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ABSTRACT

Between 1972 and 1975, textbook publishers have issued position papers and guidelines for authors which both identify the areas of bias (sex, race, and career) hidden in public school textbooks and suggest alternative measures for authors and editors to consider in order to avoid these biases. This study was begun in 1972 to determine whether objective analysis and documentation would show that positive steps were being taken to eradicate textbook bias. Textbooks were analyzed in 48 reading, literature, and social studies series published during the years 1958-1976. Comprehensive analysis of preguideline texts (1958-1970) and postguideline texts (1974-1976) shows that only minimal changes have resulted: major character assignments changed from 60% to 61% in the newer editions, major female roles changed from 14% to 16%, major ethnic-minority male roles changed from 9% to 12%, and major ethnic-minority female roles changed from 2% to 4%. Tables of findings and lists of references and of the textbooks analyzed are included. (JH)

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For Sale: Subliminal Bias in Textbooks

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FOR SALE: SUBLIMINAL BIAS IN TEXTBOOKS

Parents and educators have been reassured by publishers guidelines that the sex/race/career bias hidden in public school textbooks has been eradicated.

Textbook publishers acknowledge the charges of biased textbook materials and have responded in a variety of ways. The most common response of the 1972/1974 era was the publication of guidelines for authors; position papers promising the eradication of bias and cursory "in-house" documentation.

Publishing house "guides" identify the areas of bias as target concerns and suggest alternative measures for authors and editors to consider when writing or approving new material for textbooks.

These guides were offered to worried parents and teachers who were hoping to see a diminishing of bias in materials that their sons and daughters were reading. Eloquent statements in the guides accompanied by understanding expressions of the issues by publishing houses served to reduce the anxiety expressed by some.

In 1972 Scott Foresman supported an alteration of textbook material relative to bias and inequities in representation as revealed in the following statement:

Although many factors determine the contents of textbooks--authors, permissions, space, time, money, the market, etc.--these limitations should not be used to excuse bias, prejudice, or insensitivity.

...Women and girls should be given the same respect as men and boys.

Ginn and Company expressed their views in 1973 as follows:

Educational materials teach far more than information and a way of learning. In subtle--often unconscious--ways, the tone and development of the content and the illustrations foster in a learner positive or negative attitudes about self, race, religion, regions, sex, ethnic and social class groups, occupations, life expectations, and life chances. Inadvertent bias, as often the result of omission as commission, can influence the impact of educational programs.

...The company is obviously, concerned about the needs of its customers and intends to handle these needs with fairness and a sensitive regard for cultural, ethnic, regional, and racial differences. In accord with this concern, Ginn and Company is seeking to insure that all its programs be promoted and presented in an open, sensitive manner with no recourse to exploitation of multi-ethnic, racist, or sexist themes.

McGraw-Hill Book Company in 1974 recognized a need for change and stated:

Specifically these guidelines are designed to make McGraw-Hill staff members and McGraw-Hill authors aware of the ways in which males and females have been stereotyped in publications; to show the role language has played in reinforcing inequality; and to indicate positive approaches toward providing fair, accurate, and balanced treatment of both sexes in our publications...Women and men should be treated with the same respect, dignity, and seriousness. Neither should be trivialized or stereotyped, either in text or in illustrations. Women should not be described by mental attributes or professional position. Instead both sexes should be dealt with in the same terms. References to a man's or women's appearance, charm or intuition should be avoided when irrelevant.

The Macmillan Company guide (1975) provided additional insights and paradoxically crystalizes the issue by providing numerous examples of subliminal persuaders:

These children are not simply being taught mathematics and reading; they are also learning--sometimes subliminally--how society regards certain groups of people. In the case of that young girl or minority child, they might deduce from their reading that they are somehow second class citizens, and that one type of person has less value than another.

This subliminal repetitious implanting of bias influences their life long aspirations; indeed it leaves a permanent distorted imprint upon our children's most precious future. It not only limits their choices in terms of life styles and career selections but it distorts their self image and the images of the opposite sex as well as of ethnic minority groups. In essence, it encourages sex/race stereotyping and career role restriction.

Macmillan Company further informs us that:

Modern textbooks rarely offend groups of people by direct statements. More often, the social judgment is implied, making it all the more damaging for its subtlety.

...As the guidelines assert, in their treatment of the sexes, one of the most insidious ways in which thoughtlessly prepared educational materials can do their damage is by implying what is and what is not "permissible" behavior.

Macmillan Company concludes with the statement:

It is the policy of Macmillan Publishing Company to publish educational materials that give children an unbiased view of the full range of human potential.

A sample from Holt, Rinehart, and Winston Company's Guide of February, 1975, a late arrival in the art of publishing egalitarian statements reminds us that:

Because educational materials influence the development of the attitudes students carry into adult life, Holt, Rinehart and Winston consider it important that the values and societal roles suggested in instructional materials be positive ones, and that they be as free as possible from bias, stereotypes, and career-role restriction.

The Holt Company further states:

Children absorb more subliminally than authors and editors may realize. It is therefore necessary that we develop sensitivity to bias in educational materials, both to correct the inequities that exist today, and to prepare children for the world they will enter when they finish their education.

A final poignant and insightful statement by Matina S. Horner in the preface to the Macmillan Company Guide summarizes the essence of the issue:

From the books we read, the stories we hear and the "models" we observe, we develop an awareness of expected categorical distinctions within our society. Gradually, by a process of continual reinforcement, we adopt existing cultural norms in such a way that they become capable of exerting subtle psychological pressures on us. The exercise of these norms as internalized criteria against which we then judge the aspirations, feelings, and behavior of ourselves and others tends to perpetuate the existing categorical distinction. As a consequence, many otherwise motivated and capable individuals are constrained from being-- or even aspiring to be-- all that they are capable of becoming.

Since these and other publishers identified the problems and acknowledged the importance of basic egalitarian values being instilled in our children, parents were greatly reassured that the needed changes would be

forthcoming in the subsequent editions. Understanding statements from publishing houses implied that existing bias and inequities would be corrected. The anxieties of the concerned consumers were allayed.

"Sexism? Racism? Career Bias? Haven't you been reading the guidelines? This problem was corrected several years ago."

The newer editions are here. What changes have appeared in textbooks as a result of the enlightened egalitarian stance of publishers as espoused in their bias guidelines? Have the guidelines been adhered to or were they merely generated to reassure textbook commissions, school boards, concerned citizens groups, parents, ad infinitum?

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

A comparative analysis of research data was undertaken to respond to the questions of changes in textbooks relative to bias and career role stereotyping after the publication of the guidelines. A study was made to determine if objective analysis and documentation could support the notion that positive steps were being advanced in the direction of eradication of bias in textbooks.

This research, initiated in 1972, included objective textbooks analyses for bias in 48 reading, literature and social studies series published during the years 1958-1976. Procedures entailed a systematic recording and tabulation of not only the Anglo major characters and career roles in which they were shown, but also the ethnic minority major characters and the career roles in which they were shown.

The researchers:

- 1) Counted male/female major character roles.
- 2) Counted and listed male/female career roles.

3) Counted ethnic male/female major character roles.

4) Counted and listed ethnic male/female career roles.

The analysis included the assessment of 15,928 stories/chapters from 48 reading, literature, and social studies series for grades 1 through 12 as shown in Table 1.

The comprehensive analysis of the 15,928 selections showed males in 53% of the major character role assignments and females in 13% of the major character role assignments with 34% of the stories assigned to the category of Other. The category of Other included stories which showed boys/girls equally as major characters, neuter animals, entire races, or inanimate objects. Ethnic minority males were assigned major character roles in 10% or 1555 stories and females in 3% or 436 stories. The ethnic minority category of Other showed 3% or 538 stories as noted in Table 2. Different career roles assigned to either sex revealed an imbalance in terms of the limited number of careers assigned to females.

PRE-GUIDELINE TEXTS

Those texts published between 1958-1970 were designated as texts published prior to the appearance of guidelines from publishing houses. This included 19 different reading and literature series and incorporated the analysis of 4,330 stories. The findings shown in Tables 3 and 4 document the fact that males were assigned 60% of the major character roles in contrast to 14% assigned to females. The category of Other was 26%. The ethnic minority groups showed 9% male major character role assignments as contrasted with female major character role assignments of 2%. The ethnic minority category of Other showed 2%.

POST GUIDELINE TEXTS

Textbooks published during the 1974-1976 period were designated as material appearing for the most part after the guidelines had been printed and should reflect changes in terms of bias as outlined by publishers. These series included 11 publications totaling 3,256 stories/chapters analyzed as shown in Tables 5 and 6. The documentation indicates that 61% of the stories were assigned to males as major characters, with 16% assigned to females as major characters and 23% assigned to the category of Other. Ethnic minority males were assigned to major character roles 12% or 379 times. Minority females were shown as major characters 4% of the time or in 139 roles. The ethnic minority category of Other indicated 2% or 54 stories.

CAREER ROLE BIAS

The imbalance in career role assignments continue to appear. For example, the 1976 edition of Ginn and Company Reading 720 Series (Grades 1-6) shows 298 different career roles assigned to adults in the illustrations or the text. Males of all races were shown in 249 different career roles or 84% and females were depicted in 49 different career roles or 16%. Ethnic minority males were assigned to 34 different career roles and females to 14.

SUMMARY

After studying the 1958-1970 editions and comparing them with the 1974-1976 editions it appears as if only minimal changes have resulted in terms of major character role assignments. For example, male major character assignments increased by 1% from 60% to 61% in the newer editions, and female major character role assignments changed from 14%

to 16% an increase of 2%.

The ethnic minority male major characters showed an increase of 3% thereby advancing from 9% to 12%. The ethnic minority female recorded a 2% increase in major character assignments from 2% to 4%.

CONCLUSIONS

After the printed expressions of concern, publishers could have made a substantive attempt to equalize the inequities--however, the evidence is to the contrary. Changes have been minimal, the "new" product appears to be teaching the same "hidden curriculum" as the preceding series. The great disparity remains between male/female representation as major characters in textbook series.

Is there any motivation for publishers to modify a product which is so lucrative as it is currently written? According to the Bowker report in the June, 1976 issue of Publishers Weekly, the publishers' stake in the educational market is considerable with a realization of almost 2 billion dollars in sales as of 1975 according to Table 7. Dow Jones Average between 1974-1976, is there any financial impetus to change? After studying Table 8 it appears as if resistance to change has been quite profitable from a financial point of view.

What about the humanistic point of view? Certainly, the publication of a policy statement in the format of a small guide is less expensive than a major revision in terms of the quality and quantity of stories included about females and minorities. Publishers seem more inclined

to publish the guidelines than take measurable, objective actions to enforce them. Unfortunately, the child consumers do not read the guides and so are unaware of the subliminal subconscious persuaders within each textbook which continue to subtly convey attitudes, values and images of people in our society.

How can the consumer's parents make judgments? Many began to ask for objective evaluation and documentation of the newer materials by persons without vested interests in the publishing business. Not authors, editors, public relations directors but independent researchers should be conducting evaluations by objective standard procedures. In order to verify the documentation other researchers using the same procedures could duplicate the study and obtain similar findings. The findings should be available to all.

Merely acknowledging a problem does not remove it. And guidelines without timetables and procedures for enforcement and monitoring will not remove bias from textbooks.

Parents' and educators' concerns are fostered by the realization that attitudes, values, images of people in our society are conveyed to our youngest citizenry via educational media which they are legally bound to read during their school years. Prejudices and limitations are conveyed that may last a lifetime.

The First Amendment guarantees freedom of press and speech to textbook publishers. Which amendment guarantees all of our children the freedom to read about themselves as equally worthy humans?

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3. Beckley-Cardy	Cowboy Sam	Grades PP-1	1958-64
4. Beckley-Cardy	Sailor Jack	Grades PP-1	1960
5. Beckley-Cardy	Dan Frontier	Grades 1-3	1961
6. Benefic	Tom Logan Series	Grades 1-3	1966-71
7. Benziger, Inc.	The Linguistic Readers	Grades 1-3	1971
8. Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co. A Bell & Howell Company	The Merrill Linguistic Reading Program	Grades 1-6	1975
9. D. C. Heath	Reading	Grades 1-3	1973
10. D. C. Heath	Reading Perspectives	Grades 1-6	1975
11. Economy Company	Phonetic Keys to Reading	Grades 1-6	1967
12. Economy Company	Keys to Reading	Grades 1-6	1972-74
13. Economy Company	Keys to Reading	Grades 1-6	1975
14. Field Educational Publications	The Cornerstone Readers	Grades 1-5	1970
15. Ginn and Company	Reading 360	Grades 1-6	1969
16. Ginn and Company	Reading 360	Grades 1-8	1973
17. Ginn and Company	Voices in Literature, Language, and Composition	Grades 7-9	1974
18. Ginn and Company (Xerox)	Reading 720	Grades 1-6	1976
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| 28. Houghton Mifflin | Directions | Grades 7-9 | 1972 |
| 29. Houghton Mifflin | Houghton Mifflin Reading Series | Grades 1-8 | 1974 |
| 30. Houghton Mifflin | The Houghton Mifflin Reading Series | Grades 1-6 | 1976 |
| 31. ita Publications | Early-to-Read | Grades 1-3 | 1964-66 |
| 32. J. B. Lippincott | Basic Reading | Grades 1-6 | 1975 |
| 33. Jones, Kenilworth, Bracken | Specific Reading Skills | Grades 1-6 | 1973 |
| 34. Lyons and Carnahan | Young America Basic Reading Program | Grades 1-8 | 1972 |
| 35. Macmillan | The Macmillan Reading Program | Grades 1-6 | 1965 |
| 36. Macmillan | The Bankstreet Readers | Grades 1-3 | 1966 |
| 37. Macmillan | Series r | Grades 1-6 | 1975 |
| 38. McGraw Hill | Programmed Reading | Grades 1-3 | 1973 |
| 39. New Dimensions | Alpha One | Grades K-1 | 1972-73 |
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| 42. Reader's Digest | Reader's Digest Skill Builders | Grades 1-10 | 1959, 1966, 1968 |
| 43. Science Research Associates | The SRA Basic Reading Series | Grades 1-6 | 1965-68 |
| 44. Science Research Associates | SRA Distar Supplementary Readers | Grade 3 | 1973 |
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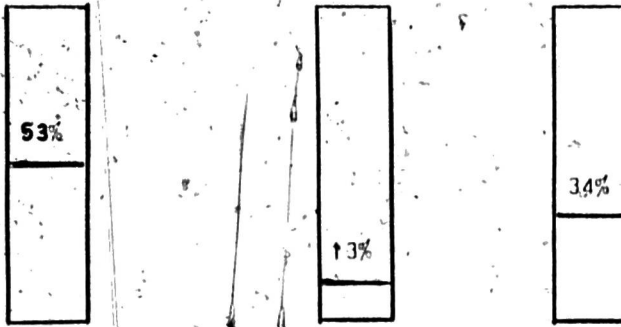
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TABLE 1

Textbooks published (1958-1976) showing major
character analysis by sex for grades 1-12

Total Selections=15,928 Total Series=48

Male n=8457	Female n=2086	Other n=5385
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TABLE 2

Textbooks published (1958-1976) showing
ethnic major character analysis by sex
for grades 1-12

Total Selections=15,928 Total Series=48

Male	Female	Other
n=1555	n=436	n=538

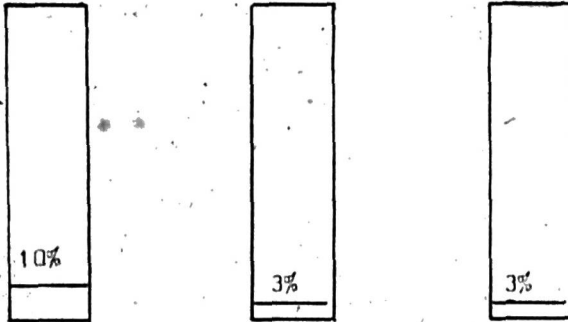


TABLE 3

Textbooks published prior to guidelines
(1958-1970) showing major character
analysis by sex for grades 1-10

Total Stories=4330		Total Series=19
Male n=2583	Female n=597	Other n=1150

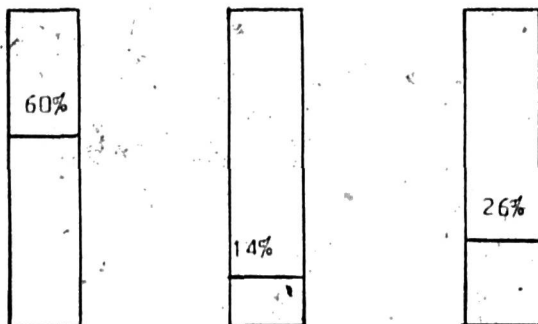


TABLE 4

Textbooks published prior to guidelines
(1958-1970) showing ethnic major character
analysis, by sex for grades 1-10

Total Stories=4330		Total Series=19
Male n=403	Female n=91	Other n=85

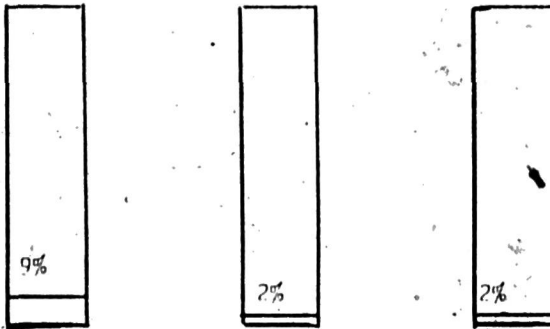


TABLE 5

Textbooks published post guidelines
(1974-1976) showing major character
analysis by sex for grades 1-12

Total Stories=3256 Total Series=11

Male	Female	Other
n=2002	n=513	n=741

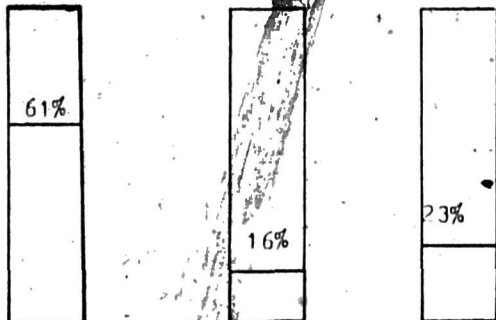


TABLE 6

Textbooks published post guidelines
(1974-1976) showing ethnic major
character analysis by sex for grades 1-12

Total Stories=3256 Total Series=11

Male	Female	Other
n=379	n=139	n=54

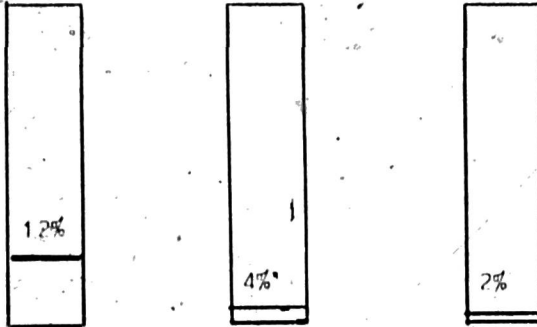


TABLE 7

Estimated 1975 Sales of Books and Materials in the Educational Market: Domestic Sales

Millions of Dollars

	Total Market		ELHI Textbooks		College Textbooks		AV and Other Media		Mass Market Paperbacks		General Books		Subscription Reference Books		Maps		Standardized Tests	
	\$	%	\$	%	\$	%	\$	%	\$	%	\$	%	\$	%	\$	%	\$	%
ELHI	1090	100	579	53	22	2	230	21	45	4	159	15	14	1	11	1	30	3
College	716	100	24	3	424	59	19	3	22	3	220	31	4	*	2	*	1	*
Total	1806	100	603	33	446	25	249	14	67	4	379	21	18		13		31	2

Extracted from AAP report, Table T2. Data for "AV and Other Media" are supplied to AAP by Educational Media Producers Council, National Audiovisual Association.

% = Percent Share of Market.
 * Denotes less than 1 percent.

PUBLISHERS WEEKLY June 28, 1976 P. 46

TABLE 8

BOOK PUBLISHING STOCK AVERAGE
(Market Performance 12/31/74 vs. 1/15/76)

	Price 12/31/74	Price 1/15/76	Percentage Gain
Addison-Wesley	6*	7½*	31%
Harcourt Brace Jovanovich	14½	25	69
Harper & Row	4½*	8½*	86
Houghton Mifflin	6	14½	144
J. B. Lippincott	2½	4½	80
Macmillan	3½	5	43
McGraw-Hill	6	15	150
Prentice-Hall	18½	24	31
Scott, Foresman	8	17	113
John Wiley & Sons	7¼*	15*	107
<hr/>			
Book Publishing Stock Average (12/31-73=100)	90	166	85
Dow Jones Industrial Average	616	930	51
Value Line Composite Average	49	78	59

* Bid price in Over-The-Counter Market

Note: Reprinted from *Publishers Weekly*, February 2, 1976.

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The Bowker Annual of Library & Book Trade Information
With Cumulative Index 1972-1976, 21st Edition, 1976