Methodological Musings:
Problematizing Examinations of Diversity in Curriculum

North American Community: Uniting for Equity

Journal of Interdisciplinary Education

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Abstract

  This article reports on an exploration of author diversity within the texts used in U.S. International Baccalaureate English Literature Programs. The paper reflects on the value and limitations of systematic explorations of practice. In the example study, the researcher traced patterns in author demographics for 1,641 texts taught in 100 randomly selected classrooms from across the US. The demographic areas included authors' gender, ethnicity, birthplace, place of residence, site of formal education, and nation of citizenship. Looking across indicators for patterns, the researcher found that, even in the context of internationally-minded programs, most authors were white, male, and from North America or Northern Europe. This paper emphasizes the importance of systematic and aggregated explorations using commonly recognized indicators. These indicators can highlight gaps, expose otherwise unperceived patterns, and enable comparison to prior studies. At the same time, this paper illustrates how aggregated data can mask nuances, minimize other factors, and leave out important stakeholder voices. Ultimately, the author argues that critical researchers must continue exposing hegemonic practices through systematic explorations of practice, but also advocates for this sort of work to be considered in conjunction with other scholarship.

The texts that students encounter are more than just stories; they are also what Botelho and Rudman (2009) referred to as windows, mirrors, and doors— opportunities for students to see others' experiences, find reflections of themselves, and negotiate new understandings of both. As citizens in diverse national and international communities, it is especially important that students encounter a wide range of perspectives. They need to become increasingly cognizant of the roles that they play in an interconnected world (Cabrera & Unruh, 2012). Unfortunately, a number of studies have suggested that the texts young people are exposed to tend to privilege dominant identity groups and promote hegemony (Boutte, Hopkins, & Waklatsi, 2008; Gangi, 2008). Accordingly, it is important to systematically consider the voices that students are exposed to, or not exposed to, in English literature secondary classrooms.

The study introduced in this article explored the degree to which the voices of diverse authors were included in the curriculum. It did so by examining patterns in the taught texts in International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme Literature (IBDPL) courses. The IB is an ideologically-driven organization that is overtly dedicated to fostering engaged global citizens. This research project (Lillo, 2019) was funded by a Jeff-Thompson Award, an IB research award that reflects the IB's eagerness to promote these ideals in practice. This study considered the concept of diversity very broadly, though it primarily focused on manifestations of diversity with regards to authors' gender, ethnicity, and country of origin.

The results suggest that even within a program with overt intercultural aims, authors from certain demographic groups were more widely represented in the taught curriculum than authors from other demographic groups. This implies that certain voices are privileged in practice. An acknowledgement of such patterns of practice allows gaps to be strategically addressed. However, even as findings are presented, the author considers the limitations to the study's methodological approach. This paper will problematize results and pose questions about how best to capture systematic inequalities and how to advocate for author diversity in the curriculum.

This article first offers a literature-based justification for attending to patterns of author demographics. Then it explains the critical methods used in the study and presents the patterns of inclusion/exclusion that the researcher observed in the dataset. In the discussion section, this paper shifts

into methodological musings—the author reflects on the potential and limitations of the sorts of critical work that this study engaged in. Finally a case is made that critical research on curriculum choices must continue. However, the author acknowledges ways that certain indicators only offer a partial picture of what students are exposed to and how texts are taught.

Review of the Literature

The literature review below presents scholarship related to two of the central underlying assumptions of this study: the value of diverse voices and the need for critical curricular studies.

Value of Diverse Voices

The field of cultural studies has long pointed to the power of texts to communicate values and define realities (Hall, 2012; Kellner & Durham, 2012). Texts impact how young people view both themselves and others (Nieto, 1999). Texts can either reinforce or dismantle hegemonic norms (Boyd, 2017; Gollnick & Chinn, 2016; Hinton & Berry, 2005). They can influence how students see themselves in relation to local and global communities (Appleman, 2000; Roberts, 2009).

Scholars acknowledge that student populations in American classrooms are becoming increasingly ethnically diverse (Gollnick & Chinn, 2016). This has created a push for texts to reflect the diversity of students (Zygmunt, Clark, Tancock, Mucherah, & Clausen, 2015). Recent literature and curriculum studies have focused on representations of race (Panlay, 2016), gender (Landt, 2013), sexuality (Lester, 2014), and disability (Kidd, 2011) in the curriculum, as well as considering the intersections of these aspects (Baxley & Boston, 2014). This study complements these efforts; by tracing authors' gender, ethnicity, and international origins, it contributes to critical explorations of the taught curriculum.

This study was conducted in an IB context; as such the IB's framing of texts as sites of cultural navigation is important to acknowledge. The IBDPL guide explicitly states that texts communicate values. While describing assessment aims, the guide indicates that students should "demonstrate an understanding of the ways in which cultural values are expressed in literature" (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2011, p. 10). This phrasing implies that texts promote cultural values. The framing of texts as opportunities for cultural interactions is also seen in the objectives for the works in translation section of the curriculum.

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According to the guide, students should:

> Understand the content of the work and the qualities of the work as literature, respond
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> independently to the work by connecting the individual and cultural experience of the reader with
>
> the text, and recognize the role played by cultural and contextual elements in literary works.
>
> (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2011, p. 18)

This explanation recognizes the interplay between a reader's cultural background and the cultures embedded within the text itself. In other words, as students interact with ideas in a given text, they can critically look at themselves and better understand others.

In short, both scholars and the IB suggest that texts carry cultural messages. In the context of diverse classrooms, a diverse nation, and an interconnected world, it is important that students hear a wide range of voices.

Precedence for Critical Explorations of Curriculum

This study recognized that systematic research must be done to consider whose voices are included and excluded in the taught curriculum. Power and privilege can manifest in subtle ways, such as disproportionate inclusions in curriculum. Critical scholars seek to disrupt systematic oppression by making inequities visible. This study did not stem from a single critical theory, but rather it adopted Sandoval's (2000) general aim of critical research: "To lift dominant forms of repression" (p. 7). Bell's (2016) framing of social justice captures the aims of this study's critical approaches:

> Reconstructing society in accordance with principles of equity, recognition, and inclusion. It
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> involves eliminating the *injustices* created when differences are sorted and ranked in a hierarchy that
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> unequally confers power, social, and economic advantages, and institutional and cultural validity to
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> social groups based on their location in that hierarchy. (p. 4)

The injustices that Bell speaks of assume many forms; this study focused on potential inequality in curriculum. If authors from certain demographic backgrounds are read more or less frequently, their perspectives/experiences are implicitly amplified or muted.

There is a scholarly precedence for using critical approaches to consider the literature texts that

young people are exposed to. In her seminal exploration of portrayals of African American characters in trade books, Larrick (1965) was one of the first scholars to recognize alarming patterns of representation. She discovered that only 6.7% of the 5,000 published texts she analyzed included African-American characters, many of whom were portrayed in stereotypical ways. Since Larrick's initial study, many other scholars have explored patterns of representation and inclusion in texts that young people encounter. These explorations have included critical examinations of race (Dowd, 1992; Hughes-Hassell, Barkley, & Koehler, 2010; Landt, 2013; Moller, 2014; Nilsson, 2005; Rawson, 2011; Stewart, 2002), gender (Landt, 2013), disability (Curwood, 2012; Matthew & Clow, 2007; Smith-D'Arezzo, 2003), and sexuality (Cart, 1998; Jenkins, 1993; Kidd, 2011). Little scholarship has been done on international representations in American classrooms and this study helps address that gap in the literature.

Critical methods are not prescriptive; critical methods share a common aim of identifying and addressing injustices. There are numerous indicators that have been used to explore patterns of exposure and representation. For example, while some have focused on demographic patterns of characters (Landt, 2013; Larrick, 1965), others have looked at the background of authors (Appleman, 2000). Scholars also recognize that students' understandings are influenced by teachers' approaches to texts (Berchini, 2016) and students' experiences of teaching (Nieto, 1999). Regardless of the specific way that critical approaches are applied, there is a precedence for systematically exploring representation in books published, consumed, and taught. Through a systematic exploration of authors' backgrounds, this study continues these trends.

Methods

This paper is based on an IRB-approved study with two parts. First, the researcher explored demographic patterns of authors by analyzing taught text lists from IBDPL classes. Then the researcher interviewed 20 U.S.-based IBDPL teachers about their curricular choices and perceptions of curricular diversification. This paper centers on findings from the first part of the study, which was guided by the following question: Whose voices are IBDPL students exposed to, or not exposed to, through taught texts?

The last examination cycle in which IBDPL teachers submitted full taught text lists to the IB was in May of 2012. In that cycle, 693 U.S.-based schools submitted full IBDPL taught text lists. For this study,

100 submissions were selected at random. When the taught texts from these 100 classrooms were aggregated, the collective list included 1,646 taught texts. In the process of doing what the Pell Institute (2018) referred to as cleaning the dataset, five listings were disqualified because of data entry inconsistencies. Thus, The final analysis focused on 1,641 texts with 232 discrete titles.

The researcher, aligned with common critical aims described in the literature review, considered manifestations of privilege by looking for demographic patterns in the authors that were given voice in American classrooms. The researcher considered authors' gender, whether they were white, their year of birth, birthplace, citizenship(s), place(s) of education and place(s) of residence. For each text she also considered original publication language, settings, and whether the author had lived in those settings. Authors were not directly involved in the study and had no opportunities to self-identify; many were no longer living and those that were alive were scattered all over the world. As such, to aid consistency purposes, demographics were based on published online biographies and autobiographies. Whenever possible, multiple accounts were triangulated.

The researcher maintained both a raw and coded version of the taught texts and author data. To allow aggregation, locations were coded by regions as defined by the United Nations Statistics Division (2017). The researcher then used descriptive statistics (Salkind, 2016) to explore demographic frequencies. Excel pivot tables were used to explore patterns and consider intersectionality.

Results from the Study

Results pointed to widespread inclusions of male, white, and North American or Northern European authors; meanwhile, works by female authors, Authors of Color, and authors from other parts of the world were less often taught. The results also showed a wide inclusion of canonical authors—ones that are frequently white, male, and from North America or Europe. This suggests that authors from certain identity groups were given more voice than those from other identity groups. The study's critical methodological approaches thus highlighted a potential manifestation of privilege—a recognition that should promote introspection and deliberate reactions.

Patterns in Author Demographics

As noted above, most taught authors were male, white, and/or "from" North America or Northern Europe. Of the 1,641 taught texts, 78% were written by males, 21% by females, and 1% by authors whose gender was unknown. Seventy-two percent were written by authors who were white, 25% by Authors of Color, and 3% by authors whose racial roots were unknown. Male authors were far more likely to be white than female authors. Of the male authors, 72% were also white in comparison to 49% of female authors. Perhaps the higher percentage of white males stems from a heavy inclusion of canonical authors. Overall, 61% of the texts were written by authors who were both white and male, 14% by male Authors of Color, 11% by female Authors of Color, 10% by white female authors, and 4% by authors where one or both demographics were unknown.

As noted in the methods section, this study considered multiple indicators of where authors were from, including authors' birthplace, citizenship, countries of education, and countries of residence. Table A captures overall results by geographic sub-region, aggregated geographic regions, and percentages for two countries that were especially heavily represented: the United States and the United Kingdom. It should be noted that some authors are represented multiple times within a given demographic category (e.g. if an author holds dual citizenship, she is included in the percentages for both regions). Regional aggregates represent the percentage of overall texts authored by individuals from that region (e.g. if an author lived in both North and South America, they were not counted twice for the regional Americas aggregate).

Results displayed in Table A show some variation in percentages by indicator, yet indicators consistently suggest a heavy representation from authors "from" either North America or Northern Europe. For example, the four indicators of authors' connections to North America showed that 36% of texts were authored by individuals born there, 40% by writers educated there, 40% by regional citizens, and 54% by authors who had lived

Table A: Percentage of 1,641 texts authored by individuals born in, educated in, citizens of, or residents of various geographic regions

Region	Birthplace	Place of Education	Citizenship	Extended Residence
North America	36%	40%	40%	54%
Central America	2%	2%	2%	3%
South America	6%	6%	6%	18%
Caribbean	1%	1%	1%	3%
Americas combined	45%	48%	49%	55%
United States	34%	36%	37%	50%
Northern Europe	27%	33%	34%	45%
East Europe	8%	7%	5%	13%
South Europe	4%	4%	4%	12%
West Europe	4%	8%	7%	27%
Europe combined	43%	47%	49%	59%
United Kingdom	24%	28%	29%	34%
North Africa	3%	3%	1%	5%
East Africa	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
South Africa	1%	1%	1%	2%
West Africa	3%	2%	2%	3%
Middle Africa	0%	0%	0%	0%
Africa combined	7%	4%	5%	9%
East Asia	2%	2%	2%	2%
South Asia	3%	2%	1%	5%
Southeast Asia	<1%	<1%	<1%	2%
West Asia	<1%	2%	<1%	2%
Central Asia	0%	0%	0%	0%
Asia combined	5%	4%	3%	9%
Oceania	<1%	<1%	<1%	1%
Unknown	<1%	3%	0%	1%

there for extended periods of time. There was a similarly high representation of authors from Northern Europe: 27% of texts were authored by individuals born there, 33% by authors educated there, 34% by ones who were citizens, and 45% by authors that had lived there. Two nations were especially represented within these regions: the United States. and the United Kingdom For example, 50% of texts were authored by individuals who had lived in the United States and 34% authored by ones who had lived in the United Kingdom.

Texts by authors from other parts of the world were far less frequently taught, even from United Nations geographic regions where English is widely spoken such as Oceania (e.g. Australia, New Zealand), Southern Africa, and Eastern Africa. By most indicators, as shown in Table A, only 1% or less of texts were authored by writers from the Caribbean, East Africa, Southern Africa, Oceania, Western Asia, and Southeast Asia. There were two regions where no authors came from at all by any indicator: Middle Africa and Central Asia. These underrepresented regions are populous and have many English speakers. The extent of their exclusion from the taught curriculum in American IBDPL classrooms is certainly worth noting.

Heavy Reliance on Canonical Authors

There was quite a heavy inclusion of canonical texts and authors in the data set. Table B lists the 35 most commonly taught authors along with the percentage of schools that taught his or her works and the most frequently taught text by that author. Many of the authors on this list could be considered either traditional/canonical authors like Shakespeare, Ibsen, Sophocles, or Kafka or more contemporary classical writers like Fitzgerald, Achebe, or Atwood.

Table B: Most frequently taught authors, the percentage of schools that taught their works, and their most commonly taught text

Author	% of Schools	Most Commonly Taught Text in the Sample
1. William Shakespeare	100%	Hamlet
2. Gabriel Garcia Marquez	55%	Chronicle of a Death Foretold
3. Henrik Ibsen	45%	A Doll's House
4. F. Scott Fitzgerald	43%	The Great Gatsby
5. Arthur Miller	40%	Death of a Salesman
6. Albert Camus	38%	The Stranger
7. Robert Frost	34 %	selected poetry
8. Chinua Achebe	32%	Things Fall Apart
9. Tennessee Williams	31%	A Streetcar Named Desire
10. Zora Neale Hurston	29%	Their Eyes Were Watching God
11. Toni Morrison	28%	Beloved
12. Joseph Conrad	28%	Heart of Darkness
13a. Isabel Allende	27%	The House of Spirits
13b. Sophocles	27%	Antigone
15. Franz Kafka	24%	The Metamorphosis
16. John Keats	23%	selected poetry
17. Sylvia Plath	22%	selected poetry
18. Kate Chopin	21%	The Awakening
19a. Emily Dickinson	20%	selected poetry
19b. Nathaniel Hawthorne	20%	The Scarlet Letter
19c. John Steinbeck	20%	The Grapes of Wrath
22. Mark Twain	18%	The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn
23a. Margaret Atwood	17%	The Handmaid's Tale
23b. Fyodor Dostoyevsky	17%	Crime and Punishment
23c. Hermann Hesse	17%	Siddhartha
23d. Langston Hughes	17%	selected poetry
23e. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn	17%	One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich
28a. Samuel Beckett	16 %	Waiting for Godot
28b. Seamus Heaney	16%	selected poetry
28c. Tom Stoppard	16%	Rosencranz and Gildenstern are Dead
28d. Oscar Wilde	16%	The Importance of Being Earnest
32a. George Orwell	15%	1984
32b. William Faulkner	15%	As I Lay Dying
34a. Laura Esquivel	14%	Like Water for Chocolate
34b. Athol Fugard	14%	Master Harold… and the Boys

While it is not altogether surprising that an IBDPL teacher would integrate many of these widely known "literary greats" into their classroom, it is important to note that these canonical authors reflected similar demographic patterns to the patterns seen in the overall dataset. Of the 35 most commonly taught authors, displayed in Table B, 77% were male, 77% white, 46% born in North America, and another 17% were born in Northern Europe. Only five (14%) did not hold citizenship in, live in, or get educated in one of the two most widely taught regions (North America/ Northern Europe). Considering that many of these canonical authors hold identities that were heavily represented in the dataset, it seems important to recognize how widely taught they were.

Discussion

While there are significant implications of the results detailed above, this paper focuses less on the findings themselves and more on the value or limitations of the study's methodological approach. As such, this section considers what can or cannot be seen through the patterns described above. First, the author considers what aggregated data make visible and why the systematic observation of patterns of practice might help address inequalities. Then the discussion shifts to things that aggregated patterns might fail to account for, reflecting on potential weaknesses of this approach. Ultimately, the author argues that it is essential to consider patterns of practice; at the same time, limitations of the approach must also be recognized.

Benefits of Methodological Approach

This study involved systematic explorations of 1,641 texts taught in 100 classrooms. The researcher tracked a range of indicators that might reveal the levels of heterogeneity in curriculum. The focus was on broad patterns within the aggregated dataset, noting patterns of both over- and under-representation. There are at least three major benefits of a methodological approach that relies heavily on aggregated data: aggregated data allows broad patterns to become visible, patterns can reveal practices that might not be readily perceivable to individuals, and, when compared to prior studies with similar methodological approaches, longitudinal progress (or lack thereof) can be observed.

Patterns become visible

The study results revealed patterns of inclusion/ exclusion in the taught curriculum. When such patterns are acknowledged, they can then be addressed. For example, if through commissioned studies, the IB knows that teachers are leaning on texts by authors from certain identity backgrounds, they can develop support materials that would encourage IBDPL teachers to select texts authored by individuals from more diverse identity backgrounds (Lillo, 2019).

Likewise, if broad patterns in American classrooms are visible, teacher educators or professional development providers can intentionally develop trainings that expose teachers to authors from underrepresented groups. This creates the potential to increase teachers' ability to shift patterns of inclusion/exclusion.

Furthermore, the patterns observed in this study might inspire teachers to conduct audits of their own syllabi or syllabi in their school to see how their text choices compare to patterns observed in this study. Only when patterns are acknowledged can they be addressed. Methodologically, this study made patterns visible.

Patterns of practice can be difficult to perceive

Systematically tracking patterns can help uncover biases that are not perceived by individuals. As Millner (2007) reflected on applications of Critical Race Theory, he recognized that inequalities often go unseen and require systematic study to expose. In other words, there are often disconnects between individuals' perceptions and reality. This was observed in this study. For example, in the interview portion of the study, numerous participants said that they felt that other educators addressed diversity aims primarily through inclusions of diverse American authors. However, the data suggests that this perception was only partially reflected in teachers' practices more broadly. For example, it did seem true that texts authored by North American authors were more balanced with regards to gender than in the overall dataset—38% of texts by North American authors were written by females in contrast to 21% of texts written by females in the overall dataset. At the same time, there were no differences in the percentage of texts written by Authors of Color from North America versus Authors of Color in the overall dataset: 25% of texts in both cases. By

systematically tracking demographic patterns of authors taught in 100 schools, the study was able to capture broader practices. This example shows how individuals' perceptions of systematic inequalities might not match realities of practices. The sorts of approaches that this study employed are especially important for revealing hidden trends.

Common methods allow some comparison

An additional benefit of this study's methodological approach is that by tracking similar indicators to those used in prior studies, longitudinal progress can be observed. For example, Applebee (1993) surveyed the texts taught in 543 schools and found similar demographic features of authors: their respective genders, ethnicity, and country of origin. He found that 86% of the taught texts in grades 9-12 English classes were written by male authors and 99% by white authors. Applebee also observed that 57% of authors came from North America and 33% from the United Kingdom. While the context of his study was not identical to that in this study, it is still interesting to contrast Applebee's findings to patterns emerging 25 years later in IBDPL classrooms. As described above, in this study 78% of taught texts were written by male authors, 72% by authors who were white, 37% by American citizens, and 29% by citizens of the United Komgdom. When these two studies are considered together, it seems there may be subtle improvements with regards to diversification of curriculum, but perhaps not as much progress as one might hope for in two and a half decades. This recognition can allow introspection on growth, or lack thereof. Longitudinal tracking can also offer a more macro picture of patterns of inequalities. Hopefully, it can also catalyze future interventions. Comparison is only possible when similar indicators are used to explore diversity in the curriculum.

What is Still Unclear

While the section above illustrates benefits of the study's methodological design, there were also shortcomings to its approach. Three are considered below. First, this study primarily considered aggregated author data. Aggregated data, by its very nature, masks nuances—nuances that might be important to broader quests for diverse curriculum. Second, by choosing to focus on particular indicators of diversity in curriculum, this study also ignored other indicators and factors that might influence students' cultural

understandings. Third, this study notably excluded the voices of the marginalized in its methodological design. Considering these limitations, studies that focus on patterns of practice must be considered in conjunction with other scholarship that addresses these shortcomings.

Masking nuance

While aggregated data allowed broad patterns to be observed, it also flattened certain things. For instance, the nuances of individual authors' backgrounds were hidden, as were interactions between indicators. Yet a look at particular authors or sub-sets of authors within the dataset can reveal ways that aggregated indicators might be misleading. For example, as aggregated data presented in Table A showed, less than 1% of texts were authored by individuals born in East Africa and only 6% by individuals born in South America. When the stories of authors within those respective subsets were further explored, North American and Northern European experiences surfaced. For instance, the one East African author in the dataset also lived for an extended period of time in Northern Europe. Meanwhile 61% of the individuals born in South America were either educated or lived for extended periods in North America. While North American or Northern European experiences in no way minimize other aspects of these authors' identities, these two examples do show how authors might have cultural influences that were masked in the aggregated form.

It also seems important to recognize that a focus on patterns of practice with individual indicators might provide misleading conclusions. For example, in focusing exclusively on race, gender, or country of origin, given statistics might downplay what McCall (2005) refers to as intersectionality. Through consideration of multiple indicators (e.g. race and gender simultaneously), one can get a fuller picture of the intersection of these identities in the ways they are being treated in the curriculum. However, there are aspects of power and privilege that are likely masked by the ways that the data were categorized. How might findings look different if instead the socioeconomic status of authors was considered? Or if the influence of mental or physical health of authors was explored? In short, there are many aspects of authors' identities that might be influencing how likely their voices were to be heard in the classroom. Focusing on certain indicators can minimize the impact of other identity features or life experiences.

Furthermore, patterns of indicators detached from their respective socio-political contexts might provide misleading conclusions about the degree to which authors represent dominant or marginalized perspectives. As Kellner and Durham (2012) illustrated, texts are always bound to cultural contexts. A female author in the United States might have a different societal power position than a female author in Afghanistan, Liberia, or Mexico. However, aggregated data speak little to nuances of these respective contexts.

Power and privilege are complex; individuals can simultaneously affiliate with groups that are both dominant and marginalized. Likewise, individual authors hold multiple identities and may be included in aggregated figures for both widely included sub-groups and ones that aggregated data suggest are more excluded. For example, Langston Hughes' poetry was taught in 28% of schools. Hughes would have been included in aggregated figures for authors who are male, of Color, born in, educated in, lived in, and a citizen of North America. Few would debate that Hughes' works offer an important perspective and contribute to a curriculum that gives students access to a range of voices. Yet in aggregated views of gender and country of origin, Hughes' background would also contribute to elevated counts for males and North America, two groups that surfaced as widely represented. In this example, Hughes is simultaneously a member of identity groups that were minimized and others that were elevated in the taught curriculum. As such, it is important to recognize that patterns can help expose broad patterns of inequity, yet single indicators cannot be taken out of a more nuanced context.

Recognizing other factors and influences

Furthermore, one should be very careful not to conflate particular demographic patterns with the presence or absence of diversity in curriculum or with a given author's value or a lack thereof. As the sections above demonstrate, there can be many ways to consider diversity, power, and privilege. Author demographic patterns can certainly help identify potential imbalances in inclusion. However, there may be other ways that students might be gaining diverse perspectives in English classes. This is a second major limitation of this study's approach—by focusing on certain indicators of diversity in the curriculum, others are implicitly minimized. This study allowed for systematic exploration of authors' backgrounds, something

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that has been historically recognized as an important part of exposing students to diverse views (Applebee, 1993). Yet there are other things that can stretch students' understanding that this study does not consider. As the literature review established, teaching approaches (Berchini, 2016; Boyd, 2017), students' perceptions of learning experiences (Nieto, 1999), and representations within texts (Landt, 2013; Larrick, 1965) are also important considerations. In other words, there are factors that this study overlooks. As such, findings from studies like this one must be considered in conjunction with research on these other factors.

Voices of the marginalized are not heard

Furthermore, it seems important to note that by design, this study focused on indicators of practices rather than on the voices of those who might be considered marginalized. As scholars such as Milner (2007) have noted, it is especially important to carefully reflect on the ways that critical research might misrepresent those whom it aims to support. It is important that individuals from marginalized groups have opportunities to "nam(e) their own realities" (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 56). In the same vein, Fine (2018) advocated for research done in collaboration with the communities it aims to empower.

It is important for the sorts of research done in this study to be considered in conjunction with studies with narrative-oriented methodological approaches or action-research designs. This might involve traditional qualitative approaches (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), autoethnographies (Chang, 2009), or participatory action research (Fine, 2018; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005). Research could consider voices of marginalized authors, students, or teachers. There are many perspectives that are minimized in this study's approach.

Conclusion

Ultimately, studies that critically explore patterns of inclusion or exclusion are valuable to the field of curricular research. This study exposed inclusion patterns that privileged certain identity backgrounds. This is an important recognition—one that can spark both critical introspection and intentional responses from teachers, teacher educators, curriculum designers, and publishers.

At the same time, there are limitations to what one can conclude through demographics-oriented critical explorations of diversity in curriculum. This paper highlights how attention to individual

demographics might mask the nuanced cultural influences of a given author. Furthermore, the methods used in this study might overemphasize the importance of authors' backgrounds in the promotion of diversity, ignoring other important factors such as the representations included within the texts themselves or the ways that teachers facilitate discussions of the texts.

In short, scholarship that employs a critical lens is essential. But critical researchers, including the author, must reflect carefully on the indicators they attend to and the conclusions they draw from their findings.

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