through a critical content analysis lens, our understanding was informed by psychological perspectives regarding bullying (i.e. Meyer 2014; Peguero and Williams 2013). Our critical content analysis revealed three important themes across our text set: (1) *Transitions to new places* where characters experienced negative treatment as they were displaced

or relocated; (2) *Naming and describing racism* revealed how characters and storylines reflected racist practices; and (3) *Counternarratives* are perspectives of nondominant children and provided opportunities to understand the perspectives of marginalized populations or people. Table 2 details definitions and examples of our themes. In our “Findings” section, we explore these themes in relation to the picturebooks that were analyzed.

Findings

Transitions to New Places

In our picturebook set, most of the main characters experience a transition into a new home environment, a new school environment, or a combination of both. These transitions often result in a significant impetus for racism and bullying. In addition, stories reflect how this transition evokes apprehension in the characters who are adjusting to their new environment. While moving and/or starting a new school represents a difficult adjustment for children (Short 1994), these stories demonstrate how peer interactions exacerbate this change.

Many children encounter a significant change as they start a new school; they may feel apprehensive about whether they will like the new environment and how they might fit with peers. In the selected books, the characters experience transitioning to a new school as a result of moving due to migration, desegregation, or family work opportunities. For example, Chico, in *First Day in Grapes* (Perez 2002), has attended several new schools because he is the son of Latinx migrant workers. This book portrays his experience beginning third grade at another new school. Illustrations in the book depict a difficult first day; images from the book show that the bus driver is unwelcoming of him, children on the bus are mocking him, and he shrugs uncomfortably in front of the classroom as he introduces himself to the class. Chico's first day at this new school mirrors his past experiences at other schools; children tease him and make derogatory comments based on his language and culture. He hypothesizes that “maybe it was because he often moved before kids got to know him, or because he spoke Spanish sometimes” (Perez 2002, n.p.).

Another picturebook, *Busing Brewster* (Michelson 2010), takes place during the 1960s Civil Rights Movement and desegregation of schools in which characters experienced verbal and physical assault when they attended a new school. In this book, the mother decides to send her sons, Bryan and Brewster, to Central School in the area of town where most of the White people live rather than the predominantly Black neighborhood school. Bryan displays outright disdain for having to attend the school whereas Brewster is hopeful

Table 1 Summaries of selected picturebooks

Book title	Author	Illustrator	Book synopsis	Notable awards or recognition
Busing Brewster	Richard Michelson	R.G. Roth	This book was selected as an exemplar because of the blatant bullying behavior based on race. This book is a fictional account of the racial integration of schools.	New York Times Best Illustrated Children's Book Award NCSS/CBC Notable Children's Trade Books in the field of social studies
Chocolate Me!	Taye Diggs	Shane W. Evans	An African-American boy is teased in his neighborhood based on his skin color, hair, and other aspects of his appearance. This book was written by two friends, Taye Diggs and Shane Evans, to describe their own experiences fitting in as kids. Now as fathers, they wrote this story for their own kids	
First Day in Grapes	L. King Perez	Robert Casilla	A child of migrant workers is bullied when he starts a new school. He stands up to the bullies by using his academic strengths, challenging them to math problems that they cannot solve	Pura Belpré Award
Layla's Head Scarf	Miriam Cohen	Ronald Himbler	Layla, a Muslim student, is subjected to bullying based on wearing her hijab. This is part of a series focused on "social and emotional learning" that addresses topics that occur in schools	
Mr. Lincoln's Way	Patricia Polacco	Patricia Polacco	Eugene is bullying other classmates using racial slurs. His principal, Mr. Lincoln, addresses his racist attitude and helps him learn to be kind to others	
Sumi's First Day of School Ever	Soyung Pak	Joung Un Kim	Sumi is nervous about how she will be treated as she begins her first experience in school. She characterizes school as scary and lonely and navigates both positive and negative interactions with her peers	
I'm New Here	Anne Sibley O'Brien	Anne Sibley O'Brien	Three students, Maria, Jim, and Fatima, are new to the school and also new to the United States. This book depicts how children can be affected by inclusive and exclusive practices in the classroom	

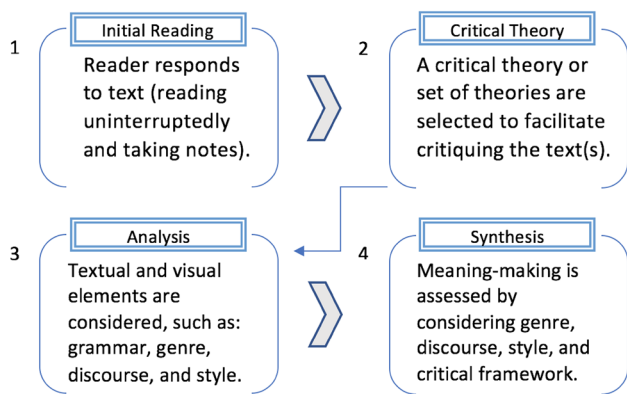


Fig. 1 Four steps of critical content analysis

of the possible opportunities at the new school his mother describes. The children witness White adults protesting against Black children attending the same school as their own children. The illustrations reflect the aggression and hostility facing Brewster and Bryan and other children as they ride the bus and enter the school. One image, a double page spread, depicts a White student with an aggressive stance, hovering over Bryan as he drinks at the water fountain and on the adjoining page, we see many angry-faced people. Once inside the school, Brewster encounters the same treatment from another student who decries “Wish your kind all stayed at Franklin [the neighborhood school]” (Michelson 2010, n.p.).

Three of the books address immigration and depict how the characters experience bullying and harassment as they adjust to a new culture and life in a new country. Two characters, Sumi and Chico, exhibit anxiety as they transition to a new country and a new school because of concern of how others will treat them. In some of the texts, the characters attempt to seek peers’ acceptance while still maintaining customs and cultural values of their families’ home country. In the book *Layla’s Head Scarf* (Cohen 2009), Layla is a Muslim girl who feels reticent to enter her new first-grade classroom. While other students are engaged in the morning routine with the teacher, Layla is uncomfortable and does not want to participate. One student explicitly teases her about what he refers to as the “hat” she is wearing, while illustrations depict her wearing a hijab. The illustrations incorporate detailed facial expressions of characters allowing the reader to interpret the characters’ feelings throughout the text. In another scene, Layla stands alone with a worried expression while her classmates engage with one another joyfully on the playground. The story ends on a positive note, and with peer and teacher support, Layla finally feels comfortable and participates in classroom activities.

In order to facilitate a smoother transition and acceptance by their peers, some characters try to assimilate. In

Table 2 Emergent themes across the text set

Theme and definition	Questions	Example
Transitions to new places	From where are characters transitioning? To what new environment are they transitioning? What happens in this process?	In <i>Sumi’s First Day of School Ever</i> (Pak 2003), Sumi, who has moved from Korea, is apprehensive about going to school and practices how to say her name in English
Naming and describing racism	How is racism identified and described? How is racism portrayed?	<i>Layla’s Head Scarf</i> (Cohen 2009) depicts a scene where a White classmate, Danny, refers to Layla’s hijab as a hat and demands that she take it off
Counternarratives	How are stories of racism and marginalization told? Do these stories run counter to dominant discourses? Do these subvert alternative views? Are the characters allowed to tell their stories? Who has power? When is power taken away? How do bullies build on racism/discriminatory practices to wield power?	In <i>Mr. Lincoln’s Way</i> (Polacco 2001), the principal stands up against a boy’s racist beliefs by befriending him and showing him how his perceptions and racism was unfounded

Sumi's First Day of School Ever (Pak 2003), Sumi has recently immigrated to the United States. Korean is the heritage language that her family uses at home. Because she is concerned with how others will interpret her language, Sumi practices the English phrase “Hello, my name is Sumi” that her mother teaches her. When Sumi arrives at school, she sees so many things that are unfamiliar to her and hears the other students conversing in a language she does not understand. When her mother leaves her, the illustration depicts Sumi standing alone and looking down, on the far end of the classroom and unsure of how to join in. We see from the text and the images that school is a lonely and scary place for Sumi. This feeling becomes worse when Sumi encounters a White boy who uses his fingers to pull back his eyes and makes a face at her—making fun of the shape of her eyes. Two classmates (a White girl and a Black boy) are depicted standing next to the boy, applauding and laughing. The importance of bystanders is significant in this story. Initially, classmates did not come to Sumi's assistance to resolve the bullying incident. When she becomes acquainted with a classmate named Mary who is kind to her at recess, Sumi finally feels at ease. For each of the characters in our books, the transition to a new school, a new country, or both, creates apprehension and tension. Experiences with other students in the new setting adds to their experiences in both positive and negative ways.

Naming and Describing Racism

According to Pérez Huber and Solorzano (2015), “everyday racism can be experienced anywhere and everywhere” (p. 223). For us to assess how this text set depicts everyday racism in school, we recognize racial microaggressions as a form of systemic everyday racism employed “to keep those at racial margins in their place” (Pérez Huber and Solorzano 2015, p. 223).

In *First Day in Grapes* (Perez 2002), Chico refrains from sharing some of his family's cultural practices in classroom interactions and his peers initially overlook his strength in math and mock his language skills. Rather than simply labeling this episode as bullying, we recognize that such episodes reflect systemic racism. An instance where Chico is made fun of for his language skills is an example of racial microaggression in that the assault targets Chico's language, accent, and immigration status. Illustrations throughout the book document how two boys specifically target him, throughout the day, on the bus and in the cafeteria.

Understanding the role of how microaggressions connect with phenotypes (e.g., Pérez Huber and Cueva 2012) was important in the text *Layla's Head Scarf* (Cohen 2009) where a White classmate, Danny, refers to Layla's hijab as a hat and demands she remove it. We noted several examples of racism based on an individual's observable

characteristics. The book addressed important aspects of racism and bullying; however, we also noted that the use of the term *headscarf* rather than *hijab* reflected a lack of cultural understanding, at best, and possibly an example of cultural misappropriation. Whereas Layla is assaulted for wearing a hijab, *Chocolate me!* (Diggs 2015) depicts a scene where White children refer to a boy's skin as “brown like dirt” and we see from the pictures that the children in the neighborhood are a lighter complexion. Such assaults reflect how racial microaggressions are a form of systemic everyday racism.

While *Chocolate me!* (Diggs 2015) tells the story about a Black boy who endures forms of everyday racism in a predominantly White neighborhood, it is important to highlight that the existence of the White neighborhood corresponds to an ideological foundation (i.e., macroaggression) that secures the separation of residency according to race and/or class (Pérez Huber and Solorzano 2015). In addition, *Busing Brewster* (Michelson 2010) depicts historical perspectives of White supremacy, specifically, the experiences of Black children as they attended integrated schools in the 1960s. We see visual images of White adults who march against busing minority students to the school, hold signs, and throw rocks at the bus.

Counternarratives That Highlight Conditions of Inequality

In analyzing these six picturebooks, the theme of counternarratives emerged as a significant aspect of exploring racism and marginalization through children's literature (Yenika-Agbaw 2014). The children in the stories share their counternarratives, reflecting how they are affected by racism and discrimination. It is not a coincidence that five of the books, with the exception of *Chocolate Me!* (Diggs 2011), feature characters who transition to a new school and experience racism and microaggressions in school contexts. By highlighting the context of schooling, these stories place importance on the role of education in perpetuating racist interactions for children. Of the five books set in school contexts, all depict children starting a new year, and in several cases, coming from another country. For example, In *Sumi's First Day of School Ever* (Pak 2003), Sumi feels that school is “lonely”, “scary”, and “mean” because of how she is received by her classmates. In *I'm New Here*, three students are new to the school. One of the students, Fatimah, is depicted sitting alone at a table while a group of girls intentionally excludes her.

Even before children experience bullying or harassment in schools, they may realize the pressure to suppress their identities due to how their peers may treat them, reflecting on hegemonic expectations of what constitutes family or culture. This experience is captured most ardently with Chico's

narrative in *First Day in Grapes* (Perez 2002). This book tells the story of a migrant family; the text and illustrations depict the warmth and caring home of the family as well as portray the academic strengths of the main character Chico. Yet, we receive insight into Chico's experiences, starting with Chico's nervousness of starting a new school and how he does not see himself in the curriculum. When Chico first walks into the classroom of his new school, the illustrations show George Washington, a map of North America, and the American flag as dominant images. When Chico refers to George Washington's picture as an "old friend from other schools", it reflects the lack of diversity in the school curriculum, even though it is clear from the storyline and illustrations that the students comprising the classroom come from many different backgrounds. When Chico is asked to introduce himself, his awareness of his classmates' prejudicial attitudes cause him to self-censor; he shares only a few facts about himself. He states that he is not sure how much would be acceptable to share even though he thinks about "how he can dance the bull dance while his uncles played salsa on guitars, or how he wanted to be a race car driver" (Perez 2002, n.p.).

One important aspect in the books is how important allies are in children's experiences; the allies in the text set were both children and adults. For instance, in *Layla's Headscarf* (Cohen 2009), the librarian reads a book that is about a person with a hijab in order to explain the cultural practice and facilitate acceptance. In *Mr. Lincoln's Way* (Polacco 2001), the principal stands up against a boy's actions rooted in racism and discrimination as he physically and verbally bullied children, including calling some children "brown skinned toads". Mr. Lincoln decides to befriend him and show him how his perceptions and racism were unfounded and based on ignorance. Mr. Lincoln, who embodies the characteristics of inclusion and tolerance of others by involving himself in his students' interests, cultural events, is described as "just plain cool" and addresses the "hate in his heart" (Polacco 2001, n.p.). In addition, the mother is a significant character in *Chocolate Me!*, convincing the main character that he is beautiful the way he is and should celebrate his identity. She explains to him that "you have skin like velvet fudge frosting mixed in a bowl" and "cotton candy hair soft to the touch of my fingertips" (Diggs 2011, n.p.). In a full-page spread, the mother puts her hand around her son in front of their reflection and tells him to "look in the mirror and love what you see" (Diggs 2011, n.p.).

We observed how the notion of counternarratives transcends character development and goes beyond the pages of the book. Specifically, picturebooks provide opportunities for authors of marginalized groups to present their own perspectives regarding racism and discrimination. Taye Diggs and Shane Evans wrote the book *Chocolate Me!* about their own experiences, explaining that it was important for them

to have a book to share with their children about valuing their identities. Likewise, *First Day in Grapes* (Perez 2002), which was awarded the Pura Belpré Award for a picturebook that best represents the Latina/o cultural experience for children, was based on the author's husband's experience as a child of migrant workers; she was inspired by his experiences growing up at the camps. Illustrations were important for providing a voice in these stories. To create an authentic visual depiction, the illustrator Robert Casilla researched migrant families to visually represent their experiences in *First Day in Grapes*. Casilla's illustrations reveal how families set up a warm and inviting home, even though they may only live in a location for a short time. And *Sumi's First Day of School Ever* (2003) was written by Soyung Pak, who moved from South Korea at the age of two. Her background is similar to the character; we wondered if her positionality influenced her depiction.

It is significant that these texts represented strong characters and allies and provided powerful opportunities for narratives that run counter to dominant discourses that reflect White supremacy. The stories told build on the notion of counternarratives by showing how many children perceive their classrooms or neighborhoods as lonely and intimidating, particularly when other children bully or act aggressive towards them. All of the stories are from a child's point of view, which highlights how important it is to allow children to share their experiences. However, in many cases the stories provided authentic experiences from the author's perspectives which allowed for credible and legitimate details to consider and understand. We only wish our search for these texts yielded more books; this topic is clearly underrepresented in children's literature.

Conclusion

Understanding children's literature that depicts bullying and race is important because books are a starting point for meaningful conversations about serious issues. We found that there are few children's picturebooks written that reflect these cultural experiences, despite the fact that racism results in aggression, bullying, and harassment for children. From our analysis of the psychological elements of bullying, we found that these books, for the most part, supported realistic depictions of the topic. For instance, in *First Day in Grapes* (Perez 2002), Chico stood up to the bullies and was supported by bystanders in his school. Another example can be found in *Layla's Head Scarf* (Cohen 2009) when Layla's classmates continually explain to Danny, the bully, that Layla and her own uniqueness should be accepted. Classmates are also depicted consoling Layla after Danny insults the hijabs worn by people in Layla's family portrait. Teaching children about the importance of bystanders, regardless

of whether bullying occurs related to race or any other attribute, is an important lesson.

The books profiled in this article are significant in their anti-deficit approaches by depicting immigrant families in a positive light, how a Muslim girl addresses offensive remarks about her hijab, a child who is experiencing racial integration, how a child learns to be proud of his differences, how a bully learns to address his behavior toward others based on an influential adult and a child's concern about whether she will fit in with others. We have concerns about the portrayal of Muslim children in *Layla's Headscarf* and feel that picturebooks that are not authentic can evoke harm through their representation. Furthermore, we are concerned that a scarce amount of books exist that address bullying based on racism and also incorporate an anti-deficit approach, realistic portrayals of bullying incidents, and relatable descriptions of how the bullying behavior is addressed.

The movement of #WeNeedDiverseBooks is salient to the topic of racism and bullying. Books reflecting the experiences of children, particularly books that are realistic and credible, are needed. We particularly want to emphasize the importance of contributions from authors and illustrators of color to provide authentic texts (Koss et al. 2018). We highly recommend incorporating books that have been identified as culturally authentic. A good starting point is the American Library Awards, which include the Carter G. Woodson Awards that depict ethnicity, the Pura Belpré Awards given for portrayals of Latino culture, or the Coretta Scott King Awards which focus on African American values. Our analysis revealed that authenticity was an important aspect of the texts and that authors and illustrators with lived experiences produced important stories for children. We believe that when teachers privilege stories from diverse experiences and open the curriculum to critical perspectives of race and racism, they are enacting a form of advocacy for children in their classrooms.

Overall, the books in our text set that address bullying and racism have the potential to address salient issues, particularly those who have been historically marginalized. Reading these texts with children can demonstrate how people can take action on important social issues whether it be by speaking up against racial microaggressions or befriending a new student from another country. Children's literature should serve as a starting point for conveying an anti-racist stance and supporting children in schools, acknowledging children who are experiencing acts of bullying, and addressing those who are enacting racist and bullying behavior. We hope more books that focus on bullying and racism will be created to use as a vehicle for these important conversations in classroom settings.

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