Viewing the literacy textbook, *Treasures*, through the lens of an ethnographic researcher was an eye opening experience for me as a second grade teacher. *Treasures* is a Macmillan/McGraw Hill Second Grade Literacy textbook used in the school I currently teach in just a mere few years ago. *Treasures* alludes, through the occasional inclusion of photographs of multicultural people, that it is filled with rich stories of diversity and inclusion. However, as I utilized the Assessing Bias in Standards & Curricular Materials Tool to assess the curricular materials present in the textbook I realized the extremely filtered views present in the text. The curricular materials present are full of stereotypes. It makes broad generalizations about groups of people, lacks depictions of people from diverse backgrounds and hides the voices and histories of diverse communities. As I rated the textbook on different categories such as Invisibility, Stereotyping and Cosmetic Bias, I realized that using this textbook in my extremely diverse second grade classroom would hinder my students’ growth as culturally responsive citizens.

*Treasures* incorporates numerous “classics” in children’s literature. It’s downfall being the fact that not one of these classics is a true story of people with diverse backgrounds. The curricular materials in *Treasures* is biased throughout its entirety. There are photographs of people of diverse backgrounds, with an overwhelming presence of images depicting only white people. This textbook would not be an adequate curricular material for my multicultural classroom as the groups of people discussed and depicted are not relatable for my students.

As I used the equity tool to assess the text for invisibility or exclusion of cultural groups I came to the realization that what Sadker says is extremely true. “What you don’t see makes a lasting impression,” (Sadker, n.d.). This is particularly evident in the section of the textbook titled “Coming to America,” in which images of children from diverse backgrounds are placed as side bars to a short article about immigration. The article simply does not reflect the cultural histories of the communities of people it is discussing. I would make additions to this section by including true narratives of immigrants. I believe we are doing the students a disservice if we do not include the multitude of reasons that people might immigrate to another country. Through *Treasures*, students are not asked to acknowledge diverse histories. It simply skims the surface of immigration, not touching on the reasons why people would seek out America as a country known for its freedoms. Within my classroom of 21 students, I have 15 students that are either immigrants themselves, or the children of immigrants. It would be an excellent, and relatable, opportunity for growth if students were exposed to a text that mirrored or related to their own family’s reasons for immigrating to the United States. It is very important to showcase, to all students, the struggle that diverse populations have gone through in order for the students to have empathy and understanding for a wide variety of people. We need to ensure there is space for critical collaborative inquiry in curriculum so that students may learn the perspectives and backgrounds of historically marginalized groups.

There is nothing in *Treasures* that challenges or disrupts stereotypical images of a particular group of people, which in turn does not promote the shared vision for learning at my current school. Our mission at Sayre School is” to create a safe, positive and nurturing experience for all our students,” where “students will develop an appreciation for the diversity of their local and global communities,” (Sayre). How can students develop said appreciation if the very curriculum they are using does not expose them to these narratives of diversity? There is only one image in the entirety of *Treasures* (over 400 pages) showing a non-heteronormative image of women in the work place. A page with no text at all, where one African American woman is shown as a doctor. There are no corresponding narratives that can support this imagery. I request that pictures are included in this textbook that show non heteronormative career choices for both men and women, and are supported with narratives involving true people from diverse backgrounds and of different genders. Just showing a picture of a black woman as a doctor is not enough to teach students that women of color can have high power careers.

As a teacher at a school that is 42% Black and 43% Hispanic I believe that a culturally responsive education leader would need to ensure that the curricular materials being used in this school are reflective and relatable for all students engaging with the text. I firmly believe that it is not simply enough to include imagery of individuals engaging in diverse activities. Without an explanation or a conversation following these images they are not a learning opportunity. Including information about cultural histories, community practices, and cultural repertoires of people from diverse backgrounds is vital. It would be very easy to adapt or replace almost all of the stories written in this text and still maintain a second grade syntax and diction and corresponding learning goals.

The curricular material possesses aesthetics and imagery that promote a “bias free” (Sadker, n.d., Cosmetic Bias section, para. 1) picture of the information presented in the text. This is merely an illusion as the text itself contains absolutely no narratives that discuss true histories of women, people of color, or the LGBTQ+ population. The only time the *Treasures* approaches a topic of disability is a section called “Meet Rosina.” This section is a photo essay about a school for the Deaf located in New Mexico. This story introduces Rosina, a deaf student, and tells us about the way she learned ASL in order to learn English after moving to America. While this story is not written in a way that depicts people with disabilities as disadvantaged, or that they only serve as inspiration, it is very brief in its mention of contributions to society that are made by people with disabilities. “My mom and aunt are deaf, too. They work at the school. Mom is a teacher’s helper,” (Treasures, P 92). This is the only evidence present in the story that shows the reader how people with disabilities are able to be active members of communities. This section paints a very rosy image of disability in the way that deafness has allowed Rosina to go to special camps, and be in special classes. There is no mention of the adversity that accompanies disabilities. In a school where 13% of our population labeled as Diverse Learners, I believe that it is important to make a change to the curricular material here and add a narrative where a real historical or contemporary figure who is deaf explains how this had made his or her life different than the life of a non-disabled person, not how it has made them disadvantaged but how a disability has molded the way that they live.

I believe that it is imperative that all students are exposed to text and standards that make visible diverse communities and their histories, voices, and practices heard. I believe that it is important for students to be able to relate and connect with the people they read about in a text, this means reading about people who are diverse like themselves. Without this there is no cultural opportunity for growth. I recommend adding in true narratives or short biographies to *Treasures*, showcasing the lives of important figures from diverse backgrounds. Including true information that examines experiences of hardship, happiness, triumph and adversity a diverse group has gone through, will in turn inform students of the histories or narratives of people of diverse backgrounds.

As a second grade teacher I feel that this textbook is not culturally responsive, nor is it reflective of the cultural repertoires or diverse narratives of the student’s in my classroom. Teaching in Chicago Public Schools, specifically in a very racially and ethnically diverse classroom, I feel that using this textbook within my practice would be doing my students a disservice. For these reasons it is not enough for me to simply make recommendations about the things I deemed as needed to be included in *Treasures*. There is a need for textbooks that reflect the curricular needs of students and are accessible and relatable to the dynamic within the individual’s classroom. As culturally responsive educators we need to require ourselves to be better advocates for our student’s and the things they need to be exposed to within a text.

Works Cited

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Chicago Public Schools

Evidence

