'Windows and mirrors' or 'closed doors'? Representations of diversity in early years' textbooks

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Abstract

This research examined representations of diversity in a sample of early years textbooks. Using critical discourse analysis as a framework, the study examined how particular groups were represented, or, of equal importance omitted, from these books. The scope of the analysis included images and text. The study found significant omissions of particular groups. It identified uncritical tokenistic approaches towards certain groups which functioned to reinforce stereotypes rather than challenge them. The study further identified an assumption that readers were members of the dominant 'in-group', an assumption that functioned as exclusionary towards children from minority groups.

Keywords: **diversity, identity, representations, textbooks, early years**

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Introduction

The classroom in contemporary Ireland is a microcosm of society, with children from a range of backgrounds attending school together. This study examines how such diverse groups are represented in a sample of early years' textbooks. Textbooks play a key role in transmitting ideologies as they are "constructed as education tools" (Pingel, 2010, p. 46). Studies at second-level (Bryan, 2007, 2008, 2014; Bryan and Bracken, 2011) have demonstrated that textbooks can perpetuate inequality through misrepresentation of particular groups. Faas and Ross (2012) have also pointed to a contradiction between the inclusive rhetoric of policy documents and the content of textbooks which portray diversity as a recent phenomenon while promoting "an explicit (usually Catholic) notion of Irish identity" (Faas and Ross, 2012, p. 586). At primary level, Waldron (2005, 2013) has examined history textbooks; she found that, despite the "stripping away of historical concepts, the neglect of processes and the blandness of the writing", the status of these texts "continues to confer on them powers of definition in terms of identity and belonging" (Waldron, 2013, p. 56).

This study focused on textbooks in the early years classroom. It aimed to establish whether young children can see accurate representations of themselves and those outside their immediate world within their texts. Critical discourse analysis of the textbooks was undertaken as the research methodology in order to ascertain which values are projected as the norm, or, of equal relevance, what is omitted.

Early years' curricula

Síolta, the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education was developed by the Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education (CECDE, 2006), followed by *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 2009). *Síolta* (2006) focuses on quality of learning and development in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), while *Aistear* (2009) is a framework for providing learning experiences for children from birth to six. The underpinning principles of *Aistear* (2009) and *Síolta* (2006) include diversity, equality and citizenship. The theme of diversity in *Aistear* encompasses ethnicity, race, faith/no faith, home language, family background, special educational needs, physical appearance, gender and abilities. *Síolta* (2006) also encourages practitioners to anticipate any stereotypes or bias that may be reflected in the classroom through books, images or toys. *The Síolta Research Digest* (CECDE, 2007), notes that children identify differences from a very early age, and assimilate both positive and negative messages about difference, which influence their self-identity. Murray, Crooke and O'Doherty (2006) also state that children's views are reinforced through adults and through the broader community.

Anti-bias education

Children have the capability to distinguish racial differences and to develop prejudices towards particular groups from the age of three (Connolly, 2003, 2009, 2011; MacNaughton 2006; Connolly, Smith and Kelly, 2002; Nixon and Aldwinckle 1997; Siraj-Blatchford, 1994; Van Ausdale and Feagin, 2001). Van Ausdale and Feagin (2001) argue that young children "are far from being oblivious to racial group and racism" and that they are "inundated with [racism] from the moment they enter society" (pp. 189-190). Those authors contend that children's social interactions have the power to generate or reinforce stereotyping, or facilitate and encourage mutual self-esteem.

Derman-Sparks and Ramsey (2006) emphasise the importance of anti-bias education, arguing that children notice and are influenced by racially-related images and messages, while Murray and O'Doherty (2001) advocate that such education must not be confined to cultural issues but must also address class, language, faith/belief, gender and disability (Derman-Sparks, 1989). Derman-Sparks and Edwards' (2010a) guide for selecting textbooks and storybooks notes the importance of checking content for stereotypes, tokenism and invisibility, in illustrations as well as storylines. If books display unbalanced representations of particular cultures, classes or family structures, children learn that certain groups are more 'deserving' of a voice in society, a message that can undermine the child's sense of self.

Anti-bias education actively avoids a superficial "tourist curriculum" which can perpetuate stereotypes as the educator "drops in" to "exotic" people before returning to the dominant cultural norms (Derman-Sparks and Edwards 2010b, p. 12). Banks (2010, p. 240) calls this the "contributions approach" arguing that it trivialises cultures and reinforces stereotypes as children are not enabled to see the character as a whole person like themselves. Banks (2010, p. 240) also describes the "additive approach" where content is added to the curriculum without changing the structure and with no critical engagement with facts.

Images

'Young children are sophisticated readers of visual and verbal text and can make sense of images on literal and metaphorical levels' (Arzipe and Styles, 2003).

CECDE (2007) advocates diverse images of community and family life, and avoidance of stereotypical role-models and bias. Barnardos (2002) note that children pick up notions about ethnicity from books and media, and that children who do not have first-hand experience of particular groups "depend totally on these sources of information if they are to develop an opinion or an image of such groups" (p. 5). This emphasises that children need to be assisted in developing positive self-identity. The complexity of identity formation is also noted by Hegarty and Titley (2013) who argue that "uncritical use of stereotypes risks cementing in people's minds a homogenised view of a certain group or community" (p. 6). Readers need to be presented with accurate representations in order to avoid sensationalised or exoticised views of particular groups.

The Dóchas Code of Conduct on Images and Messages (Dóchas, 2014) highlights the power of images. It was produced for those responsible for communicating images and messages, including teachers. It demonstrates that images have the power to create stereotypes or promote solidarity, and it encourages diverse voices, perspectives and representations. Images can misrepresent groups particularly if cropped or if information is omitted. Images that stereotype or exoticise people, situations or places can perpetuate myths, especially if these images or stories are the only viewpoints the reader has been given.

Identity formation

The metaphor of "windows and mirrors" is used by a number of theorists (Bishop, 1990; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Dolan, 2014; Landt, 2006; Derman-Sparks and Edwards 2010b) to describe how books can reflect and affirm the child's culture, and how a child can look through a window to a different world. Dolan (2014) states that omissions are as significant as what is represented and that minority groups often have few literary "mirrors" that affirm their identities. Mendoza and Reese (2001) demonstrate the importance of avoiding distorted "windows and mirrors", in that representations should be accurate, while Hegarty and Titley (2013) note that "the impact of images can be internalised inviting deficit identity conclusions" (p. 7), further reiterating that images can empower or disempower the reader.

Methodology

Research question

This research examined representations of diversity in a sample of early years' textbooks and accompanying books (Appendix A), and questioned whether readers would be enabled to see accurate representations of themselves and others in these books. It further aimed to identify whether these representations challenged or reproduced stereotypes. Questions in textbooks were analysed to decipher whether they were inclusive or whether they presented cultural assumptions. Both the presence and absence of representations of minority groups were analysed.

Textbooks were chosen as the sample, as they are operational in the majority of classrooms and are based on the primary curriculum. It was envisaged that social environmental and scientific education (SESE) textbooks would deal specifically with diversity and citizenship, but it was decided to analyse all textbooks and accompanying books in use in one junior school as this represents the reality that many children encounter. The sample included 14 textbooks and 21 accompanying books from one school's booklist. These books are listed in Appendix A.[1]

Methodological approaches

The research encompassed a qualitative framework, with critical discourse analysis forming the main approach. The qualitative aspect was a key component in identifying the underlying assumptions and messages the textbooks were transmitting. A quantitative element was also embedded in the research survey as the representations of particular groups were recorded numerically to determine which groups were represented and how frequently.

A rubric was developed to ascertain the degrees of representation of particular groups (Appendix B), and was adapted from the *Equal Measures* (Department of Education and Skills, 2006) literature analysis survey and textbook analysis survey. These two surveys, created for the purpose of exploring gender equality, were adapted to explore further equality issues based on the 'nine grounds' of equality legislation, specifically to identify the level of representation of minority ethnic groups, Travellers, characters with special educational needs, and a range of family structures, including the variety of family types as presented in the *Different Families, Same Love* (INTO, 2015) campaign. The quantitative aspect of the survey included counting and recording the number of characters in order to identify whether the degrees of representation were tokenistic or representative of societal realities. Derman-Sparks and Edward's *Ten Steps for Reviewing Children's Books* (2010a) was consulted because the anti-bias approach was key to the investigation. This involved checking illustrations for stereotypes, tokenism and identifying whether characters were presented as complex human beings rather than one-dimensional "add-ons". Derman-Sparks and Edwards (2010a) also identified the need to question subtle messages that may carry bias in story lines. This questioned whether characters from minority groups were presented as dependent or passive; whether such groups had positive representations or had unnaturally inspirational qualities in order to gain approval or acceptance.

Critical discourse analysis.

The qualitative aspect of the research entailed critical discourse analysis, which identified what was implied through the text rather than what was stated through linguistic and non-linguistic depictions (Denscombe, 2010). Therefore what was said and what was unsaid were considered of equal importance. Discourse analysis reveals "underlying assumptions that cannot be measured" (Pingel, 2010, p. 68). Fairclough (1995) argues that units of text are ideological. Denscombe (2010) reiterates this, stating that words and images are not used to

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1   Within this study "readers" are referred to as "accompanying books" in order to differentiate them from the textbooks and from the "reader", as in the person who engages with the text.

depict reality, but for "creating and sustaining reality" (p. 287). Within the research it was important to identify what "realities" were being created and reproduced, as these realities can influence the young reader's sense of identity and their identification of others (Faas and Ross, 2012).

Questions in textbooks were analysed to deduce what the author took for granted or felt needed to be explained. Further analyses were conducted based on Pingel's (2010) list of criteria for analysis (p. 71) which involved the hermeneutic analysis of underlying assumptions, target group, narrative, balance and rationality of the representations. This included examining textbooks from the reader's point of view in order to ascertain whether the reader was ignored or included. Van Dijk (1993) notes how dominance may be enacted through subtleties and through everyday forms of talk and text that appear "natural" (p. 254). He argues that social dominance may be ideologically sustained and reproduced by the media or textbooks. The level of culturally assumed knowledge was examined through the rubric in order to identify levels of "natural dominance". As the textbooks were designed based on the *Primary School Curriculum* (1999), they reflect and reproduce societal values which can impact on the child's sense of self.

Image-based research

Early years' textbooks tend to be more visual than textual; therefore, some textbooks required more emphasis on image analysis. Images present factual information and represent things through symbolism and hidden meanings (Denscombe, 2010), and so they were examined in relation to their function with the accompanying text, as their combined relationship can alter the meaning (Barthes, 1977). However, this was not always possible as there were often no textual references to the imagery, which led to reliance on the reader's prior knowledge and experiences as Apple (2000) argues that readers interpret texts based on their own "classed, raced, religious and gendered biographies" (p. 191).

Denscombe (2010) further cautions against the taking images out of context and as such it was important to note the purpose and position of the image. This was illustrated in the *Dóchas Code of Conduct* (2014) which was considered during the analysis of images of the global south, where the functions of illustrations were considered to ascertain whether they complemented the text or altered the meaning.

Data analysis processes

Quantitative data were input into Microsoft Excel, and bar charts were created to represent the number of male and female characters, occupations according to gender, and the number of minority ethnic groups within textbooks. The number of white characters was quantified as well as those from minority ethnic groups in order to exemplify the representations proportionately. Bar charts were utilised to make the degrees of representation more visual while undertaking qualitative analysis; however it was important to remain aware that this represented a small sample (Appendix C, Figures 2 and 3).

Findings and discussion

The following is a summary of key findings:

⚡ All representations of disability were presented through an image of a person in a wheelchair with no textual references to disability. This was with the exception of one text where the Paralympics was briefly explained[2].

⚡ Regarding gender: while textbooks depicted men and women in a variety of non-traditional occupations, women were more likely to be seen engaging in perceived masculine activities such as physical labour, than men were seen in nurturing roles.

⚡ Traditional roles within families were prevalent, and nuclear families remained the dominant image. LGBT families were absent.

⚡ There were omissions of families suffering from socioeconomic hardship.

⚡ Within representations of countries in the wider world, there was a failure to show diversity within regions, countries or continents.

⚡ While 'home' was a recurring theme, it was generally assumed that children had homes. Travellers were not referenced within the sample texts.

⚡ Some of the questioning relied on assumed culturally-specific experiences of the reader.

Disability

Within the sample, there was a limited number of children and adults with special needs, all of whom were presented in wheelchairs with no textual references. Some of the images presented active wheelchair users; however, only one of these representations was integrative and "natural", while other representations portrayed stereotypical views of disability.

The only representations of special needs throughout *Bun go Barr* and *Planet Maths* featured in the second class textbooks. Within *Bun go Barr 2* a young boy in a wheelchair was presented playing basketball with his friends. He asked his peers to look at him and see that he was happy and not afraid. According to Derman-Sparks (2010a), children with disabilities should not have to display extraordinary qualities in order to gain acceptance from their peers. As the boy drew attention to his lack of fear, an everyday activity was exemplified as an achievement for a person with a disability.

In *Planet Maths 2* a boy in a wheelchair was presented painting with his peers. This was the only representation in which a person with a disability was presented as independent and distinct. There was only one wheelchair user throughout the *Wonderland* collection, a boy who appeared in the text *The Wrong Car* and pointed where to go while his mother attentively gazed at him. This representation could be interpreted as uncritically reinforcing the stereotype of people with disabilities as being helpless and dependent (Derman-Sparks, 2013).

Direct references to ability were made in *Grow in Love 1* on a page entitled "Hey! Look what I can do!" (p. 12). Readers were asked which of the following they could do: jump, balance books on their head, play ball or do a handstand. The image of playing ball was presented with a girl in a wheelchair, however the choice of physically challenging activities further emphasised what a wheelchair user could not do.

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2   Feena's Second Book of Facts (Holmes, 2011, p. 16)

Grow in Love 2 presented a young boy in a wheelchair playing tic-tac-toe. His friend pointed towards which section he should choose. This suggested incapacity to make decisions which implied that the boy had both physical and intellectual disabilities. *Small World 1* included one young wheelchair user watching his peers play. He held his hand up but no one looked at him, which emphasised his exclusion. There were no representations of children with disabilities in *Small World 2*; however, children were asked to design a house for a person who uses a wheelchair, an exercise which elicited critical thinking, a key component of anti-bias education (Derman-Sparks, 1989).

In summary, disability was presented in the sample textbooks through a homogenised wheelchair motif. The representations further suggested physical and intellectual disabilities to be interlinked. Textbooks failed to reflect the diversity of special needs. As wheelchair users were the only characters with special needs presented, this reflected a stereotypical "naturalised" view of disability (Hyatt, 2005, p. 252).

Gender

Gender marking in job titles was avoided, suggesting a move towards inclusivity. For example, in *Small World*, inclusive language such as "lollipop-person", "milk-person", "delivery driver" and "bin-person" was used. This inclusive language was absent from other texts; however, those texts did not directly deal with the theme of occupations.

Within *Small World*, women were pictorially represented doing non-traditional roles including plumbing and building. This challenged stereotypes and supported critical thinking as advocated by Murray, Crooke and O'Doherty (2006, p. 12). However, men dominated the roles of builders and caretakers (Figure 1).

There were representations of male nurses and teachers but female representations outnumbered them. Therefore, the extent to which women were presented engaging in perceived masculine roles was not reflected in the reverse. Furthermore, men outnumbered women in almost all of the textbooks (Appendix C, Figure 2).

The language attempted to open up roles to men and women but traditional roles were reverted to in accompanying images. Throughout the textbooks all representations of "lollipop-people" were of women and all images of "post-people" and "milk-people" were of men. In *Small World 1* the term "milk-person" was used once on a page that explored occupations (p. 86). However, all other references were to the "milkman", demonstrating inconsistency.

Gender roles within families were selective and although men were frequently seen cooking for their children, there were no images of men pushing a pram or holding a baby. As families were explored in *Small World 1,* the reader was told "everybody's family is different. You might not have any brothers or sisters. Your granny might not be alive anymore. Your dad might live in a different place" (p. 80). This portrayed the mother as the primary caregiver because the father was presented as a person who may be absent. The textbook then asked readers to draw their "granny", "grandad", "uncle", "aunt" or "cousin", rather than providing children with a space to depict their immediate family.

Figure 1: Occupations according to gender within the sample.
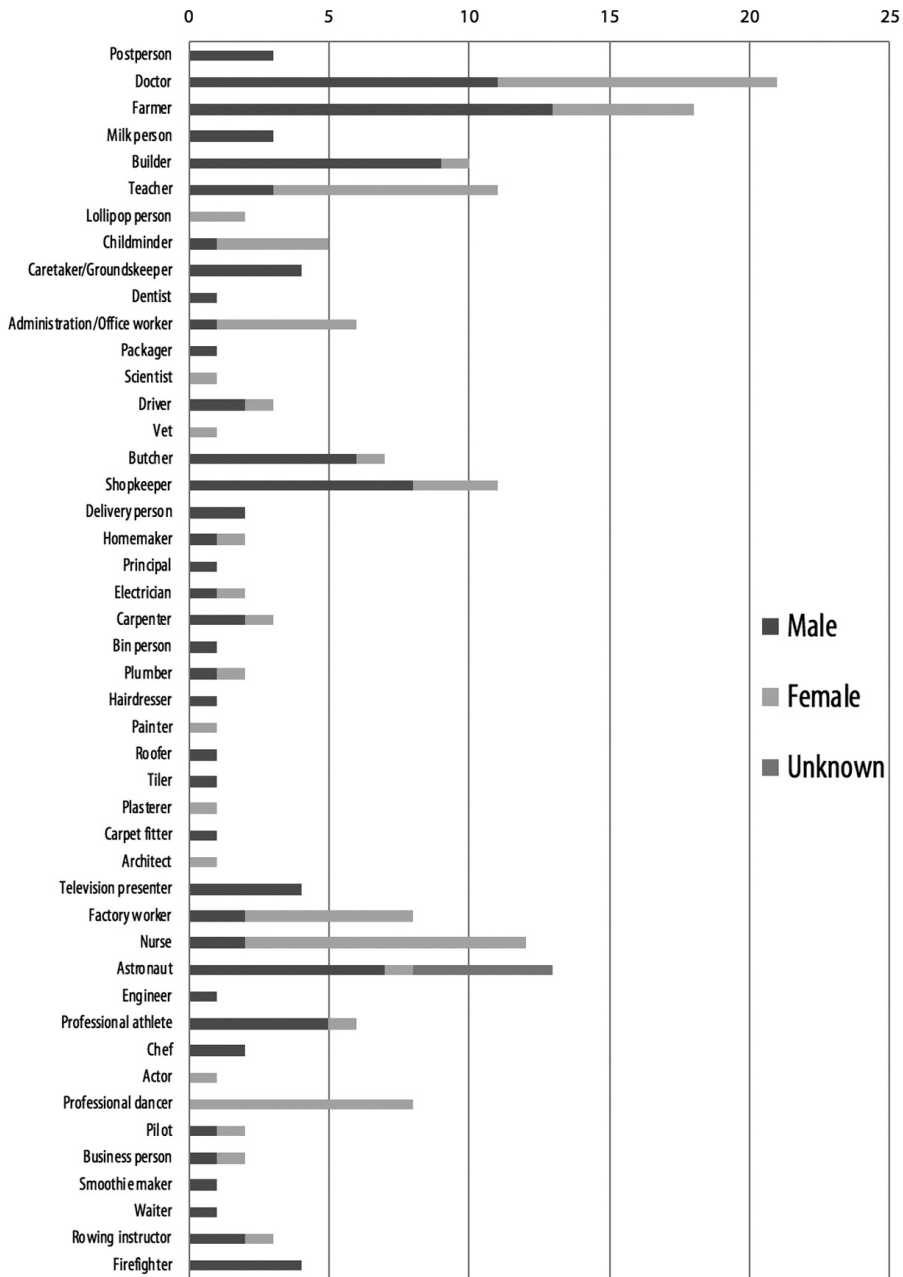
Representation of 'family' in textbooks revealed the prevalence of traditional roles, and nuclear families remained the dominant image. In instances where there was only one parent in the image there was no occupying text, therefore personal interpretation of family dynamics was required from the reader. LGBT families were absent.

Within *Wonderland* there were constant references to the male character GG's size. In *Dance Shoes for GG*, he had to specifically order extra-large shoes but was unimpressed with the feminine shoes he was delivered; "they were very big, very soft and very pink... I can't wear these. Everyone will laugh at me" (p. 10). The *Wonderland* series often made overt references to femininity and masculinity which were not present in the textbooks. For example, in *The Treasure Hunt*, GG and Winchilla had a disagreement about whether boys or girls were better at reading maps whereby Winchilla stated, "the girls have won. Girls are much better than boys at things like that" (pp. 4-5). Such statements perpetuate gender stereotypes that may have implications for a young child's identity formation (Derman-Sparks, 1989; Derman-Sparks and Edwards, 2010b; MacNaughton, 2006; Murray, Crooke and O'Doherty, 2006).

To summarise, although there was a move towards inclusive language in texts, further work needs to take place in order to present balanced representations of women and men, and the roles they occupy within families and society. Representations of families need to reflect the diversity of modern family life.

Socioeconomic status

Jobs were presented as something to be taken for granted in the *Wonderland* series. In *Feena's Second Book of Facts*, the reader was told people "need jobs so there *must* [emphasis added] be work nearby" (p. 9). Multiple reasons for working were given "*the main reason* [emphasis added] people work is to earn money to buy the things they need" (p. 13); people were described as choosing to work to use their skills or "get a sense of achievement" (p. 13) rather than for economic necessity. These presuppositions projected the availability of jobs as an assumed "reality" (Hyatt, 2005, p. 48).

Young labourers in "other countries" were referenced but were presented as a deviation from the norm; "in many countries there are laws that stop children from working... in *other* [emphasis added] countries, children start working much younger" (*Feena's Second Book of Facts*, p. 13). This was accompanied by the image of a smiling Asian child carrying water on his shoulder with the caption "young worker". The image-text relationship functioned to position the young worker as "other" it did not specify which country he was from, therefore the reader had to make his or her own deductions.

Country fact files

Within the sample, various countries were explored in terms of facts and cultural elements. *What a Wonderful World* in-text fact files took the reader on what Banks (2010, p. 240) describes as a "contributions approach". The main foci of these approaches were on flags, famous animals, landmarks and facts about the country. This dipped into parts of the country with no depth. Young children are highly influenced by the imagery with which they are presented (Derman-Sparks and Ramsey 2006, 2010; Dolan, 2014; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Landt, 2006; MacNaughton, 2006; Murray and O'Doherty, 2001). Therefore, showing one-sided views of a country or lifestyle can greatly influence children's understanding of the world. For example, Mexico was explored in *Small World 1* with stereotypical Mexican celebrations, foods and objects. It was depicted as a monolingual country; "Spanish is the

language that is spoken in Mexico" (p. 65). The reader was then asked to write two facts about Mexico which the child would likely base on the information provided, thus potentially reinforcing and reproducing said stereotypes.

Throughout the textbooks, there were minimal representations of minority ethnic groups (Appendix c, Figure 3). References to African countries throughout the sample varied from a thematic approach to facts in isolation. The range of living environments was limited to recurring images of mud huts and one image of a township. Within the sample, Kenya, Chad, Egypt, Ethiopia, South Africa and Zambia were referenced explicitly. Selective stereotyping prevailed throughout texts. This was evident with Kenya being explicitly referred to as "African" while Egypt was rarely linked with Africa textually or graphically. When referring to Kenyan homes in *Small World 2*, the text describes how "some African people build their homes with mud" (p. 28) rather than "some Kenyan people". This depicted Africans as one homogeneous group. The Maasai people were suggested to be underdeveloped in *Feena's First Book of Facts*, "In some parts of the world some people still wear the same style of clothes that they have worn for hundreds of years. The Maasai women in Africa *still* [emphasis added] like to wear colourful free flowing clothes" (p. 15). On the following page the question "What do people living in hot areas wear?" was answered with "In areas where the weather is hot and dry, people wear loose, light coloured clothing" (p. 16) accompanied by an image of a nuclear white family wearing light clothing on a beach. This contradicted the prior reference to Maasai women, thus deviating them from the norm.

In *Small World 2*, industry in Zambia was focalised through an Irish person, John, who moved to Lusaka in 1968 for work; "it is a new city with building sites everywhere, it's no wonder they *need* [emphasis added] engineers... the city badly needs a good supply of clean drinking water" (p. 92). This wording suggested that there were no Zambian engineers and 'John' was doing work that could not be provided by locals.

In the same text, "Muna" explained that she lived in a hut in Ethiopia. Her lifestyle was portrayed as an ordinary non-emotive experience; "I help my mother by sweeping the house and fetching water... my family eat the dinner that I cook with my sister" (p. 77). This was accompanied by an image of Muna and her sister 'fetching water' barefoot. Muna further stated, "We often have coffee after dinner, even the children!" Her statement "even the children" demonstrated awareness that this may be perceived as unusual. Following this story, readers were asked to write "two differences" between their lives and Muna's life. This further distanced readers as they were not asked to draw any similarities.

A view of rural Ethiopia was presented with no references to urban life. This could have implications for both Ethiopian children in the class and children who rely on these representations as their only window into Ethiopia, thus reinforcing rather than challenging stereotypes (Derman-Sparks, 2013).

In summary, a homogenous and superficial view of Africa was presented within the texts, with a failure to represent the diversity of urban living within countries on that continent. Selective imagery and dialogue created a binary between the global north and the global south, presenting an unbalanced and inaccurate representation of the wider world.

Homes and homelessness

Home was a recurring theme. The geography strand unit of 'homes' for infant classes aims to ensure children "acquire some, awareness of different types of homes in the locality flat, cottage, house, caravan, trailer and begin to appreciate the need for shelter for a family". (NCCA, 1999a, p. 24). The variety of homes is extended within the first and second class curriculum, with developing an awareness of homelessness as a stated aim (p. 38). The researchers argue that the variety of homes presented in SESE textbooks functioned as an "additive approach" (Banks, 2020, p. 240) to suit curricular requirements. Outside of pages where particular homes were arguably present to cover curricular objectives, detached homes permeated the textbooks, reflecting a natural dominance (Fairclough, 1995).

The pictorial and textual representations of homes in *Small World 2* reinforced the global north/global south binary, with selective and unbalanced representations within particular regions. This was further emphasised through language. For example, representations of South Africa's and Hong Kong's living spaces were both suggested to be 'crowded'. Houses in South Africa were described as "small and overcrowded" while Hong Kong was described as having "lots of people" in apartments, framed with the exclamation "Wow!" to make it seem appealing. The cost of townhouses in New York was referred to, while people who have swimming pools in their gardens in Australia were described as "lucky" (p. 29), mirroring Bryan's (2014) concept of "development as luck". She argues that this encourages children to favour Western society over the developing world, creating a "cultural superiority" (p. 67).

Small World 1 assumed that readers had a home. Children were asked to write their address, write about their own home or draw a picture of it. In *Grow in Love 2* children were asked to draw where they live. This question was more inclusive than those in the SESE textbooks as the children could draw their town as per the example. Although *Small World 2* attempted to deal with the issue of homelessness, its approach was contradictory. It firstly assumed that readers had a home: "What does our home give us?", then children were asked to choose from the following options: "It shelters us from the weather; It keeps us safe from danger; It is a place for our things; It is a place to eat, sleep and play" (p. 28). Subsequently, children explored selected homes around the world and were asked "How is this home different from your own *home* [emphasis added]?" (p. 29). These possessive pronouns functioned to segregate rather than include (Hyatt, 2005).

Another page in *Small World 2* presented an Irish girl's story of homelessness. While there were intentions to exemplify homelessness as normal, it was abnormalised through questions which assumed home-ownership: "Write three things you love about your home", "Write three feelings you would have if you were homeless" (p. 30). The pronouns positioned the reader as an "in-group member" (Hyatt, 2005, p. 47) which marginalised readers without a permanent home. These activities could be particularly isolating for the increasing number of children living in emergency accommodation, with figures showing almost 4,000 children homeless in Ireland in May 2018 (Peter McVerry Trust, 2018; Scanlon and McKenna, 2018).

There were no references to Travellers within the sample; however some imagery of caravans was present with emphasis on temporal aspects. Caravans were framed as a "type of transport" or somewhere to stay for a holiday as seen in *Small World 2*. The word "caravan"

was used despite the fact that Travellers use the word "trailer" (Kenny and McNeela, 2006). According to Kenny and McNeela (2006); "curricula are not neutral, and how settled people are taught about Travellers is a significant factor in the reproduction of prejudice" (p. 55). As Travellers were not the focalisers and inaccurate language was used, Travellers' voices were delegitimised.

In summary, a number of children would not have their identity reaffirmed through these textbooks, such as children suffering from socioeconomic hardship, children from non-nuclear families, and those in temporary or emergency accommodation. Furthermore, the invisibility of particular groups such as Travellers, served to delegitimise their place in society.

Questioning

The SESE textbooks elicited prescribed answers with multiple-choice or "fill in the blanks" questions. In instances where questions were open, prescribed examples led readers to a particular answer. This was evident in *Small World 2* where readers were asked to write two facts about Ireland, guided with prior information. Readers were then asked to write a fact-file which was heavily prescribed "(flag, famous animal, famous place, two facts) for another country, e.g. Spain or Canada" (p. 5). These references assumed that readers would know facts about these countries despite other countries being covered previously within *Small World*. This reflects Fairclough's (1995) concept of naturalisation of "common sense" (p. 74) which positions the world from a dominant eurocentric/global north paradigm.

Although multiple choice questions often accompanied a factual piece, they sometimes related to personal experiences, which was problematic. Within *Small World 1* readers were asked whether the first present that they received was a teddy, blanket or a doll, which presented cultural assumptions. Children who did not receive such gifts would not be able to write a different answer which further perpetuates a natural dominance of particular "norms", and functions to exclude those not in the "in-group" (Hyatt, 2005, p. 47). More open-ended questioning in textbooks would recognise the heterogeneity of contemporary classrooms and would provide greater opportunities for increased dialogue in class.

Conclusion

This study examined representations of diversity through the analysis of a sample of textbooks for children in junior classes. The research found that peripheral representations of diversity were present, constituting an "additive approach" (Banks, 2010, p. 240) that did not reflect the anti-bias education advocated by Derman-Sparks (1989, 2010b). Textbooks provided limited scope for children to see those already marginalised in society fairly represented. Although some texts attempted to present non-traditional roles through gender-neutral language, there were inconsistencies between text and image whereby the imagery reverted to traditional gender roles. As the pertinent issue of homelessness was ignored outside its explicit position as a theme, it was disconnected from the remainder of texts. This uncritical approach positioned homeless children as outsiders. As suggested by Banks (2004), in order for curricula to be truly inclusive, content needs to be examined and

restructured as dominant ideologies can be covertly presented. Literature has the potential to function as both "windows" and "mirrors" but textbooks in this sample did not provide this opportunity. Critical discourse analysis revealed the natural dominance of the reader being Irish and not suffering from socioeconomic hardship. This dominance was further constituted through personal pronouns and presumed experiences which excluded some readers. Closed and prescribed questioning functioned to further exclude those who were not part of the "in-group" (Hyatt, 2005, p. 47).

Authors need to be aware of the implications of these findings when creating texts for use in primary schools. To be fully inclusive, textbooks should provide children with space for critical reflection and for dialogue, in order to challenge homogeneous or tokenistic representations. Greater attention to the matters raised in this study would support the development of the type of anti-bias curricula necessary for schools in contemporary Ireland.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Gaeilge:
Bun go Barr. Bunchéim A, Bunchéim B, Bun go Barr 1 agus 2, (2009). Dublin: C.J Fallon.
Maths:

Whelan, D. (2011). *Planet Maths. Junior Infants*. Dublin: Folens.

Curley, A. (2011). *Planet Maths. Senior Infants*. Dublin: Folens.

Ó Conghaile, P. and McCann, E.(2011) *Planet Maths. First Class*. Dublin: Folens.

Hande, M. and Ward, V. (2011). *Planet Maths. Second Class*. Dublin: Folens.

Religious Education:

O'Connell, D. and Mahon, E. (2015). *Grow in Love. Primary 1 and 2*, Dublin: Veritas.

Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE):

Griffin, A. and Sheehy, L. (2015). *What a Wonderful World! Junior Infants and Senior Infants*. Dublin: CJ Fallon.

Daly, L., Finn, D.], Fletcher, M. and McCarthy S. (2015). *Small World. First Class*. Dublin: CJ Fallon.

Connolly, C., Fletcher, A. and McCarthy, S. (2015). *Small World. Second Class*. Dublin: CJ Fallon.

Wonderland Accompanying Books
Stage One:

Holmes, F. (2011). *The picnic; GG is too big!; Where can GG sit?; Ella goes to the airport; The wrong car; Globby helps out; The beach house; Globby's football match; Wandsville friend's; Wandsville rhymes; Fairytales 1* Dublin: CJ Fallon.
Stage Two:

Holmes, F. (2011). *Looking after Zara; The new suit; Dance shoes for GG; Camper van fun; Feena's first book of facts; The treasure hunt; GG's new job; A surprise for Feena; The magic ring; Feena's second book of facts*. Dublin: CJ Fallon.

Appendix B: Textbook analysis survey

Number of female characters	
Number of male characters	
Unknown gender of characters	
Ratio of male to female characters	
Number of Traveller characters	
Number of ethnic minority characters (specify ethnicity)	
Number of characters with special needs (specify Special Needs)	

	Almost Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Never/No	Not Applicable
Are minority ethnic groups or Travellers equally represented in positions of authority?					
Are men and women equally represented in positions of authority?					
Do characters with special needs have superior qualities such as extra intellectual or sporting ability?					
Do characters with special needs have positive representations?					
Do minority characters display unnaturally inspirational qualities?					
Do boys and girls participate in stereotypical activities?					
Are men and women shown in a variety of occupations including non-traditional ones?					
Are a variety of family structures present?					
Are women as homemakers presented as competent and decisive?					
Are men presented in nurturing or caring roles?					
Is inclusive language used e.g. "firefighter" instead of "fireman"?					
Do illustrations stereotype characters?					
Are achievements of minority characters represented as heroic?					
Do the books present a range of socioeconomic conditions?					
Do questions assume prior culturally specific knowledge? Give examples					

Appendix C:

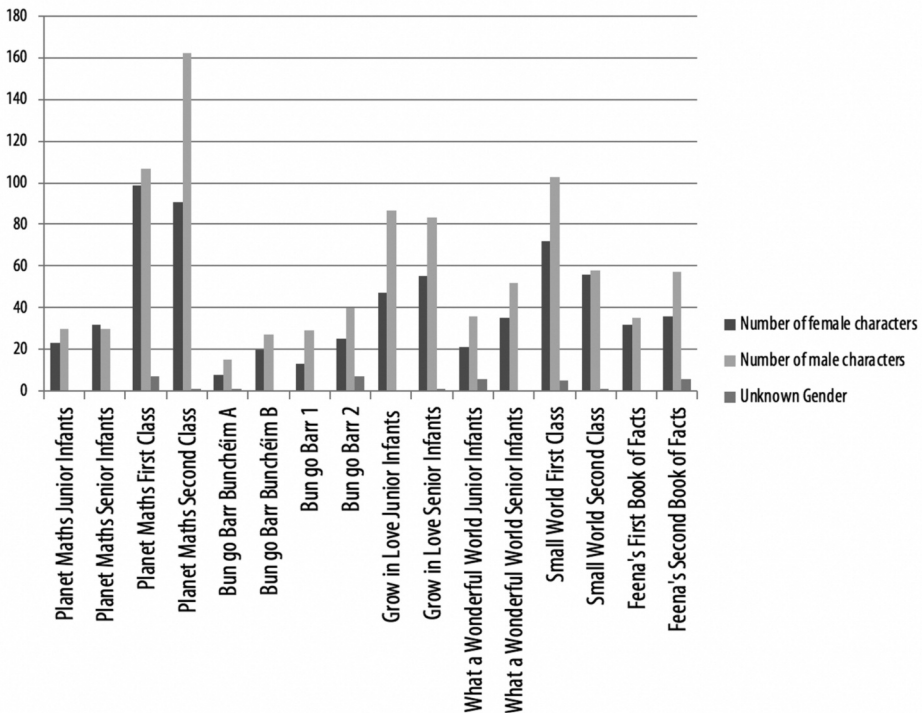*Figure 2: Representations of male and female characters within the sample.*

Figure 3: Representations of ethnicity within the sample