

Discerning Diverse Voices: Symposium on Diversity

Poster Title:

Inclusion and Representation Matter: Homogeneity in Youth Literature with Dis(Abled) Characters

Abstract:

Picture books, juvenile books, and young adult books that portray persons with disabilities have made great strides in the last thirty years. Many negative stereotypes in youth literature have been replaced by accurate, honest portrayals of individuals with intellectual and/or physical disabilities. Unfortunately the majority of the characters, both in the protagonist role and in supporting roles, in the books with positive representations of disability are not depicted as racially or ethnically diverse. This study is a content analysis of both the descriptions of characters in the texts of books and the illustrations (if applicable) in all three categories - picture, juvenile, and young adult - to find the intersections between characters with a disability and his/her race or ethnicity. The gender of the characters with a disability will also be noted. Many of the books in this study have been awarded the Schneider Family Book Award, an award given annually by the American Library Association to authors or illustrators of books with artistic expression of disability, and/or the Dolly Gray Children's Literature Award, awarded every even year to an author and/or illustrator to recognize positive portrayals of people with developmental disabilities.