The Impact of Authentic and Diverse Racial Representation in Children’s Literature

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Abstract

This study examines the impact of authentic and diverse racial representation in children’s literature on students. This study examines the current lack of representation of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) students in classroom literature and misrepresentation and stereotyping in children’s literature. It also examines how some teachers lack the knowledge and experience to address racial representation and diversity in their classrooms. This study uses data from a teacher interview to analyze their experience and understanding of how using literature that has authentic and diverse racial representation has affected their students. The research provides evidence that using children’s literature that includes authentic and diverse racial representation in the classroom can increase students’ motivation and engage them in higher-order thinking skills to help improve their academic performance. Understanding the positive impact that diverse representation in children’s literature can have on students can bring awareness to current and future teachers about analyzing and evaluating the effectiveness of the literature in their classrooms.

*Keywords:* BIPOC, Representation, Diversity
What impact can authentic, diverse racial and cultural representation in children’s literature have on students? This question is vital to education research because there is a current rise in the number of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) students in classrooms. The Cooperative Children’s Book Center (2020) shows that more books were published about white characters (41.8%) than of all BIPOC characters combined (about 36%), which is only a little higher than the number of animal characters (29.2%) in 2019. Therefore, it is significant to analyze the racial and cultural representation in children’s literature to determine whether or not students are reading stories about themselves and the impact this can have on them.

**Statement of Problem**

Educators have some responsibility in providing lessons, activities, and materials relevant to their students to help promote their engagement and motivation to be successful in the classroom. There is often a lack of diversity in the literature educators provide students because of the lack of awareness surrounding the importance of having culturally representative literature for students. Studies show that “white educators receive little to no preparation in how to engage with students from cultural or linguistic backgrounds different from their own” (Searle, 2022, p. 877). When these educators are not aware of how to implement racial and cultural diversity within their classroom, they cannot use it properly or even leave it out. This omission can impact students’ motivation and engagement within the classroom. According to Koss and Paciga (2020), “children’s growth and self-awareness are significantly impacted by the books they read and interact with” (p. 2). Teachers need to understand how the literature we provide our students can significantly influence their sense of identity and motivation. Teachers’ education and experiences can help them gain awareness surrounding the relationship between the diversity of their students and the literature they provide in their classrooms. According to Mosley (2010),
“personal relationships with children from backgrounds that differ from the preservice teacher can move the teacher from objectification - resting on the laurels of her assumptions - to a deepened understanding of cultural diversity and its relationship to literacy learning” (p. 451).

When teachers gain experience working with students from diverse racial and cultural backgrounds, they better understand the importance of diverse racial representation within the literature they provide to their students.

**Justification of the Study**

This problem is urgent to the teaching profession because there is an increasing diversity of our students from various backgrounds. According to Gollnick and Chinn (2021), “In today’s public schools, students of color account for more than half of the student population, with the largest increases in Asian American and Latino students” (p. 2). The diversity within our schools is increasing as the number of BIPOC students rises. This idea is significant because the literature provided to students needs to reflect their perspectives and be relevant to them to help them stay engaged with the material. Therefore, it is necessary to look at the literature we select in our classrooms to ensure that it is representative of the increasing racial diversity among students.

**Positionality**

I am a white/European-American woman from a middle-class family background. I have roots in Germany and Italy. My interest in multicultural literature stems from my experiences in higher education in my pursuit of becoming a teacher. I frequently found studies that reflected a lack of diverse racial representation in children’s literature. I grew up valuing multiculturalism, but I did not fully understand the impact of racism in society. As I have grown and learned about racist ideologies and the impact multiculturalism can have on students in the classroom, I
became more interested in the topic. Although I have learned about multicultural education practices, my experience is limited in the extent of using these practices. I also do not have the perspective of someone of another race who may have experienced these issues, but I am actively trying to understand and educate myself about others' experiences as much as possible.

**Review of the Literature**

This literature review will discuss the findings of relevant research studies as they relate to authentic and diverse racial and cultural representation in children’s literature. Research suggests that there is currently a lack of diverse racial representation in children’s literature being used in classrooms. This research will help teachers understand whether or not they can select literature that is representative of their students. Research also emphasizes the importance of teaching multicultural pedagogy to teachers and ensuring authentic representations of all races and cultures. Teachers need to be aware of literature with racial representation to understand how to implement diversity in their lessons. They must also understand how the authenticity of representation can impact how students perceive themselves and others to understand the impact of stereotypes in the literature. These ideas support my understanding of my problem of practice because they help outline current research and understandings about racial and cultural representation in children's literature.

**The Current Lack of Diversity in Children’s Literature**

Teachers need to be aware of the current lack of diversity in children’s literature to understand the importance of searching for literature that is racially and culturally diverse. Koss and Paciga (2020) analyzed all the Newberry Award-winning books from 1922 to 2019 with a coding system to determine the racial representation within this literature. Newbery award titles were analyzed because “award-winning books are often included in the curriculum and in school
and classroom libraries, thereby ensuring likely access to and engagement with these texts” (Koss & Paciga, 2020, p. 4). It is significant to look at the racial makeup of these books because they can be representative of the racial diversity in the literature frequently used within classrooms. This study found that out of the 92 books analyzed for race, 63 of them contained White characters, while only eight of them contained Black characters, four contained Latinx characters, eight contained Asian characters, two contained American Indian characters, two contained Island Born characters, two contained Middle Eastern characters, one contained a character with multiple races and two contained characters identified as an unknown race (Koss & Paciga, 2020). This study demonstrates the lack of diverse racial representation in award-winning books that are frequently used in classrooms.

It is also significant to analyze the racial and cultural diversity in transitional literature, where students are learning to transition into independent readers. According to Hughes-Hassell et al. (2009), “transitional readers need books that provide text support that will enable them to become more independent in their reading” (p. 3). Therefore, it is critical to look at transitional literature because it supports children's foundational development of reading skills. Hughes-Hassel et al. (2009) used the Fountas and Pinnell Leveled Book List database to analyze the race or ethnicity of the main and secondary characters and the race or ethnicity of the authors and illustrators of the 559 books from Level J through Level M. This study found that “83.5 percent of books in the sample contained at least one white main or secondary character,” but “only 25.8 percent of the books contained at least one person of color as a main or major secondary character” (Hughes-Hassel et al., 2009, p. 10). These results suggest that there is little representation of BIPOC students in transitional books compared to the representation of White students. When students are trying to engage with the literature to become independent readers, it
is crucial that they see themselves represented within the literature. Representation of the racial and cultural diversity of students in children’s literature may, therefore, have a significant impact on students' achievement and motivation for reading, especially with transitional books.

A lack of diverse racial and cultural representation was also found in the education laboratory library for preservice teachers. Buchanan and Fox (2019) analyzed human characteristics, including race, ethnicity, family structure, gender, regional/physical setting, religion, and language, of 286 realistic picture books from the Betty Holden Stike Education Laboratory. This study found that “the three most common race and ethnic categories were White (80%), Black (19%), and Hispanic and Latino (10%),” while indigenous and Native Americans only made up 1% of the books, Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders made up 1%, Asians made up 5%, and 3% were multiracial (Buchanan & Fox, 2019, p. 195). It is significant to note the lack of diversity within the books available to preservice teachers because it gives them experiences with literature that is not racially or culturally diverse. When there is a lack of racial diversity in the literature preservice teachers are exposed to, how are they supposed to expose their students to literature that is culturally and racially diverse? Buchanan and Fox (2019) note that “White pre-service teachers appear to select titles with predominantly White-characters for instruction with diverse students” (p. 190). When preservice teachers are not exposed to diversity in children’s literature, they may continue to use the literature they were exposed to. Based on these findings, understanding the impact that racially and culturally diverse literature can have on students is significant in selecting literature that is representative of the diversity of students for preservice teachers.

**Teaching Multicultural Pedagogy to Teachers**
Teachers need to understand how to use racially and culturally diverse literature before they can start analyzing literature for authenticity. Teachers’ lack of awareness and understanding of how to teach multiculturalism to their students may ultimately result in the failure to provide a diverse range of perspectives to their students. Ciampa and Reisboard (2021) created a professional development program at a public charter school under the pseudonym Williamsburg Charter School during the 2018-2019 school year for 14 K-8 urban female teachers. Eleven of these teachers identified as White, while the other three teachers identified as Black. These teachers participated in a 90-minute professional development program every month and were taught comprehension strategies using graphic organizers on five fiction and five non-fiction books, which focused on positive self-image for African Americans. These teachers were observed and created a reflection entry to reflect upon the successes and challenges of their lessons. The White teachers in this study had difficulty teaching BIPOC students because they did not have the knowledge or cultural awareness to teach them (Ciampa & Reisboard, 2021). These teachers were unprepared to teach their students about diversity. They also lacked the experience to understand their students’ perspectives. These teachers “were not able to articulate the same or similar cultural experiences and racial background as their Black teacher colleagues, who were critically aware of their students’ experiences and experienced a shared identity with their students” (Ciampa & Reisboard, 2021, p. 138). These findings demonstrate a lack of awareness and limited understanding some teachers may have about teaching racial and cultural diversity in the classroom. Teachers must gain awareness and understanding of how to teach racial and cultural diversity before they can understand the impact that authentic and diverse racial and cultural representation in children’s literature can have on their students.
Teachers should also understand how their instruction can influence their students and how they can support their students in understanding racial and cultural diversity. Mosley (2010) analyzes Kelly’s, a preservice teacher in the United States, understanding of anti-racist pedagogy and how this influences her interactions with her students. She had Kelly participate in two engagements with literacy pedagogy, including a reading lesson with two African American students and a teacher educational book club that analyzes children's literature. Mosely (2010) found through her observations of Kelly's guided-reading lesson that Kelly “did not disrupt the racialized statements that they put forward nor was she able to bring the students into a conversation about the social issues in the text, however in the interview she was on the verge of recognizing what racially literate practices might look like in that context” (p. 463). Although this teacher understood what racially conscious practices would look like, she could not implement these in the interactions with her students. Educators should disrupt racist statements made by students and literature to ensure they develop an appreciation for all cultures. This study demonstrates the importance of educating teachers about how to defend their students by educating them about when literature reinforces racist stereotypes ingrained in society. Teachers must ensure the literature does not reaffirm these stereotypes to students or make them feel negatively about themselves and their identification with a certain racial, cultural, or ethnic group.

Teachers must also educate themselves on instructional methods for teaching racial and cultural diversity. Pierce (2017) proposes a model for working with racial and cultural diversity and using multicultural instruction in the classroom, which has been implemented by a teacher for the past five years. This model works to help educate teachers about the transition to cultural diversity in the classroom. It allows teachers to widen students’ perspectives using classroom
materials representing different cultural backgrounds (Pierce, 2017). When teachers learn the academic benefits of using course materials that represent the cultural and racial diversity of their students, it will help them to include instruction about racial and cultural diversity. When teachers know the impact of using literature with diverse racial and cultural representation, it may encourage them to use it during this instruction.

Although teachers may lack understanding or awareness of multicultural pedagogy, there are currently ongoing efforts to teach pre-service teachers about how to implement and use it in their future classrooms. Matteson and Boyd (2017) propose an original framework known as PROGRESS, which stands for positionality, race, sexual orientation, gender, relationships, environment, social class, and stereotypes, to examine potential literature for their students through the scope of social justice issues. This study includes the application of this framework to the book *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* to demonstrate how teachers can learn about racial and cultural diversity within a text. Matteson and Boyd (2017) examine how “possible areas of inquiry when examining race in a text could include addressing discrimination, prejudice, and racism…and investigating racial oppression in terms of minoritized and dominant groups” (p. 33). These could be potential starting points for conversation to engage pre-service teachers in learning about racial and cultural diversity within a text. This study found that race and ethnicity conversations within *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* can help lead to an understanding of the relationship between dominant and minority groups (Matteson & Boyd, 2017). When teachers examine the influence of literature on racial and cultural diversity, they can see potential starting points for conversation with their students. When they have conversations about race and culture within a text, they can better understand the impact that representation in literature can have on their students.
Importance of Authenticity in Racial Representation in Children’s Literature

Even if students receive literature that is racially and culturally diverse, this literature may reinforce racial and cultural stereotypes, which can significantly impact students’ self-esteem and how they treat one another. “When school curriculum traffics in such racial, gender, and religious stereotypes, these forms of negation influence how students see themselves in relation to the world” (Liou & Cutler, 2021, p. 415). Although it is significant to provide students with literature that is racially and culturally diverse, the literature may reinforce negative stereotypes about a race or culture. Liou and Cutler (2021) analyzed three third to sixth-grade children’s books that included Muslim characters using critical content analysis and two coding cycles to determine how Muslims and their experiences were represented in children’s literature. This study found that in these books, “orientalism is upheld through essentialism and stereotypes, further reifying long-standing historical portrayals of Muslims as exotic, backward, and oppressed” (Liou & Cutler, 2021, p. 421). Although these books include Muslim characters, the stories reinforce negative stereotypes of Muslims. It is significant to understand how children’s literature can reinforce negative stereotypes to understand how these stereotypes can impact students’ impressions of a race or culture.

It is also critical to understand various aspects of the literature that can contribute to these negative stereotypes. The visuals in children’s literature can help contribute to stereotypes of different racial and cultural groups. Gardner (2017) analyzed students between the ages of 6 and 11 in a working-class community in the Southeastern United States during one to two-hour sessions, two to three times a week, for eight months, where they were introduced to books and articles not used in the schools around them. This study found that “the visual rhetoric in African American literature for children is particularly germane for expanding justice-oriented goals in
critical racial literacy education and for recognizing children’s picturebooks as a significant form of visual culture that shapes the racial subjectivities of all children” (Gardner, 2017, p. 129). This study demonstrates how perceptions of race in the visuals of picture books shape children’s views of race. It is significant for there not only to be racial diversity in the literature but also to verify that the representation does not reinforce racist stereotypes that may negatively impact students. These stereotypes do not accurately reflect races or cultures, which demonstrates why teachers should analyze the visuals in children’s literature to ensure that they do not reinforce negative views of a race or culture that may ultimately shape how students view their cultures or other cultures.

The language used within children’s literature can also help to reinforce racial and cultural stereotypes. Martinez-Roldan (2013) analyzed five books from the popular Skippyjon Jones series by Rudy Schachner using critical content analysis and critical multicultural analysis. This “critical content analysis of the Skippyjon Jones series reveals that the author's use of Spanish language creates negative images of Mexicans, the places they live, and the language they speak” (Martinez-Roldan, 2013, p. 11). Therefore, altering a language or mixing it with another language used within literature can create negative stereotypes about a racial or cultural group. It is significant to understand how the language in children’s literature can influence students’ understanding and opinion of a racial or cultural group. When looking at the impact of authentic and diverse racial representation on students, it is essential to discuss how to look for misrepresentations of racial and cultural groups to ensure there is authentic representation in children’s literature.

Conclusion
I examined research on the current lack of diversity in children’s literature, teaching multicultural pedagogy to teachers, and the importance of authentic representation in this literature. These ideas are essential in understanding the impact of authentic and diverse racial and cultural representation for BIPOC students. There is a lack of racial and cultural diversity in many popular books used in the classroom, so teachers should analyze their classroom literature for diversity. If there is a lack of diversity in the literature, how do teachers gain access to books that are racially and culturally diverse? I will examine this question within my research. Teachers must also understand how to use multicultural literature in the classroom to educate their students about racial and cultural diversity. However, they must be cautious and analyze the stories, pictures, and language of the literature to ensure that these representations are authentic and do not reinforce stereotypes.

Although research has analyzed the diversity and authenticity of racial and cultural groups in children’s literature, there is limited research on how using this literature impacts students' engagement and motivation. My community partner interview will help me to connect these research studies with a current educator’s experience of selecting and engaging students with literature that has authentic and diverse racial representation.

**Methodology**

In trying to determine how authentic and diverse racial representation in children’s literature impacts students, Critical Race Theory (CRT) plays a crucial role in understanding the systematic racial structures within our schools. Critical Race Theory examines how the systemic racism ingrained in societal institutions impacts all races, including the dominant and minority races. I also interviewed Mr. Anderson, who provided me with critical information about how he selects literature for his classroom. I learned how he selects literature for authenticity and why
some teachers struggle to get diverse literature in their classrooms. Finally, I learned how using literature that has authentic and diverse racial representation impacts students’ motivation, academic success, and their relationships.

**Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework that best supports my research study is the Critical Race Theory (CRT). The Critical Race Theory examines and works to shatter the systematic racism in our society through our policies, laws, and institutions, including our schools. Critical Race Theory “interrogates racial phenomena and recognizes race as a social and institutional apparatus that impacts and influences all racial groups” (Gardner, 2017, p. 124). This theoretical framework has been applied to our education system in the various instructional methods and experiences provided to students. Studies examining Critical Race Theory in our schools found that “racially diverse students enter schools where their experiences, histories, and perspectives are largely excluded from school curriculum and learning opportunities” (Howard & Navarro, 206, p. 256). The lack of diversity in racial representation of student experiences in the curriculum, especially in the literature, helps demonstrate the interest of my research.

It is also significant to note how this constructed racial system helps many students lose their identity as they begin to believe they do not have any racial or cultural identity. One study examining multiculturalism in the classroom found that “participants lacked awareness of their own racial identities, allowing them to deny their racial privileges and their membership in the dominant group” (Searle et al., 2022, p. 876). It is significant for teachers to acknowledge this gap in understanding the dominant group’s own identity to help them foster awareness about their own identities and to help them better understand the role institutionalized racism plays in
society. Therefore, it is significant to examine the impact that authentic, diverse racial representation in literature can have on all students.

Community Partner Interview

To better understand my problem of practice, I decided to interview someone with extensive experience in education. The person I interviewed was James Anderson, who has been a teacher for over 21 years for fourth, fifth, and sixth grade. This name is a pseudonym to protect my community partner's identity and keep confidentiality. He has also worked with his local county’s education department to build lessons that authentically represent the racial and cultural diversity of the community. These lessons are based on authentic stories and cultures from the local community, and the local councils representing each racial and cultural group must approve these lessons. My problem of practice involves the impact of providing literature to children that is authentically representative of their cultural and racial diversity. Mr. Anderson’s extensive experience with selecting literature for his classrooms and working to create lessons with cultural groups gave me greater insight into my problem of practice. This interview was an incredible opportunity to understand the research I have analyzed and even furthered my understanding of my problem of practice.

Selecting literature representative of students' cultural and racial diversity is of utmost importance to my problem of practice, so I started the interview by asking Mr. Anderson questions about how he chooses literature for his classroom. These questions helped me better understand the importance of the selection process and how teachers should select literature with such a wide range of books available. This interview confirmed some of the readings I have cited and gave me more insight into how teachers can learn about their students to select literature which is representative of them. Then, I began to focus on questions about how authentic and
diverse racial representation in the literature in the classroom has impacted his students. Mr. Anderson’s experience has helped me confirm some of the research I have cited, but it has also given me new insights into my problem of practice.

When I asked Mr. Anderson about the selection process, he explained how he selects books based on the message they are trying to convey. He explained how his district does not give much guidance concerning what kinds of books to choose from, so he usually selects these books by himself or through teacher recommendations. He has the freedom to decide what literature he uses in his classroom. Mr. Anderson also explained the importance of choosing books every kid can relate to. He told me that stories are generally about kids and their cultural makeup and that all students from all backgrounds can appreciate other students' experiences, which can help them learn about other cultures. This idea was discussed extensively throughout the interview that students can learn from literature that is representative of cultures other than their own. He also explained how he selects literature sensitive to the issues of the diversity of his students. Some of the books he uses include Pasquala: The Story of a California Indian Girl and The Cay. Mr. Anderson also does a unit at the beginning of every school year about culture with his students, where his students share their cultures and experiences. He explained how some students think they have no culture because they are American. This unit helps his students understand what makes up their culture and make connections with other cultures. One key point during the interview was listening to students and getting to know them. This idea demonstrates how teachers can better select literature that is representative of the diversity of their students by learning about their student’s experiences. When teachers educate themselves on the diversity of their classroom, it can help them select literature representative of the diversity of their students.
When examining the authenticity of representation of the races and cultures in the literature selected for the classroom, Mr. Anderson explained that many previous teachers used literature with stereotypic portrayals of people. He explained how many of the students he taught had previously learned that the mission system was this great system when the Indians were actually enslaved. In his classroom, he uses biographies with cultural representation lessons to help students gain awareness of significant people and the background behind what they are learning about.

After discussing the selection of literature in the interview, I moved on to questions about how this literature affects his students' engagement, motivation, academic achievement, and relationships with their peers. Mr. Anderson explained that using literature representative of his students' racial and cultural diversity helps increase their curiosity and spark conversation. He described one instance where his classroom was reading a book about Jewish heritage, and a student spoke out about his cultural background because he was Jewish, which none of the other students knew about. This part of the interview was crucial to research because it demonstrates how a student connected their heritage with the literature in the classroom because Mr. Anderson used literature representative of this student's background. Using diverse literature helped to spark conversation about a student’s culture.

Mr. Anderson has also found that using literature representative of his students has helped increase their higher-order thinking skills because they compare and contrast different cultures while also thinking about their own identities. This part of the interview was also crucial because it demonstrated how students' achievement levels are affected by using literature representative of racial diversity, as students have to use higher levels of thinking when interacting with their culture and other cultures. When discussing how using diverse racial representation affects
student relationships, Mr. Anderson pointed out that it is another opportunity to have a
conversation with students to help bring awareness to students, but students generally treat one
another with respect. That is key to understanding how literature can help spark conversation and
bring awareness to students.

Our interview also gave me information I did not think of in my research. It led me to
additional information I need to acknowledge for my research. One thing that surprised me from
my interview was what Mr. Anderson told me about the difficulty in finding literature that
reflects the racial diversity of his students. Although the findings of my readings have suggested
a lack of racial diversity in Newberry award-winning books and other books used in the
classroom, Mr. Anderson explained that it is not hard to find literature that reflects the racial
diversity of one’s students if teachers are looking for it, but getting permission to use the
literature can be difficult for some teachers. Mr. Anderson also mentioned that he does not think
that his students think about the bigger picture of systemic issues as much as adults do. Instead,
for students, it is about the individual people in the story. I wonder about the extent to which this
literature affects them in their adulthood. Mr. Anderson gave me a new perspective on the
availability and use of diversity in literature in the classroom and new potential points for
research. How can teachers ensure that they select literature authentically representative of the
racial diversity of their students if they do not have permission to use it? How much of an impact
does using literature that includes racial diversity have on students as adults?

Findings and Discussion

My interview with my community partner confirmed some of the things I have
researched surrounding racial representation in children’s literature, and it also gave me new
insights about this research. Although most of the research surrounding racial representation
analyzed a lack of diversity in children’s literature, Mr. Anderson gave me a new perspective on this topic, as he believes it is more difficult for teachers to get permission to use the literature rather than finding the literature. Buchanan and Fox’s (2019) analysis of the laboratory library for preservice teachers demonstrates a lack of racial representation in the literature provided. However, it is unknown whether there may be criteria or requirements for the literature allowed in this library. There needs to be additional research to examine the requirements and criteria for getting a book in the classroom.

Mr. Anderson also explained how many teachers he worked with had used literature with stereotypical racial representations. This finding confirms the lack of professional development and knowledge some teachers may have with using authentic and diverse racial representation in the classroom, which makes them choose books that reflect their values or beliefs (Ciampa & Reisboard, 2021). When teachers are uneducated about racial stereotypes, this lack of understanding may result in stereotypical and inauthentic representations of other races or cultures in the literature they select. It is significant to understand the importance of professional development for teachers to help them become aware of how to teach multiple perspectives appropriately in increasingly diverse classrooms.

When analyzing the impact of selecting authentic and diverse literature, Mr. Anderson explained how it significantly impacted his students’ motivation and academic achievement levels. In his classroom, students connect the literature with their identities and feel motivated to learn about others' backgrounds. The student with Jewish heritage related to the book Mr. Anderson's class was reading and engaged more with the material. It even helped spark a discussion with other students because it helped them to learn about a peer's cultural background that they were unaware of. This finding reflects how racial representation in children’s literature
can become transformative because it “socializes students to develop a sense of belief and disbelief about themselves and ‘others’ in this world” (Liou & Cutler, 2021, p. 412).

Representation in the literature can impact students’ motivation because it can help them understand who they are and where they come from. Learning about various racial and cultural groups also required Mr. Anderson’s students to use their compare and contrast skills, which engaged them in higher-order thinking skills and positively influenced their academic performance. The literature has helped Mr. Anderson’s students examine their own identities and learn about their peers’ diverse backgrounds. Using literature with authentic and diverse racial representation significantly impacted students' motivation and academic achievement.

**Conclusion**

The impact that authentic and diverse racial representation in children’s literature can have on students needs to be understood to ensure teachers provide students with literature that accurately reflects their lives and experiences. This impact can help demonstrate the urgent need for and importance of representation available in classroom literature. The theoretical framework Critical Race Theory (CRT) helps to examine the impact of institutionalized racism in schools. The lack of diversity and authenticity in the literature provided to students in the classroom is examined throughout my research. My research also demonstrates the lack of education and experience some teachers have with using racially diverse literature in their classrooms. In my community partner interview, I found that diverse and authentic representation in children’s literature can help contribute positively to students’ motivation and academic achievement.

**Implications and Recommendations**
I hope that my research will be analyzed and discussed by all current and new teachers to understand the importance of using a variety of literature that provides authentic and diverse racial and cultural representations. When students see themselves and their peers in the literature they read, it will help their motivation and academic achievement. Teachers must understand that they are lifelong learners, and I believe there needs to be more professional development surrounding the implementation of diverse literature in the classroom. When current and future teachers understand the impact of using literature that represents the diversity of their students, they will be more inclined to use it in their classrooms. Teachers must also learn how to teach students about diversity through literature so they will be more prepared to ensure students do not develop stereotypical and sometimes even racist ideologies. Although I am not an expert educator, I think it is significant for teachers to continue to reevaluate their teaching practices and look at the potential impact using more diverse literature in the classroom can have on their students.

There needs to be more research on the qualifications and criteria some teachers must undergo before being able to use a book in their classroom. In my research, I learned that some teachers have difficulty getting permission to use the literature within their classrooms. More research needs to be done on why teachers might have this difficulty and how it can be overcome to ensure representation in children’s literature. There also needs to be additional research on the loss of identity and culture through the systemic racism built within the education system. There is limited research about how many students believe they have no culture because they are American. Although there is an understanding that this develops as a result of systemic racism, there needs to be more research on the impact this can have on these students’ identities.
After discovering the positive impact that authentic and diverse racial representation in children’s literature can have on students, I believe teachers should evaluate the literature used within their classrooms. Teachers need to reflect upon their teaching practices and analyze the extent to which the literature in their classroom reflects the diversity of their students. They also should educate themselves about their students' backgrounds and work to understand their experiences. Teachers need to create lessons that are representative of their students to help motivate and engage them. They must analyze their personal beliefs and experiences, which may have impacted how they did or did not approach teaching diversity through literature. They must review and evaluate the literature within their classroom for stereotypes and racist representations and remove these types of books from their classrooms. Teachers need to research and look for literature representative of their students' identities to use in their classrooms and evaluate and reflect upon the significant impact it can have on them.
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Appendices

Community Partner Interview Questions:

Question 1: How long have you been a teacher for? What grades have you taught and what are your experiences in the classroom?

Question 2: How do you select literature for your classroom?

Question 3: What methods do you use to determine whether the book should be used in your classroom? Whether a book is appropriate or inappropriate?

Question 4: How were you informed about using literature that was representative of the racial diversity of your students?

Question 5: What do you think the teachers’ role is in selecting literature that is representative of their students and their experiences?

Question 6: Did you use literature that was representative of the diversity of your students?

Question 7: Was it difficult to find literature that reflected the racial diversity of your students when selecting literature for your classroom?

Question 8: How would you analyze this literature to determine that the races or cultures within the literature were authentically represented? That they did not reinforce stereotypes or racist ideologies?

Question 9: What happened to students’ engagement when you provided this kind of literature? For students from diverse backgrounds and for other students?

Question 10: Did you notice an impact on students’ achievement during that lesson? For students from diverse backgrounds and for other students?

Question 11: Did you notice an impact on the way students treated one another? For students from diverse backgrounds and for other students?
Question 12: What do you think future teachers should do to select literature that represents the racial diversity of their classrooms?