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*University of Central Florida*

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AN EXPLORATION OF REPRESENTATIONS OF RACE AND ETHNICITY IN THREE  
TRANSITIONAL SERIES FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

by

SONIA M. BALKARAN

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the Honors in the Major Program in Elementary Education  
in the College of Community Innovation and Education  
and in the Burnett Honors College  
at the University of Central Florida  
Orlando, Florida

Fall Term, 2018

Thesis Chair: Dr. Sherron Killingsworth Roberts

## ABSTRACT

This thesis seeks to explore the related research literature surrounding representations and portrayals of protagonists of various multicultural backgrounds in series or transitional books. As teachers, it is essential to acknowledge the lack of multicultural characters in children’s literature among elementary classroom bookshelves and learn how to incorporate literature featuring strong main characters of varying races and ethnicities so that children can see role models who mirror their own contexts. Prior studies, such as Gangi (2008) and Green and Hopenwasser (2017) have examined the deficiency of multicultural literature in the classroom, particularly among transitional stories, which shows the importance of exploring this topic. Furthermore, Green and Hopenwasser (2017) emphasize the importance of equal representation of transitional books with characters of diverse ethnicities, as they act as “mirrors and windows” for students to reflect upon themselves. These studies argue that to prevent the “whitewashing” of literature for primary grades, teachers should be cautious while choosing series or transitional books. I conducted an equity audit on three series or transitional books from different time periods, commonly found among elementary classroom libraries to explore ethnic and racial representations of protagonists to the actual demographics of the third-grade student population. Administering this equity audit also determined that popular series or transitional books are advantageous to include into classroom libraries when protagonists are portrayed as non-stereotypical experiencing real-life situations. The findings of this equity audit have the potential for educators to improve their methods choosing literature with characters of diverse races and ethnicities and improve methods of integrating multicultural literature into lessons.

This HIM thesis is dedicated to my father, Shamnarine Balkaran, who taught me, from a young age, the importance of embracing my diverse Guyanese ethnicity and Hindu culture.

To my mother, Ramrattie Balkaran, who instilled my love of children's literature by reading to me every single night before bed as a child.

To my sister and brother, Neela and Amit, who are my biggest advocates and supporters.

To my Aja, who instilled in me the importance of giving and receiving a good, quality education.

To Dustin, Dylan, Drew and Savannah Rose, who will hopefully grow up in a world more inclusive than my own and for whom I strive to become the best educator I can be.

Above all, to Bhagwan (God), through who's blessings and grace I accomplish all things.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The assimilation of different ethnic students in American school systems has come a long way from the time of segregation as decided by Plessy v. Ferguson, and the Bellingham Riots. The United States is considered to be a "melting pot of identities among its 323.1 million people, however, in today's society, the discussion of deporting legal and illegal Americans, denying refugees to the rights of a free life and education, and building walls between boundaries is becoming more frequent than the discussion of becoming inclusive. Racial and ethnic Enrollment in public elementary schools has increased steadily from the early 2000s. From 2004-2014, there was a 75% increase of Hispanic, African American, Pacific Islander, and Asian enrollment. By 2014, less than 50% of students enrolled in elementary schools were Caucasian, a 58% decrease from 2004. In 2017, the demographics of American elementary students from minority backgrounds surpassed the demographics of American students from Caucasian backgrounds (52% of the population vs. 48% of the population), reinforcing the statement that the United States is becoming more diverse, primarily in our school systems.

In Florida, all educators acknowledge Florida's Principles of Professional Conduct for the Education Profession in Florida, which states that teachers should not discriminate on the basis of different characteristics, including race, color, and ethnic origin. However, while this is a mandate teachers must follow, students are not necessarily held to the same standard and may act ignorant towards their fellow students due to a lack of multicultural education. Especially now, it is important to teach students, particularly elementary-aged students, acceptance, and inclusiveness of all types of people. Multicultural transitional series literature with well-established ethnic protagonists authorizes students to explore worlds both identical and different from their own. This specific type of literature offers students opportunities to traverse different



scenarios with characters whom they can compare against themselves. Through this genre of books, students are given insight as to why people look, act, dress, and behave differently.

The purpose of this thesis is to perform an equity audit of a current children's literature transitional series for elementary age children to identify if it contains protagonists of various ethnic or racial backgrounds in non-stereotypical roles. Using patterns and trends observed from a series of equity audits on three sets of transitional series literature, a list of recommended grade-appropriate multicultural series literature will be constructed and provided as suggestions for implementation in 3rd grade classroom libraries. This selected list of transitional series literature was used to generate suggestions for teachers to create a more inclusive classroom library and incorporate multicultural literature into lesson plans. The necessity of including multicultural literature and diverse characters in the everyday classroom is shown through the review of related research literature containing studies that examine the impact this type of literature has on young children and young children's attitudes towards (their own and others) race and ethnicity.

The following chapter will provide an intensive review of the research literature covering a variety of topics, from multicultural literature, mirrors and windows, the importance of children's literature, and the prominence of multicultural literature in the elementary classroom. These topics influence my research, which is detailed in Chapter Three and Four. Chapter Five analyzes the results of my research compared to my research of literature, and presents trends among results, any research limitations, educational implications, and suggestions for future research.

## CHAPTER TWO: A REVIEW OF THE RESEARCH LITERATURE

A review of research on multicultural literature for young children highlights the stereotypes that surround them and the urgent need to start including them in our classrooms. As more immigrants enter the United States and our classrooms become more inclusive, the age of introducing and discussing the concept of race and ethnicity gets younger. The majority of the research reviewed explores the growing inclusion of multicultural literature (literature with ethnic characters) into the everyday classroom. However, there was little to no reference of any multicultural literature protagonists of different ethnicities and races in non-stereotypical roles. The following literature review focuses first on the definition of multicultural literature and the relating attitudes young children have concerning their own race and ethnicity. It also examines the possible impact children's literature has on reinforcing negative views of different races (that students may have) while indicating the possible reasons of why those views exist and the influence children's literature has on positively altering those viewpoints.

### **Answering the Question: "What is Multicultural Literature?"**

To fully understand the importance of multicultural literature, one must first understand what this term encompasses. Multicultural literature is defined as "*literature about the sociocultural experiences of underrepresented groups*," (Education Wise, n.d, n.p.), underrepresented groups including those who fall outside the "mainstream" of race, ethnicity, religion, and language. All genres, both fiction and nonfiction, of literature can serve as essential tools for addressing diverse issues in the classroom. Although the definition of multicultural states representations of social experiences of underrepresented groups, some books that qualify as multicultural literature may make children feel alienated (Davis, Brown, Liedel-Rice, &

Soeder, 2005). As students of different ethnicities and races enter school, they are constantly challenged to “fit-in” and assimilate, in most cases, the texts they read in class do not allow these students to make connections or achieve proper emotional responses (Robinson, 2013). For the purpose of this research in analyzing transitional series multicultural literature, an emotional response is defined as “*common emotional reactions such as fears, triumphs, loss, maturation, childhood recollection, grief, pain, pride, and joy,*” (Robinson, 2013, p. 46.). Well-written multicultural literature with complex, developed characters allows for students of all ages to experience appropriate emotional responses, including empathy, as well as create a climate that welcomes racial, gender, and cultural diversity in the classroom.

This thesis has chosen to focus upon transitional series books for young children. Green and Hopenwasser (2017) state that transitional series literature is written in a straightforward, predictable, and comprehensible manner, usually for students between the ages of kindergarten and third grade, containing protagonists dealing with age-appropriate events. If these books are engaging, well-written and reflective of the reader, children who read transitional series literature will read for pleasure as an adult (Green & Hopenwasser, 2017, p. 51.). When young students interact with texts that feature protagonists they can connect with, they can see how others are like them and are able to make text-to-world connections between the events of the literature and their actual lives. However, if students do not encounter characters like them, literature will become more frustrating, rather than pleasurable and entertaining. In the last five decades, the main protagonists of transitional literature have moved away from the cookie-cutter mold of an Anglo-Saxon, suburban, American student between the ages of nine and thirteen (Szymusiak & Sibberson, 2001). By the late 1980s, the multicultural educational movement, a push for equal

rights that relates to schools and schooling (Bishop, 1997, p. 2), allowed for the creation of diverse, complex characters in literature. According to Rudine Bishop:

“Protagonists in literature have slowly been socially and culturally reformed to include characters of Latinos, American Indians, Asian Americans, the disabled, gays and lesbians, and the elderly; all of whom felt victimized, oppressed, or discriminated against in some way by the dominant majority.” (Bishop, 1997, p. 3)

As the American student population continues to diversify and grow, authors of children’s books seem to embrace multicultural literature and constantly including various character of different backgrounds and ethnicities; however, a majority of popular elementary book selections continue to deny underrepresented students realistic images of themselves, and their families, communities, and cultures. As teachers, one must include engaging and authentic literature; therefore, this research will explore just how current third grade transitional series literature for elementary age children strives to reflect the present diverse demographics of today’s classroom.

### **“Mirrors and Windows”**

With an influx of immigrants attending U.S. schools, it is especially important for students of all backgrounds to have opportunities to learn and reflect about themselves and others around them, in and out of school (Tschinda, Ryan, & Ticknor, 2014). Since the population of American elementary schools is becoming increasingly diverse, transitional series literature filled with mainly white characters do not allow Caucasian students to reflect on other races, nor

does it allow students of other races to reflect upon themselves. However, when used appropriately in the classroom, multicultural series literature acts as “*mirrors and windows*” (Bishop, 1990; Green & Hopenwasser, 2017):

- **Mirror Books:** Children’s books that allow students to reflect upon themselves by providing a *mirrored* view of people from their *own* culture and ethnicity.
- **Window Books:** Children’s books that allow students a “*window view*” of how people of *other* cultures and races behave, live, dress, or problem solve.

The exposure to literature can become a shared experience, allowing students to reflect on their own perspective and individual backgrounds before looking at others. As children learn about themselves and others, they explore differences and similarities that allow them to learn to appreciate both theirs and others’ cultures (Lowery & Sabis-Burns, 2007). Considering a majority of children’s literature in the elementary classroom contains more Caucasian protagonists than any other race, students of Caucasian ethnicities are exclusively exposed to literature where they see reflections of themselves and their own lives. For this reason, these students within the dominant culture view themselves and their lives as being “normal” and view other people of different ethnicities as “exotic” (Bishop, 1997). Moreover, students of minorities, who do not see any reflections of themselves, or who see stereotypical, distorted, inaccurate, or comical depictions of themselves grow to understand that they have little value in their school, community, and society.

### “Sliding Glass Doors”

In 1990, Rudine Sims Bishop coined the new term “sliding glass doors” to describe the outlooks of diversity that students obtain from children’s literature. In her essay, *Mirrors*,

*Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors*, she describes these fluctuating phases of children's literature stating:

“Books are sometimes windows, offering views of the worlds that may be real or imagined, familiar or strange. When lighting conditions are just right however, a window can also be a mirror. These windows are also sliding glass doors, and readers have only to walk through in imagination to become part of whatever world has been created or recreated by the author.” (Bishop, 1990)

Books classified as “sliding glass doors” provides students an opening of adventures beyond their own experiences while portraying protagonists that can look, act, or dress both similarly and differently than the reader. Reading these types of children's books may start to become a means of self-affirmation, where students are constantly seeking representations of themselves experiencing different encounters in literature that they do not get to experience personally. With the growing diversity in the elementary school population but only 73.3% of elementary school books containing Caucasian protagonists, the need to include these “sliding glass doors” is becoming more frequent (University of Wisconsin, 2017).

### **The Influence of Children's Literature**

What children read influences how children view themselves, and when children encounter characters to relate to in text, their comprehension and motivation to read improves (DeNicolo & Franquiz, 2006). The influence reading will have on a reader is not just affected by an engaging plot and vivid setting, but also the inclusion of relatable characters. When children's books include protagonists, antagonists, and sidekicks of similar racial and ethnic backgrounds to the students, readers can easily identify and compare themselves to those characters, which

further their comprehension of the text. Literature, especially children's multicultural literature, can contribute to the development of students' (particularly students of ethnic minorities) self-esteem by portraying accurate characters that personify students' images of themselves. When students select books that elicit empathy and engagement from students of varied cultural background from different parts of the world, children's literature can be used as a tool against challenging stereotypes (Singer & Smith, 2003). It especially allows for Anglo-Saxon, heterosexual readers to see the world "through other people's eyes," despite racial differences.

Diversity in the classroom is growing more meaningful as classrooms continue to diversify in race and ethnicity. Both preservice and current teachers are inadequately prepared to understand and handle unique challenges students from different cultural backgrounds encounter (Robinson, 2013). Teachers hoping to positively impact students' views of, attitudes towards, and treatment of individuals with various ethnic and racial backgrounds may turn to multicultural literature. Therefore, the availability and accuracy of such literature should be examined before teachers select them for their classroom libraries or as instructional materials. With the current demographic shifts occurring in the United States due to the influx of immigrants and refugees (Bigler, 2002), the daily need for cross-cultural understanding is becoming more important.

### **Importance of Introducing Multicultural Literature in the Classroom**

It is critical for teachers to be aware of potential barriers when introducing multicultural literature in the classroom, however, to do so, educators must first be exposed to this type of literature themselves. By educating preservice teachers on how to successfully analyze and choose appropriate multicultural literature, then informing teachers on integrating its use in their classroom, students are exposed to similar scenarios they may be experiencing and are better

equipped to understand people who they encounter at school, in their community, and throughout the world (Singer, et. al, 2003).

Previous studies, such as ones conducted by Warikoo (2006), and Robinson (2013) supports the idea that students and teachers alike need to be aware of social and cultural issues that impact their lives, and that teachers need to find ways of introducing these issues through literature. Warikoo conducted in-depth interviews on students of Indo-Caribbean descent that considered three factors to explain differences in ethnic identity: different media images for South American men and women, a school context of different level of “peer status” perceived by Indian boys and girls and a gendered process of migration, where women maintain stronger cultural roots in a new country while men assimilated more. She found, that when entering school, students often adopt practices of segmented assimilation theory, which suggests that second-generation of minority cultures (in Warikoo’s case, Indo-Caribbean) youth may assimilate by adapting their identity to match the “white middle class,” “African-American lower class,” or may retain ties to their ethnic culture and community (Warikoo, 2006, p. 815.).

Robinson conducted a study on how inservice teachers can best implement multicultural literature in the classroom by assuming a transformative, critical perspective and posing the questions:

- What understanding do the students acquire about themselves and others while engaging critically with multicultural children’s literature?
- What are experiences that allow children to respond critically and emotionally with multicultural texts? (Robinson, 2013, p. 43)

To complete this study, Robinson implemented a quantitative inquiry completed by collecting data, locating recurring themes and categorizing and comparing these themes. They were



conducted in her classroom, where the demographics consisted of nine European-American, one African-American, six racially mixed and two Latino students. The author found that multicultural interactive readings promote critical responses to a text, and that students will draw on prior knowledge to build upon one another's comments. By providing students with opportunities to interact and learn about people whose experiences, cultures, social and economic situations, and heritages are different from their own, students were given the opportunity to allow to delve into their prior experiences and verbalize these experiences to focus on their social and cultural background and make connections between themselves and these characters. (Robinson, 2013, p. 50.)

In this research, the performance of a series of equity audit of three current children's literature transitional series for elementary age children to identify protagonists of various ethnic or racial backgrounds in non-stereotypical roles will provide both preservice and inservice teachers a guide on selecting suitable transitional series literature to incorporate into third grade classrooms. The book list compiled at the end of this research will also provide students options of representative multicultural transitional series literature for them to compare to their own cultures, experiences, races, and ethnicities.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research was to examine the representations and the portrayals of protagonists with various multicultural backgrounds among three popular third grade transitional series'. To do so, this research will use an equity audit, similar to one administered by Green and Hopewasser (2017) conducted on the first five books of three popular third grade book series to compare racial representations each books' protagonists to school demographics of the third-grade student population. By definition, an equity audit is "*a review of inequalities within an area or of the coverage of inequality issues in a policy, program, or project, usually with recommendations as to how they can be addressed*" (Defined Term, n.d, n.p.). In the past decade, less than 5% of recommended books for schools were of the multicultural genre (Gangi, 2008), so the results of these equity audits will be used to compile a list of appropriate multicultural transitional series literature to present suggestions of books and guidelines of classroom implementation to preservice and inservice teachers so as to integrate literature in their lessons and classroom libraries.

### **Selection of the Target Population and Transitional Series for Examination**

This research focused on examining transitional series literature appropriate for third grade students with various reading levels with a multicultural lens. Students respond more positively to literature containing characters who reflect the reader's own characteristics (Gangi, 2008); therefore, I chose popular transitional series literature most likely to be in a third-grade classroom library. Three different transitional series were chosen to be audited based on popularity among three different time periods and on the amount of racial diversity and attitudes towards different ethnicities. To narrow down the selection of books from the copious amount of

popular transitional series literature, the *New York Times Best Sellers List*, and the *Goodreads Must-Have Series for ages 6-12* was consulted. From those, *The Boxcar Children* series by Gertrude Chandler Warner, *The Bailey School Kids* series by Debbie Dadey, and *Franklin School Kids* series by Claudia Miller were chosen, as they best represented the changing demographics (1960-2016) of racial ethnicity in elementary-aged children throughout the decades. These series were published between 1940-2017, so it is appropriate to compare these protagonists to the period demographics. In each series, only the first five books of the series will be examined (in the case of *Franklin School Friends*, there are only five books). Each series follows the same format:

- Each book examined includes similar sets of protagonists: four in *The Boxcar Children* (two boys and two girls) and *The Bailey School Kids*, five in *Franklin School Friends* (two boys and three girls)
  - In *The Boxcar Children* and *The Bailey School Kids*, since there are only four protagonists, each character is the focus of many books. In *Franklin School Friends* a new character is introduced each time, allowing for five protagonists.
- Individual books in each transitional series contains a new plot or “adventure,” whether it is solving a problem or overcoming a challenge, focused on one main protagonist but every book will involve all main protagonists in some aspect.
- Each book examined is between 80 to 125 pages.

- Each book examined contains about five to seven black and white pictures throughout the book depicting the main protagonist and characters, the setting, details of the plot, and any secondary characters
- Each book has a colored, illustrated front cover depicting at least one of the main protagonists.

Each series was also chosen based on their publication dates, as they were written far enough apart to show the changing demographic on racial and ethnic characters and how they were portrayed (or mentioned) in each series. The first five *Boxcar Children* series books, published between 1942 and 1960, takes place during a time where segregation between African Americans and Caucasians are beginning to peak. The first five *Bailey School Kids* series books, published between 1991-1992, were written in a time where there was ongoing debate of whether, genes, environment and ethnicity caused an academic gap between different races. The first five *Franklin School Friend* series books, published between 2014-2016, reflects the growing diversity of America while still alluding to the ongoing stereotypes the nation has of certain races. The diverse backgrounds of each series allow for a wide selection of themes to be examined when conducting, comparing, and contrasting this trinity of equity audits.

### **Selection of Trends and Themes Examined**

When conducting this set of equity audits, I examined the “who, what, where, when and why” of each transitional series to determine the assets and deficiencies of *The Boxcar Children* (Warner, 1942-1960, *The Bailey School Kids* (Dadey, 1991-1992), and *Franklin School Friends* (Mills, 2014-2016) and found that two of the three series contributed to immersing third graders

in reflective literature. In gathering my data, I examined these third grade book series for protagonists of Caucasian, African American, Hispanic/Latino, South Asian, Eastern Asian, and Multi-Racial ethnicities to research equal or unequal representations of ethnicities in elementary series children's literature. To compare to reader demographics, I also examined family dynamics and protagonist character traits (bravery, honesty, fairness) by reading the first five books in each of the three series, carefully examining the ethnic background (stereotypes, characteristics, roles, family dynamics, plot, and related actions) of each protagonist.

Based on my previous knowledge and experience with third grade transitional series literature, I anticipated finding 75% of the books among the three transitional series to contain protagonists of Caucasian backgrounds, and about 20% of the books observed might contain protagonists of African American backgrounds. While examining these three series, I found at least one African American, Hispanic/Latino, South Asian, East Asian, or multiracial character depicted in roles as secondary and maybe portrayed as stereotypical characters. My previous knowledge about transitional literature of fueled my inferences for the outcome of this research, and supported my findings that these sets of equity audits would display data showing a wide array of protagonists with Caucasian, and African American ethnicities, but would show few or no characters of Hispanic/Latino, South Asian, East Asian, or multi-racial ethnicities among Warner's, Dadey's and Mills's third grade transitional series. The following chapter outlines the findings of this content analysis to compare with my initial predictions.

### **Understanding and Eliminating Bias in the Researcher:**

This researcher read *10 Quick Ways to Analyze Children's Books for Racism and Sexism (CITE)* to further understand and remove researcher bias when conducting equity audits on

Warner's, Dadey's, and Mills's transitional series. This CIBC analysis contains tips on analyzing children's books for stereotypes (derogatory implications) and tokenism (identical individuals) in the illustrations and the author's perspective. The breakdown of the different components in a book's storyline will allow this researcher to examine and determine standards for success or resolution of problems depending on the race and ethnicity of protagonists and secondary characters. It also gives suggestions on questions to ask about the lifestyles, relationships among characters, and the ethnicities of the heroes. As an equity audit analyzes the plot, setting, illustrations and protagonists, these tips for analyzing bias in children's literature will be helpful as it gives short explanations of how to thoroughly analyze these components of children's books.

Previously to reading and coding each series, the researcher will create a list of Common Stereotypes Among Various Ethnicities and Races, located in Appendix A. While filling out the data sheets and conducting the equity audit on the following three transitional series: *The Boxcar Children*, *The Bailey School Kids*, and *Franklin School Friends*, the researcher will reference the list of Common Stereotypes Among Various Ethnicities and Races to check for hidden biases in protagonists and experiences the protagonists (and secondary characters) encounter.

For this researcher to further understand their implicit biases that may have impacted the results of this research, I completed a specific set of *Harvard Implicit Association Tests (IATs)*. An IAT is a social psychological test designed to detect the strength of a person's automatic association between mental representations of concepts and evaluations (good or bad) or stereotypes (Harvard, 2011). To better comprehend any internal multiracial, ethnic, or cultural biases, I worked to complete Race (Black-White, Native-White American, Asian-European American, Light-Dark Skin Tone, and Religion IATS). The following IAT scores helped me to

keep my bias in check and to keep the results of my analyses into account when conducting the three sets of equity audits on *The Boxcar Children*, *The Bailey School Kids*, and *Franklin School Friends* transitional book series.

### **Results of the Researcher’s *Harvard Implicit Association Tests (IATs)*:**

By completing the following IATs, I was able to further understand any implicit biases they may have in greater detail. This will allow them to acknowledge these biases while collecting data from each of the chosen transitional book series to complete an unbiased equity audit. Doing so would also allow the researcher to examine any stereotypes among protagonists.

All IAT results are based on different categorization tasks performed in sets of seven. The testing candidate sorts through pictures of men and woman of different skin tones, races, religions, and ethnicities based on different prompts, i.e. “Click I to sort African Americans when prompted, and E to sort Europeans when prompted. Please complete the sort as fast as you are able.”

#### *Race (Black-White)*

##### Debriefing

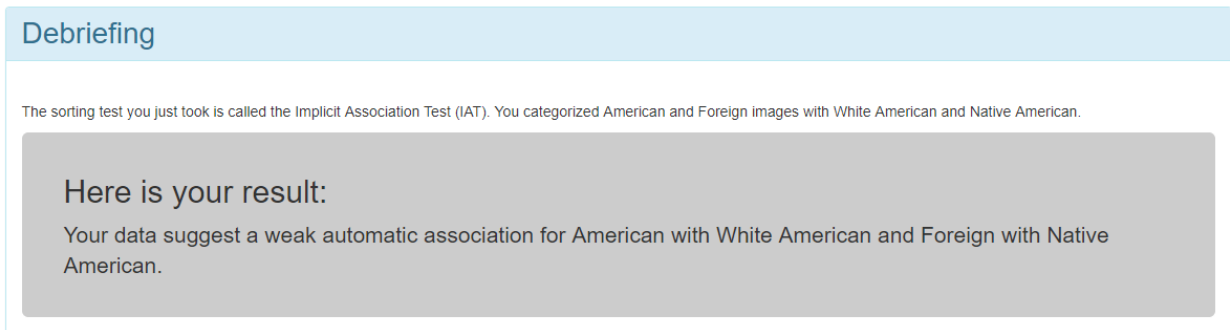
The sorting test you just took is called the Implicit Association Test (IAT). You categorized good and bad words with images of African Americans and European Americans.

Here is your result:

Your data suggest a slight automatic preference for European Americans over African Americans.

The Black-White Race IAT suggested that I have a slight automatic preference for European Americans over African Americans because I was faster responding when *European Americans* and *Good* were assigned to the same response key than when *African Americans* and *Good* were assigned same response key. The word *slight* indicates the strength of the bias that I determined.

### *Native-White American*



Debriefing

The sorting test you just took is called the Implicit Association Test (IAT). You categorized American and Foreign images with White American and Native American.

Here is your result:  
Your data suggest a weak automatic association for American with White American and Foreign with Native American.

The Native-White American Racial IAT suggested that I have a weak automatic association for American with White Americans and Foreign with Native American because I was somewhat faster responding when *White Americans* and *American* were assigned to the same response key than when *Native Americans* and *American* were assigned same response key. The word *weak* indicates the strength of the bias that I have, allowing me to acknowledge and suppress it.



## *Asian-European American*

### Debriefing

The sorting test you just took is called the Implicit Association Test (IAT). You categorized American and Foreign Images with European American and Asian American.

#### Here is your result:

Your data suggest a slight automatic association for American with European American and Foreign with Asian American.

The Asian-European American Racial IAT suggested that I have a slight automatic association for American with European Americans and Foreign with Asian American because I was faster responding when *European Americans* and *American* were assigned to the same response key than when *Asian Americans* and *American* were assigned same response key. The word *slight* indicates the strength of the bias that I have, allowing me to acknowledge and suppress it.

## *Light-Dark Skin Tone*

### Debriefing

The sorting test you just took is called the Implicit Association Test (IAT). You categorized good and bad words with images of Dark Skinned People and Light Skinned People.

#### Here is your result:

Your data suggest a slight automatic preference for Light Skinned People over Dark Skinned People.

The Light-Dark Skin Tone IAT suggested that I have a slight automatic preference for Light Skinned People over Dark Skinned People because I was faster responding when *Light Skinned People* and *Good* were assigned to the same response key than when *Dark Skinned*

*People* and *Good* were assigned same response key. The word *slight* indicates the strength of this bias.

## *Religion*

### Debriefing

The sorting test you just took is called the Implicit Association Test (IAT). You categorized good and bad words with words and images of Islam and Judaism.

Here is your result:

Your data suggest a slight automatic preference for Islam over Judaism.

The Judaism-Islam Religion IAT suggested that I have a slight automatic preference for Islam over Judaism because I was faster responding when *Islam* and *Good* were assigned to the same response key than when *Judaism* and *Good* were assigned same response key. The word *slight* indicates the strength of this bias, allowing me to acknowledge it as I conduct the equity audits.

**Example of Data Gathering Sheet for Equity Audit:**

Name and Author of Transitional Series Examined							
Book Title	Front Cover	Protagonist Traits	Family Dynamics	Stereotype	Ethnicity	Secondary Traits	Stereotype/Ethnicity
<i>Book 1</i>							
<i>Book 2</i>							
<i>Book 3</i>							
<i>Book 4</i>							
<i>Book 5</i>							

***\*Secondary Traits and Stereotype/Ethnicity will only be used in the cases where it applies.***

The following chapter will present the findings of the equity audits taken for the first five books of these three transitional series, while Chapter 5 will use these results to examine the trends and themes, research limitations and implications, and opportunities for further research.

## CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

This chapter will provide a detailed look at the first five books of each selected series and the appearance or nonappearance of the selected trends and themes. It is important to analyze each book before analyzing individual concepts and stereotypes that may span across each series or may be unique to one series. Before conducting a cross-series equity audit, three separate audits were taken from each transitional series chosen. This analysis is shown with the following data sheets (Figures 1, 2, and 3). An annotated bibliography of each book selection provided in Appendix B details all selected transitional series for the reader to better understand findings of the equity audit.

### **Data Sheet Findings for Each Series**

The first series examined was *The Boxcar Children* which remains popular despite original publication dates of 1942-1960. This is one of the oldest and most popular series found in a third-grade classroom library (Scholastic, 2018). Since this series is extremely prominent in classroom libraries, and because this series was published decades before educators concerned themselves with diversity or multicultural education, I wondered what the range of diversity presented amongst its protagonists might be. Since the original books by Gertrude Chandler Warner ended publication in 1960, I expected a lack of ethnic protagonists featured in a non-stereotypical role, as multicultural education had just originated in the 1960s as an effort of reflect and understand the growing diversity of American classroom (Sobol 1990). However, if characters of color were included, I wondered what roles they might hold.

Although the original *Boxcar Children* books by Gertrude Chandler Warner ended publication in the 1960s, through a partnership with Scholastic, this series continues to be ghost

written today, in 2018. However, since most third-grade classroom libraries includes books from the original series, the following analysis shows trends (stereotypical and non-stereotypical) among the front cover, protagonists, and family dynamics of the first five books of *The Boxcar Children*. For all five books, the four protagonists, Benny, Violet, Jessie, and Henry, range among the ages of 6 to 14, are brown-hair Caucasian. In the first book, *The Boxcar Children*, the children are introduced as orphans who prove to be intelligent, scrappy, and self-sufficient by making a new life for themselves in a boxcar in the woods. Throughout the book, each child is given a set of distinguishing characteristics that remain consistent for the rest of the books in this series.

- Henry (14): Calm, hardworking, very protective of his siblings
- Jessie (12): Motherly, tidy, organized
- Violet (10): Sensitive, shy, skilled (at sewing)
- Benny (6): Energetic, cheerful, loves everyone and everything (especially food)

**(Figure 1)** Data Sheet #1: *The Boxcar Children*

<b><i>The Boxcar Children by Gertrude Chandler Warner</i></b>					
<b>Book Title:</b>	<b>Front Cover:</b>	<b>Protagonist Traits:</b>	<b>Family Dynamics:</b>	<b>Stereotype:</b>	<b>Ethnicity:</b>
<i>The Boxcar Children</i> Introduction of Henry, Jessie, Violet, and Benny Alden, the main protagonists	-Four young, pale-skinned, brown-haired children dressed in clean, brightly colored	-Henry, the oldest at 14, is calm, hardworking and is very protective of his siblings -Jessie, 12 years old, motherly, tidy, and organized	-The four children are orphaned and live together for a majority of the book. -They eventually move in with their grandfather at	-There is a common stereotype that orphans are resilient and scrappy, something the Alden's are -Their grandfather is also extremely	Caucasian

	<p>clothes, looking hurried and scared.</p> <p>-They are climbing into a boxcar</p>	<p>-Violet, 10 years old, sensitive, shy, and skilled at sewing</p> <p>-Benny, 6 years old, loves food and is very energetic and cheerful</p>	<p>the end of the book and live with him for the rest of the series.</p>	<p>wealthy, something else that is a stereotype to orphan stories</p>	
<p><i>Surprise Island</i></p> <p>Introduction of the Alden's cousin Joe Alden</p>	<p>-Four young, pale-skinned, brown-haired children dressed in clean summer clothes</p> <p>-They are climbing out of a boat</p>	<p>-Joe Alden is young adult friendly, very into the outdoors and enjoys spending time with his cousins</p>	<p>The children still live with their grandfather, whom Joe is visiting</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>Caucasian</p>
<p><i>The Yellow House Mystery</i></p> <p>Introduction of the Alden's cousin Alice, Joe's wife</p>	<p>-Four pale-skinned, brown-haired children dressed in clean, brightly colored clothes</p> <p>-Henry and Jessie appear older here, while Benny and Violet look the same</p>	<p>-Alice is a kind woman who marries Joe and becomes the Alden's cousin</p>	<p>The children still live with their wealthy grandfather</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>Caucasian</p>

<p><i>Mystery Ranch</i></p> <p>Introduction of the Alden's great-aunt Jane Alden</p>	<p>-Depicts and older Jessie and Violet, dressed in sweaters and long pants -They are clearly in a western town, driving a horse-drawn carriage</p>	<p>-At first, Aunt Jane is cranky, bossy, and unkind -Her disposition is eventually sweet and smart, and she treats the Alden's well</p>	<p>The children live with their Aunt Jane Alden for a while, as she is sickly and in need of care</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>Caucasian</p>
<p><i>Mike's Mystery</i></p>	<p>-Five young children dressed in clean clothes appear to be watching two dogs race one another</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>The children are once again living with their grandfather</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>Caucasian</p>

Since this equity audit compares multiple books series to school demographics, the second book series that was analyzed is *The Bailey School Kids*. The publication period (1991-1992) are also dated, but not as far removed as *The Boxcar Children*, therefore more relatable to children in 2018. Since multicultural education reform in schools reestablished in 1986 (Tomlinson, 1990), I wondered if the book might highlight more diverse characters represented in these books published in the early 1990s. As I completed this data sheet, I found that three of four protagonists were Caucasian, however, this book reveals our first non-stereotypical, African American protagonist in this series. These characters have crazy experiences and undergo

challenges that appeal to students' sense of whimsical adventure, and that the characters are relatable to Caucasian and African American students. However, while this book would be perfect for library shelves of classrooms in 1990, some of the references in the book are no longer relevant to today's students, such as Eddie talking to his grandmother on a corded phone or our protagonists answering math problems at school on the chalkboard. In my experiences around third-graders in my service learning, some students have no any idea as to what these things are.

Although *The Bailey School Kids* have over 30 different books in this series and since most third-grade classroom libraries includes the first five books from the series, the following analysis shows trends (stereotypical and non-stereotypical) among the front cover, protagonists, and family dynamics for these specific books. For all five books, the four protagonists, Liza, Melody, Howard, and Eddie, are included. Similarly to *The Boxcar Children*, the protagonists include two boys and two girls. Throughout the initial book, each child is given a set of distinguishing characteristics that remain consistent for the rest of the books in this series.

- Liza: the peacemaker, doesn't like hurting other, and is very timid
- Howard: enjoys school, a logical, level-headed, intelligent thinker
- Melody: brave, athletic, and extremely competitive
- Eddie: mean-spirited (to people who aren't his friends), boisterous and dramatic

*Data Sheet #2: The Bailey School Kids*

<b><i>The Bailey School Kids</i> by Marcia Jones and Debbie Dadey</b>					
<b>Book Title:</b>	<b>Front Cover:</b>	<b>Protagonist Traits:</b>	<b>Family Dynamics:</b>	<b>Stereotype:</b>	<b>Ethnicity:</b>



<p><i>Vampires Don't Wear Polka Dots</i></p>	<p>- A traditional classroom setting, teacher is pale-skinned, class consists of 8 children, mostly depicted as Caucasian with blond, red, or brown hair. - There is one boy and one girl with brown skin and black hair</p>	<p>- Liza: the peacemaker of the group, doesn't like Eddie's ideas that usually result in hurting others. She's sensitive, scared around strangers, and whimsical - Howard (Howie): enjoys school, logical, level-headed and intelligent - Melody: brave, sporty (plays soccer) and extremely competitive - Eddie: comes across as mean, makes fun the others for believing in monsters. Comes up with drastic plans to prove there are no monsters.</p> <p><i>At the beginning of this book, the reader can clearly see Melody/Liza &amp; Howie/Eddie are pairs of best friends</i></p>	<p>-Liza: Mother, father (plumber), and sister (high school). She also has a grandmother. - Howard (Howie): mom, two sisters, and dad (aeronautics tech station worker) <i>Parents are divorced</i> - Melody: Dad (Contractor), Mom (Lawyer), Aunt, great-aunt and cousin live nearby - Eddie: Grandmother, Father, little sister. Mom is deceased. He has an aunt who lives nearby.</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>Caucasian African-American</p>
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<p><i>Werewolves Don't Go to Summer Camp</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Four kids and a man are sitting around a campfire under a starry night with full moon.</li> <li>- The man is Caucasian, with brown hair, a full beard, wearing jeans and a T-shirt.</li> <li>- Two kids, a girl and boy, (Liza and Howie) are Caucasian with blond hair.</li> <li>- (Melody), the other girl, is African-American with black hair.</li> <li>- Eddie, the other boy, is Caucasian with red hair. They are all wearing similar clothes to the man.</li> </ul>	<p>SEE ABOVE</p> <p>Liza: Sensitive about the fact that she can't swim</p>	<p>SEE ABOVE</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>Caucasian African-American</p>
<p><i>Santa Claus Doesn't Mop Floors</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-A brick hallway with a paperchain decorating the wall.</li> <li>- A man with a white beard, muscled legs and potbelly (reminiscent of Santa), is mopping the floor.</li> </ul>	<p>SEE ABOVE</p>	<p>SEE ABOVE</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>Caucasian African-American</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Three kids in winter clothes (Eddie, Howie, and Melody) are watching him.</li> <li>- Eddie: Caucasian with red hair,</li> <li>- Howie: Caucasian with blond hair</li> <li>- Melody: African-American with black hair</li> </ul>				
<i>Leprechauns Don't Play Basketball</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-A basketball court, (or maybe school gym).</li> <li>- A old man with white hair, sideburns, dressed in a green bow tie, red tracksuit, and purple sweater vest is shooting backwards hoops.</li> <li>- Two girls, Melody and Liza, and one boy, Eddie, are watching him</li> <li>Liza: Caucasian with blond hair.</li> <li>- Howie: Caucasian with blond hair</li> <li>- Melody: African-</li> </ul>	SEE ABOVE	SEE ABOVE	N/A	Caucasian African-American

	American with black hair				
<i>Ghosts Don't Eat Potato Chips</i>	An old attic, or upstairs room. An old, transparent looking man with white hair and mustache is dressed in a white shirt, brown suit, red bow tie, and brown hat and shoes. Howie, Melody, and Eddie are walking up the stairs, they look shocked at Howie's floating potato chips Eddie: Caucasian with red hair, - Howie: Caucasian with blond hair - Melody: African-American with black hair	SEE ABOVE	SEE ABOVE		Caucasian African-American

The final series I chose to analyze is *Franklin School Friends* (2014-2016), one of the most recent transitional series in third-grade classroom libraries. Unlike the books examined in *The Boxcar Children* and *The Baily School Kids*, *Franklin School Friends* have five protagonists instead of four. As it was a fairly recent series, the last book being published two years ago, I figured that this series would have the largest number of diverse protagonists encountering

relatable situations and problems. I fully expected for there to be protagonists of Hispanic, African American, and Asian American ethnicities, with maybe one or two Caucasian protagonists, if any. However, a majority of protagonists in this series were identified as Caucasian, although they were from different backgrounds. Two out of five protagonists were a race other than Caucasian, (African American and Asian American), although these characters were portrayed in a stereotypical manner (or had some other stereotypical aspect related to them). While reading, I thought that Annika Riz, the main protagonist in the second book, would be classified as a different race, since Annika is not a typical name for a Caucasian girl, however, there was no mention of her being German or Polish, so I was unable to make that connection. The following analysis shows trends (stereotypical and non-stereotypical) among the front cover, protagonists, and family dynamics of the first five books of *Franklin School Friends*. Unlike the main characters in *The Boxcar Children* and *The Bailey School Kids*, this series had each book focus on one protagonist and a specific dilemma they have to solve or overcome, although all five protagonists interact in the book in some way. For all five books, the five protagonists, Kelsey, Annika, Izzy, Simon, and Cody, are third graders, and range among the ages of 8-9. Similarly to the protagonists in *The Bailey School Kids*, each character in this series have a different outward appearance, even the ones who identify as Caucasian. In each book, each student are introduced with a certain set of qualities and have to overcome a challenge with their specific attributes.. Throughout each book, each child is given a set of distinguishing characteristics that remain consistent for the rest of the books in this series.

- Kelsey Green (8): loves reading, dislikes math, extremely competitive
- Annika Riz (8): Loves math, loyal and caring friend
- Izzy Barr (9): Talented Athlete, plays softball and runs track and field, very friendly

- Simon Ellis (8): Enjoys school, excels in spelling, tries hard to fit in
- Cody Harmon (9): Polite, well-mannered, enjoys caring for animals, dislikes school

*Data Sheet #3: Franklin School Friends*

<b>Franklin School Friends by Claudia Mills</b>					
<b>Book Title:</b>	<b>Front Cover:</b>	<b>Protagonist Traits:</b>	<b>Family Dynamics:</b>	<b>Stereotype:</b>	<b>Protagonist Ethnicity:</b>
<i>Kelsey Green, Reading Queen</i>	Pale skinned girl with short, brown shoulder-length hair, & her nose in a book	- Loves reading: reads during math class - Dislikes math -Competitive	Dad Mom (Stay at Home) Brother (8th Grade) Sister (High School)	N/A	Caucasian
<i>Annika Riz, Math Whiz</i>	Pale skinned girl with blue eyes, & long, blonde braids, filling out a sudoku page	-Loves math: will do sudoku during recess -Will whisper math answers to her friends to help avoid humiliation	Dad (High school math teacher) - family cook Mom (Tax accountant) Prime (Family dog)	Refutes the stereotype: "blonde girls are dumb," as Annika loves math, and is a math genius	Caucasian
<i>Izzy Barr, Running Star</i>	Girl with short, curly, braided brown hair, medium brown skin, & brown eyes; running	-Loves sports, does track & field and softball, encouraging to others -Hides her feelings about her dad missing her games	Dad (Foreman of Factory) Mom (Hospital Nurse) Dustin (Older half-brother)	Enforces the stereotypes that African American girls are better athletes and of absentee African American fathers	African American
<i>Simon Ellis, Spelling</i>	Boy with short brown hair, blue eyes, and pale skin;	-Enjoys all aspects of school, and	Dad (very educated, plays the cello)	Enforces the stereotype that Asian American students are	Asian American

<i>Bee Champ</i>	holding a pencil and backpack	excels in spelling -Plays the violin -Will do poorly on schoolwork in order to impress his friends -Extremely competitive	Mom (also highly educated, is an author)	smarter and better at school subjects than others	
<i>Cody Harmon, King of Pets</i>	Pale skinned boy with short brown hair styled in a cowlick, & hugging a dog	-Dislikes school and homework -Enjoys helping his dad on their farm -Loves pets: takes care of all their pets and farm animals -Polite, says “Yes sir” and “Yes Ma’am”	Dad (Farmer and truck driver) Mom (Stay at home mom) Rex (Family Dog) Mr. Piggins (Cody’s Pet Pig)	Enforces stereotype that farm children are poorly educated or dislike school	Caucasian

**Equity Audit of Protagonists in the Following Children’s Transitional Series: *The Boxcar Children, The Bailey School Kids, and Franklin School Friends***

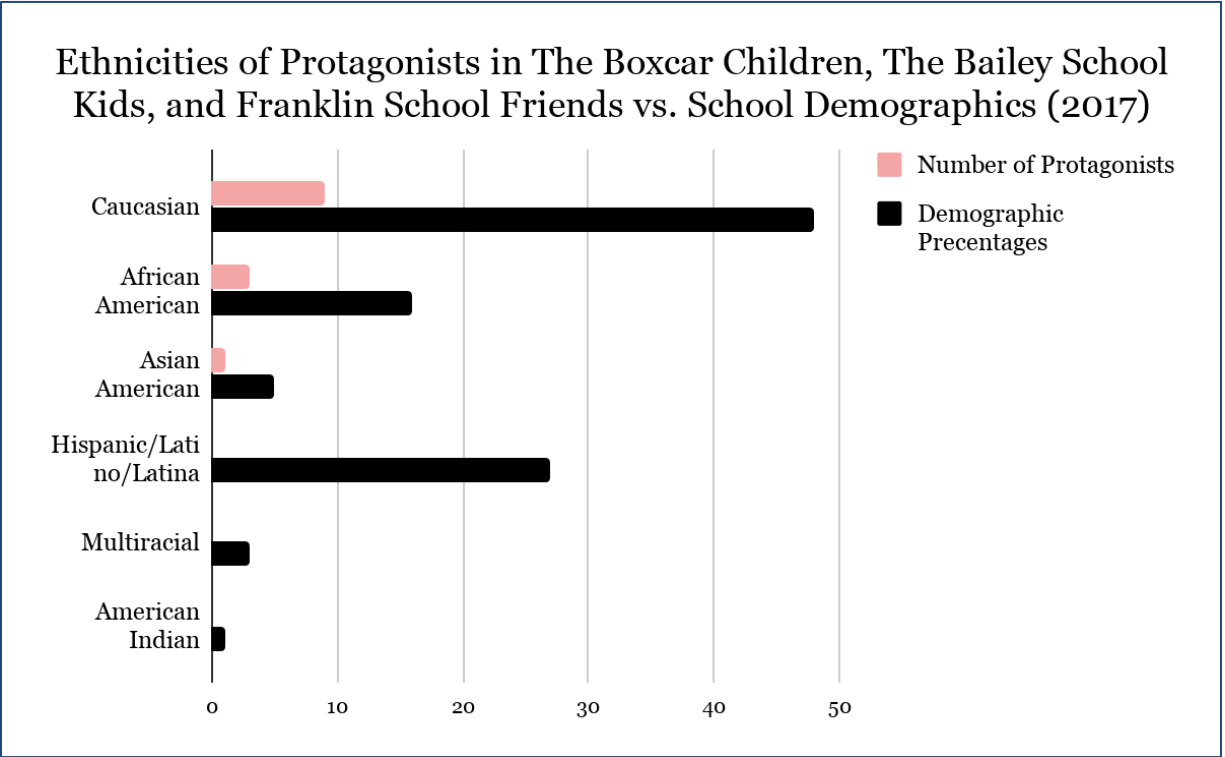
The following table provides an equity audit of ethnicities among protagonists in *The Boxcar Children, The Bailey School Kids, and Franklin School Friends*. It compares the number of protagonists in each book series among the five common ethnicities counted when taking elementary school student demographics. These five ethnicities include:

- Caucasian

- African American
- Asian American (Southern or Eastern)
- Hispanic/Latino
- Multiracial
- American Indian

As seen in the following chart, both *The Boxcar Children* and *The Bailey School Kids* included four protagonists for each of the five books analyzed. *Franklin School Friends* included five protagonists where one main character was the focus for one of the five books, however, all protagonists appeared in each book (at least) once. In *The Boxcar Children* (1942), although the illustrations are completely blacked out, the protagonists, four siblings: two boys and two girls, are depicted as Caucasian, which is consistent with children in schools of the time period, however, not consistent with the statistics of students today. In *The Bailey School Kids*, one of the four protagonists is portrayed non-stereotypically as African-American, while in *Franklin School Friends*, two of the four protagonists are shown to be of a different ethnicity (Asian American and African American), characterized with stereotypical qualities. While these books are found on shelves in third-grade classroom libraries today, the amount of ethnic protagonists are not consistent to the elementary ethnic and racial demographics the today's time period.

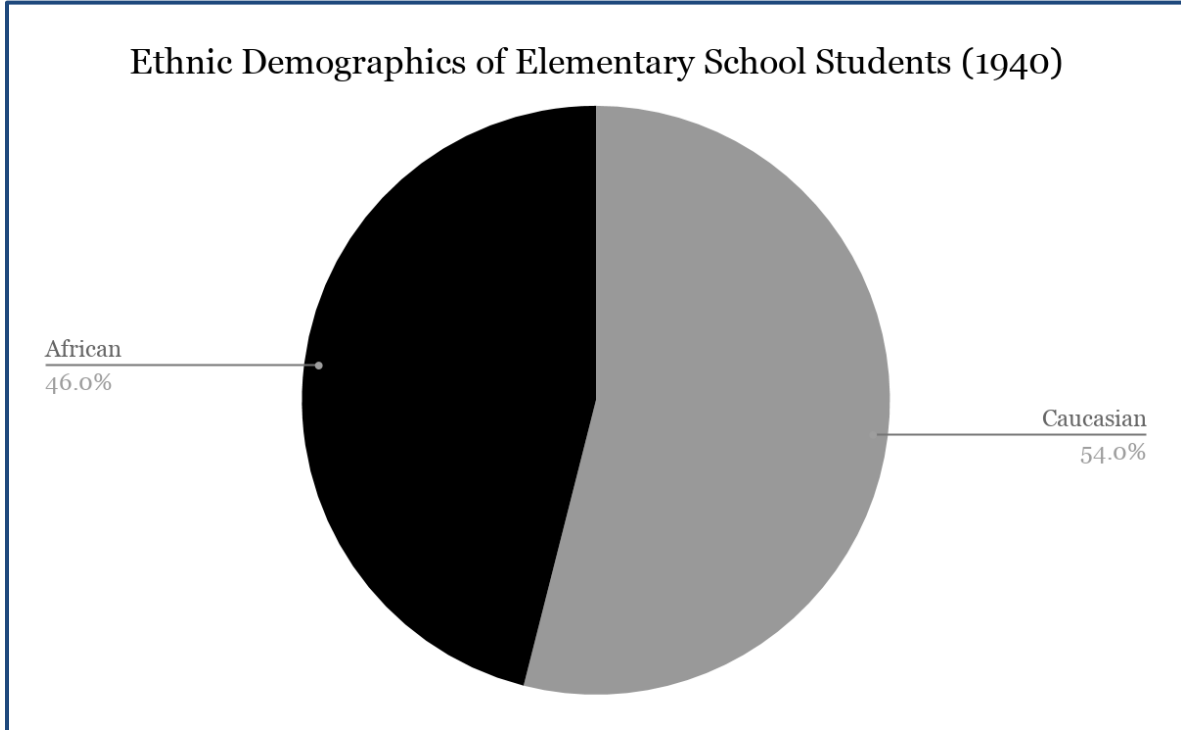




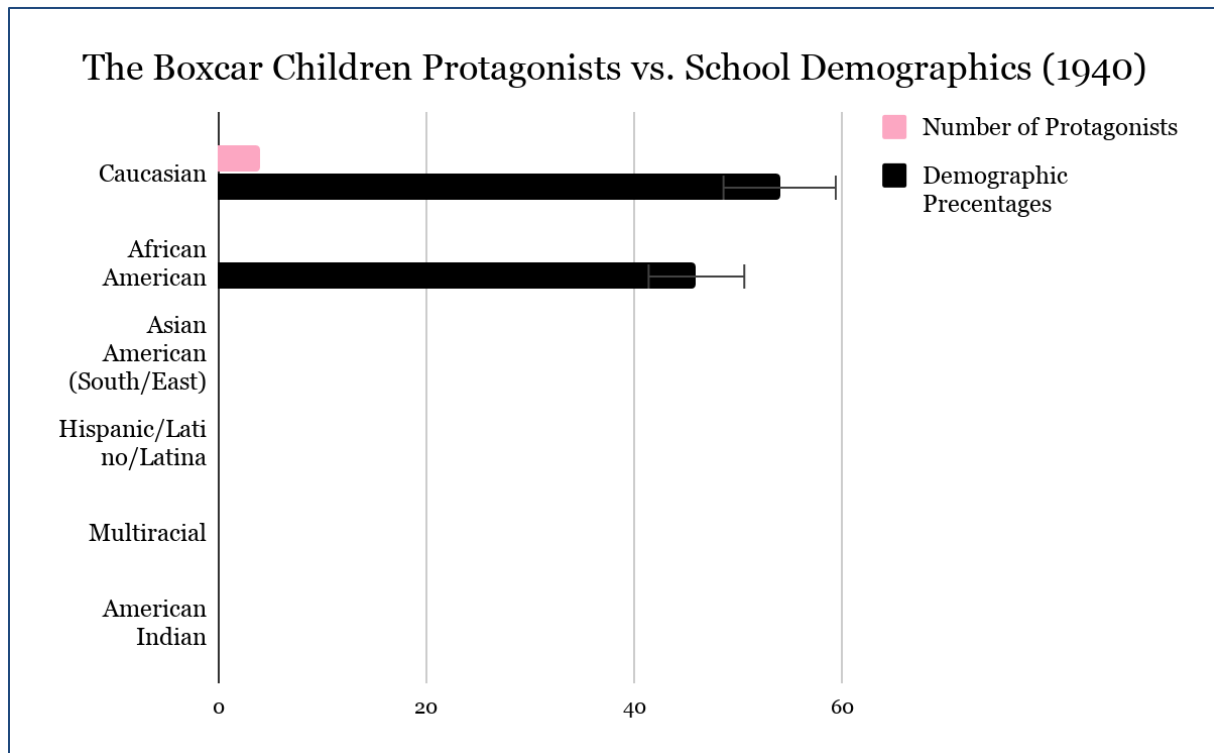
**Breakdown of Equity Audit Comparing Ethnic Protagonists in Transitional Series**

**Literature to Elementary School Demographics**

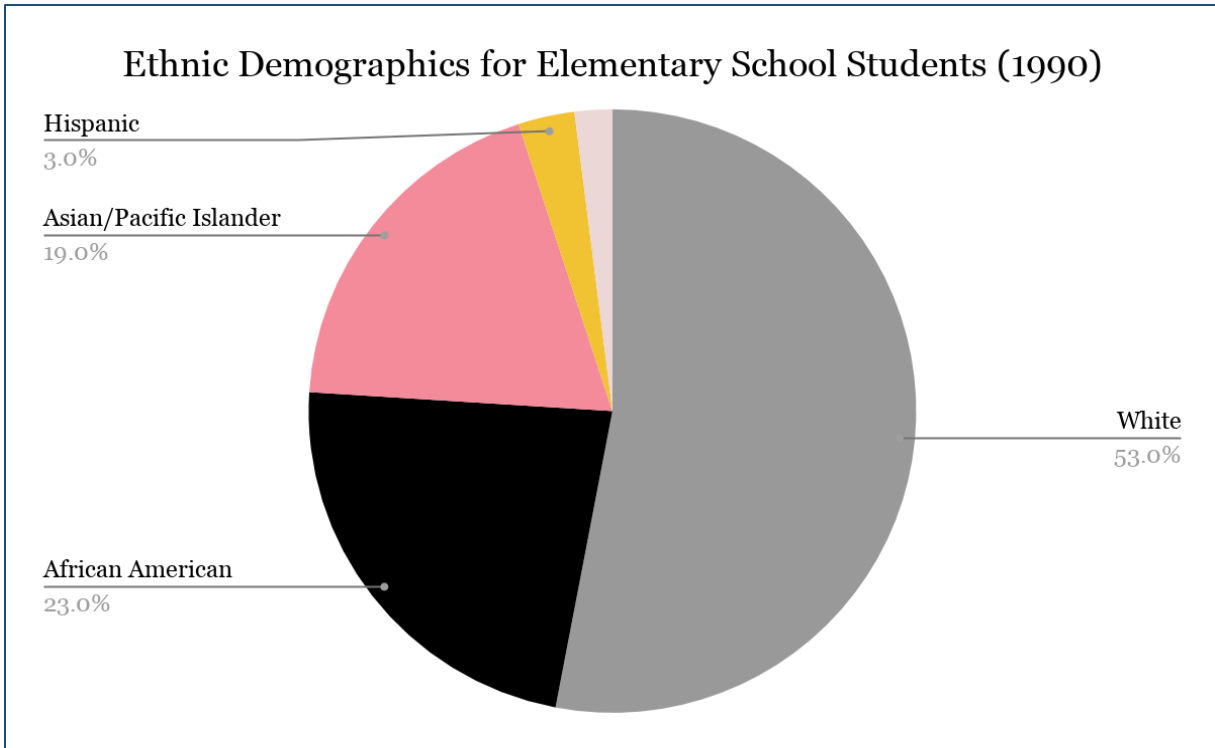
The following charts provide a breakdown of the equity audit taken among ethnicities of protagonists in *The Boxcar Children*, *The Bailey School Kids*, and *Franklin School Friends* compared to actual elementary school demographics of the time periods each series was published. A chart showing the ethnic demographics of elementary students in the time period is followed by a correlating chart of literary demographics compared to the period demographics. In this section, one must note see that the diversity of protagonists in transitional series literature does increase as related to the diversity and ethnic inclusion in the elementary school populations increases.



The chart located above shows the elementary school ethnic demographics of students in the United States in 1940, consistent with the publication of *The Boxcar Children* series. Here, the only ethnicities counted were African American and Caucasian, and while the demographics are fairly even, with Caucasian taking up 54% of the student population while African Americans take up 46% of the student population, schools in the 1940s were segregated. Therefore, students in an all-Caucasian school wouldn't be introduced to any kind of multicultural literature. While the demographics in African American schools weren't solely African American (all minorities would have gone to the same school in the 1940s) the numbers of those students would be very slight for them to not be counted in the demographics.



The chart above compares the ethnicities of the protagonists in *The Boxcar Children* to the actual elementary school demographics of students in 1940, when the first book in the series was published. Here, one must note that all four protagonists were identified as Caucasian, which would be appropriate for students of this time period since schools in the 1940s were segregated. Due to Jim Crow Laws, segregations of schools required students of Caucasian race to attend separate schools than students of African American race; therefore, if books from *The Boxcar Children* series were on classroom shelves in a 1940 all-Caucasian classroom, students would be able to relate to the protagonists of Henry, Jessie, Violet and Benny. While segregation isn't mentioned in the book itself, no African American (or minority) characters are included in this series.

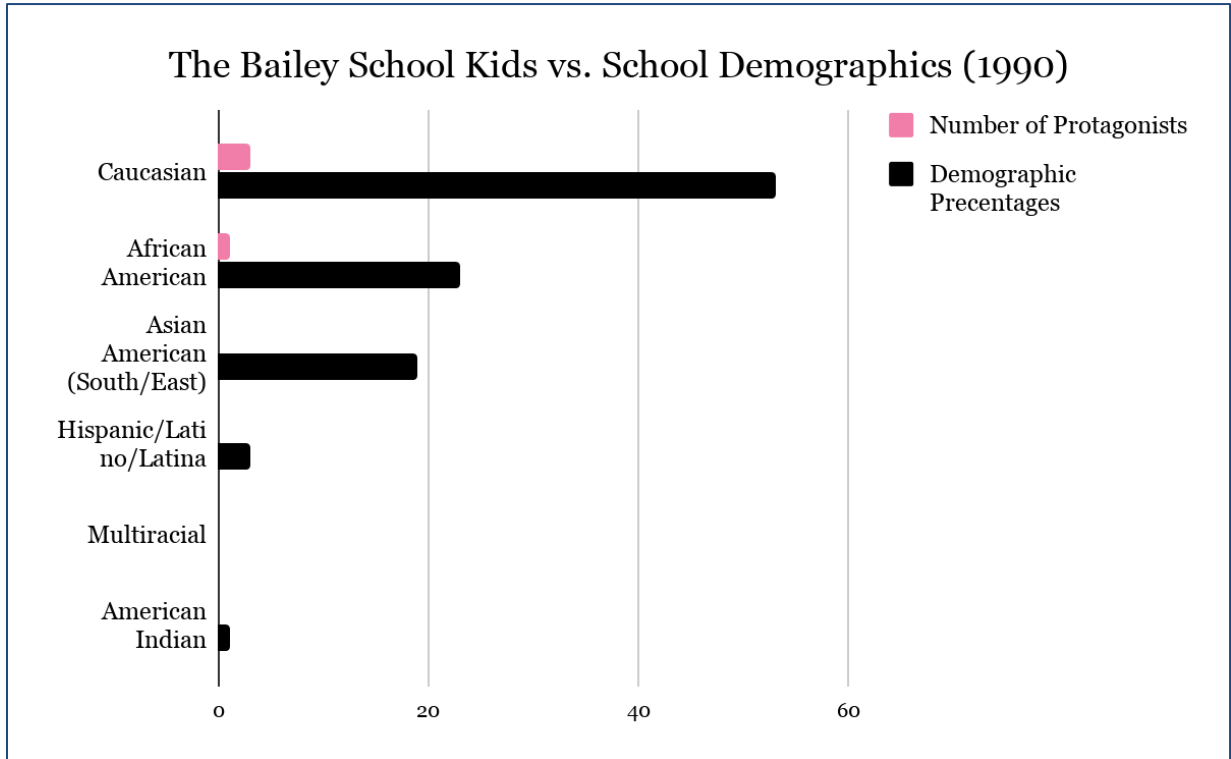


The chart located above shows the elementary school ethnic demographics of students in the United States in 1990, consistent with the publication of *The Bailey School Kids* series. Here, the only ethnicities included increased from only African American and Caucasian: Hispanic and Asian/Pacific Islander were added. The ethnicities for these demographics of students divided into the following statistics:

- Caucasian: 53%
- African American: 23%
- Asian/Pacific Islander: 19%
- Hispanic: 3%

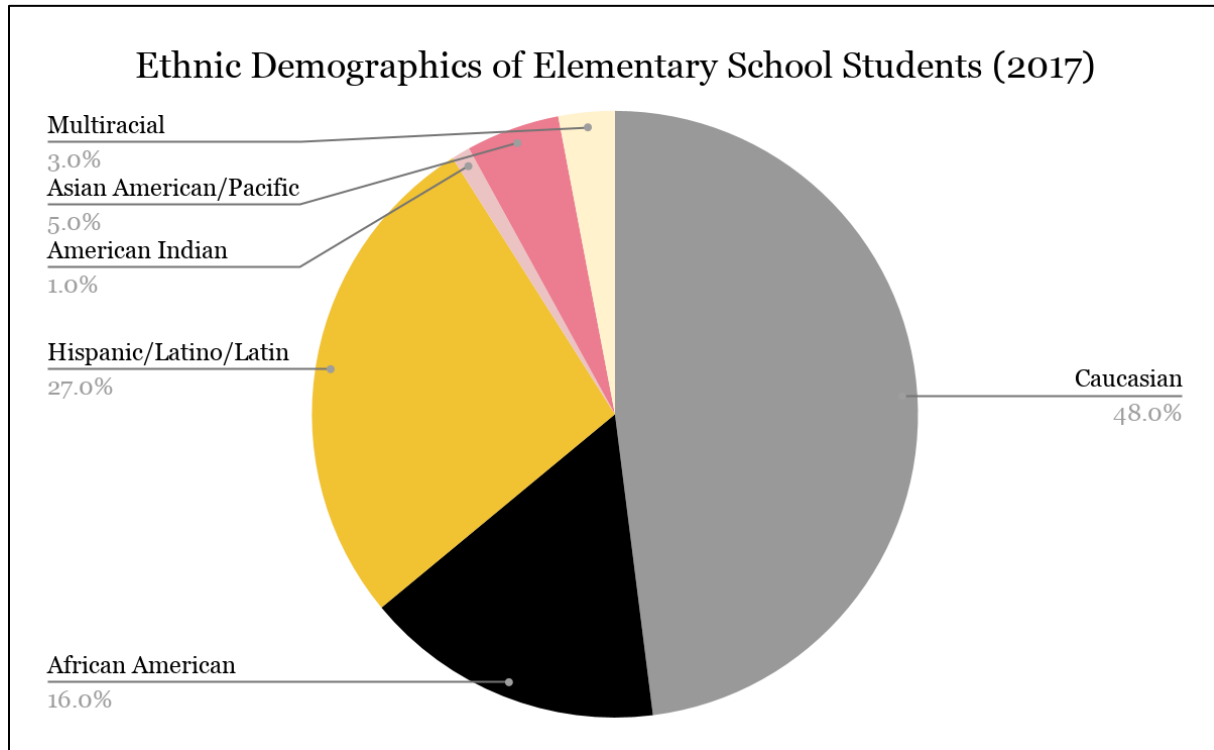
Similar to the demographics in 1940, Caucasian students made up a majority of the elementary school population in the United States. African Americans remained the biggest minority in American elementary schools, while Hispanic students were introduced as a small-

scale minority. Also similar to the 1940 school demographics, the gap between Caucasians as a majority and the ethnic minorities remains very slight (53% versus 45% in 1990, 54% versus 46% in 1940). From this data the population is slowly shifting to include more minorities.



The chart above compares the ethnicities of the protagonists in *The Bailey School Kids* to the actual elementary school demographics of students in 1990, when the first book in the series was published. In this series, the protagonists are more diversified than those in *The Boxcar Children*, as they include a protagonist of African American ethnicity. Since African American students are the largest minority of the elementary school student population, the ethnicities of the protagonists in this series aligns with the demographics. Although the books in *The Bailey School Kids* do not include any other protagonists or secondary characters of Asian American or Hispanic minorities, this book does remain appropriate to be in classroom libraries in the 1990s.

With Caucasian students consisting the bulk of the student population and the main characters in this series being mostly Caucasian, students were able to relate to these books' protagonists.



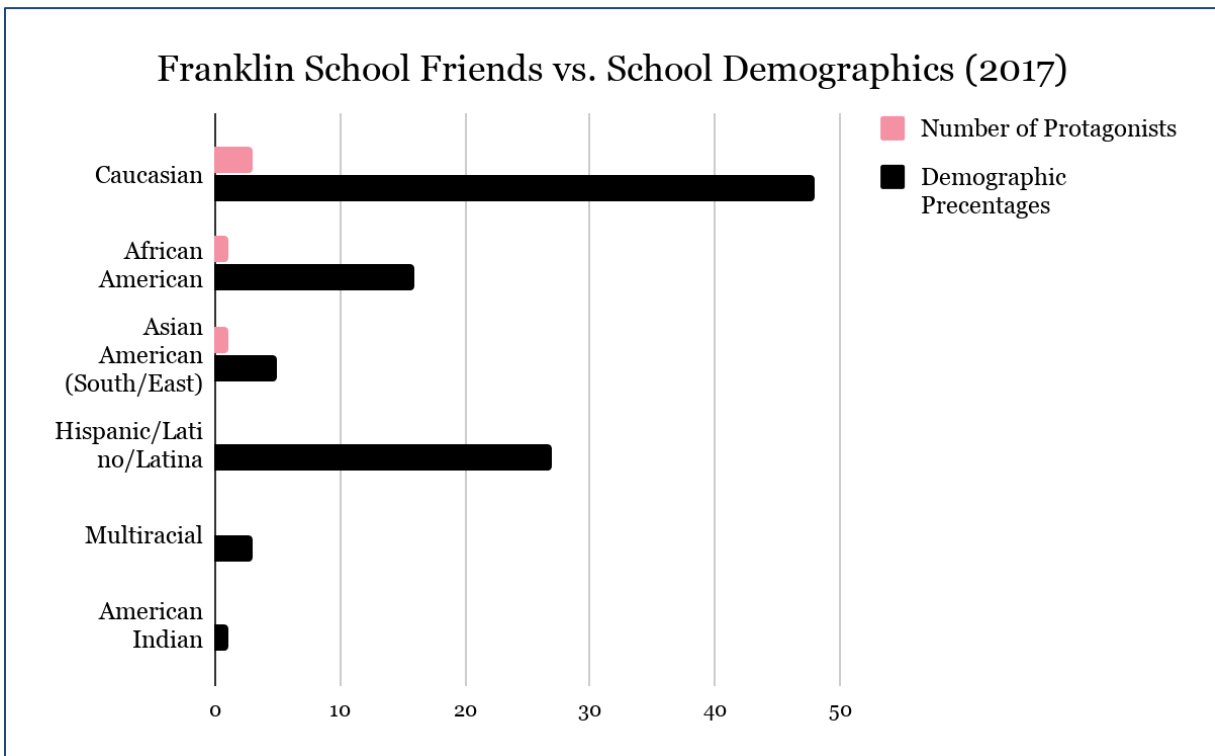
The chart located above shows the elementary school ethnic demographics of students in the United States in 2017, consistent with the publication of the *Franklin School Friends* series.

Here, the demographics examined increased from Caucasian, African American, Hispanic and Asian/Pacific Islander: Multiracial and American Indian students were added. The breakdown for these demographics of students divided into the following statistics:

- Caucasian: 48%
- African American: 16%
- Hispanic: 27%
- Asian/Pacific Islander: 5%

- American Indian: 1%
- Multiracial: 3%

For the first time, the five different minorities make up the majority of students attending elementary school in the United States; Caucasian students have now become the new “minority.” African American students are no longer the largest minority subgroup, instead, Hispanics/Latinos/Latina students makeup the biggest amount of minority students in schools due to the influx of immigration from countries like Mexico and Puerto Rico. This increase from 3% (1990) to 27% (2017) also accounts for the large number of English Language Learners (ELLs) in our school systems today. The introduction of a multiracial demographic is only further evidence of the need to include authentic multicultural literature in the classroom.



The chart above compares the ethnicities of the protagonists in *Franklin School Friends* to the actual elementary school demographics of students in 2017, when the last book in the series was published. As stated previously, 2017 saw Caucasian students become the “minority” in the elementary school population, however, most of the protagonists in the *Franklin School Friends* series are Caucasian. While two ethnic protagonists are included in the story (African American and Asian American characters respectively), aspects of their characters are portrayed stereotypically; not something an educator would want to instill or expose to their students. Also, even though 2017 demographics show that Hispanics/Latino/Latina students are the largest minority in elementary school, no character in this series would be relatable to a student of this ethnicity. For these reasons, while this series would be a fun read for students, books from the *Franklin School Friends* series would not be the most appropriate, genuine, or relevant transitional series literature for a third-grade teacher to include in their classroom library. With a majority of students in the classroom being from a different minority or race other than Caucasian, students are not given an opportunity to connect with the characters in these books. Some expectations are there, for example, an African American student with an absentee father may relate to the protagonist Izzy Barr, and some Caucasian students will definitely relate to Cody Harmon, Kelsey Green, and Annika Riz. However, a majority of students will not.

The final chapter will provide a conclusion for this thesis by analyzing the results of my research and discussing any common trends found among each transitional literature series, as well as provide a list of acceptable multicultural transitional series (or pilot books of similar series to come) to include in third-grade classroom libraries. This chapter will also present research limitations and suggestions for future research and concludes with education



suggestions that use research findings to create lesson plans to help teachers use the selected multicultural transitional series to discuss differences in ethnicity and race in the classroom.

## CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

This thesis is focused on the notable that multicultural transitional children's literature plays in shaping how students view themselves, the people, and the world around them. In schools today, this is especially true, as multicultural demographics have surpassed Caucasian demographics. As teachers, it is essential to acknowledge the lack of multicultural characters in children's literature among elementary classroom bookshelves and to learn how to incorporate literature featuring strong main characters of varying races and ethnicities so that children can see role models who mirror their own contexts. The purpose of this thesis was to examine introductory books of three popular transitional series, using an equity audit, for protagonists of various ethnic and racial backgrounds in non-stereotypical roles and to outline possible impacts of trends and themes enclosed within each series. Administering the equity audit also determined whether popular series or transitional books are advantageous to include into classroom libraries.

Prior studies, such as Gangi (2008) and Green and Hopenwasser (2017) have examined the deficiency of multicultural literature in the classroom, particularly among transitional stories, which shows the importance of exploring this topic. Furthermore, Green and Hopenwasser (2017) emphasize the importance of equal representation of transitional books with characters of diverse ethnicities, as they act as "mirrors and windows" for students to reflect upon themselves. These studies argue that to prevent the "whitewashing" of literature for primary grades, teachers should refrain and be cautious while choosing series or transitional books for classroom libraries.

In 1954, the Supreme Court's final ruling of *Brown v. Board of Education*, (racial segregation of children in public schools was unconstitutional) marked the first moment schools became diversified. Influxes of immigrants from around the world, who make a home in America, has only added to this diversity, especially in schools. Although demographics of

students of multicultural ethnicities and races have surpassed demographics of Caucasian students, there is still a lack of multicultural literature in classroom libraries that these students can relate to. With the power that children's literature has on improving attitudes, invoking empathy, and opening window and mirrors, classroom libraries should consider adding books and series that include protagonists of underrepresented ethnicities. While many positive outcomes can come from utilizing children's literature, there is also a chance to fall into new predicaments, such as ethnic and/or racial stereotyping. Therefore, this thesis analyzed three transitional series popular among third-grade classrooms for trends and themes among protagonists. The first five books of each series were examined, with the second and third series selected to remain in third-grade classrooms for containing non-stereotypical ethnic protagonists.

After conducting an equity audit across the three transitional series, I found that the number of diverse characters in transitional series literature has increased over time, however, the protagonists of these series do not accurately reflect the demographics of actual elementary schools and are occasionally portrayed stereotypically. In addition to conducting each equity audit, I have compiled a list of appropriate multicultural transitional series with suitable ethnic and multi-racial protagonists for third grade teachers to include in their classroom libraries.

### **Reflections of the Researcher**

Throughout analyzing the research, I reevaluated the purpose and extensions of my findings. Although underrepresentation of all ethnicities/races and deficiencies of multicultural literature in schools are broad, important issues, I viewed them as a future educator. Having a child sees a reflection of themselves in the books they choose to read is crucial towards their attitude and ability to read (Singer & Smith, 2003). This actuality was the driving force behind

me paying close attention to the trends and themes present in the literature I was examining, no matter how obvious or subtle they were. Focusing on these aspects is important as a researcher of multicultural literature as to completely understand the strengths and weaknesses of the books chosen to share among students through our classroom libraries. Addressing ongoing inclusion of students from all ethnicities, races and cultures is very possible through the addition of multicultural literature. As educators, teachers to do better in selecting meaningful literature for all classrooms, among all genres, where students of all ethnicities and races are able to see representations of themselves and their experiences, not just those of one subgroup.

A miniscule amount of third-grade multicultural transitional series literature is available for teachers to rotate through and pull from for their classroom curriculum. The biggest restriction of the research was the limited amount of non-stereotypical literature to examine, thus, leaving ample room for further research. The lack of available literature made the presence of trends and themes (both stereotypical and non-stereotypical) seem more intense. Common trends and themes found amongst each literature series are listed and discussed below.

### **Trends and Themes:**

Trends and themes are found throughout children's literature, and can range from being obvious to subtle. However, many times, subtle themes and trends are embedded in diversified children's literature. These trends are not isolated to just one book or one series; when one trend was present, it was likely that multiple were present. As stated previously, a student who is able to see "mirrors" of self-identity in recommended books will benefit greatly from that reflection (Bishop, 1990; Green & Hopenwasser, 2017). Protagonists in children's literature are a critical aspect when analyzing books because students identify most with main characters, especially

those who look, act, and experience similar real-life experiences. The main theme examined for this research was that of race and ethnicity; three popular series published in three different time periods were analyzed in comparison to actual third-grade demographics of the time period.

Caucasian children are no longer the only demographic (or main demographic) in elementary schools; one could even say that Caucasians students are the new minority. Students of all race and ethnicities, whether it be African American, Hispanic/Latino, South/East Asian, multi-racial or Caucasian deserve representations of themselves, especially in the classroom. However, in an equity audit conducted on the first five books of *The Boxcar Children*, *The Bailey School Kids*, and *Franklin School Friends*, 75% of each series' protagonists were of a Caucasian background. An abundance of white protagonists become especially impactful when they make up the majority of representations in these books. They become increasingly impactful when only one other race is represented in a protagonist (in this case African American) or when ethnic protagonists are included but characterized in a stereotypical manner, as seen in *Franklin School Friends* with African American and Asian American protagonists. Also, after analyzing the completed equity audit in this research, the lack of non-stereotypical ethnic protagonists in present-day transitional series literature was shocking. Although protagonists are what students mainly identify with, if the student is not represented amongst the protagonists, secondary characters are what students look at in order to make those connections. The complete elimination of ethnic and racial secondary characters refuses students this opportunity.

Beyond the protagonists and secondary sidekicks, other important characters bring different trends to the literature as well. Within children's literature, parents play an integral role in many stories, especially as the protagonists undergo different difficulties and challenges. In my research, the series I analyzed showed that the role of parent involvement to be very slight, if

absentee. In the case of *The Boxcar Children*, the children are orphaned from the prelude of the first book, and in the following book, their grandfather plays a very minor role; the protagonists are shown to be very independent and unreliable on authority figures, something almost unheard of in today's day and age. In *The Bailey School Kids*, the parents of our protagonists are only mentioned by word-of-mouth, the reader never gets the opportunity to interact with them. While the parents and family dynamics of protagonists in *Franklin School Friends* are more realistically portrayed, I was disappointed to see the father of the African American protagonist be described as a stereotypical absentee father that our protagonist tries to please. While this may be relatable to a portion of third-grade students, it is not the norm. Overall, I found that these popular classroom library transitional series did not adequately portray ethnic and racial protagonists, nor did they include relevant trends and themes related to authentic experiences of third graders.

As an Indo-Caribbean woman, reflections of myself were obviously absent among books I read in school, something I never want to occur in my own classroom. The undertaking of this research was to better myself and other educators, both pre-service teachers and well-seasoned veterans. This thesis explored the related research literature surrounding representations and portrayals of protagonists of various multicultural backgrounds in series or transitional books I conducted an equity audit on multiple sets of series or transitional books commonly found among elementary classroom libraries to examine ethnic and racial representations of protagonists to the actual demographics of the first through third-grade student population. These findings have the potential for educators to improve their methods choosing literature with characters of diverse races and ethnicities and improve methods of integrating multicultural literature into lessons.

## **Research Limitations**

My research limitations begin with the lack of available children's literature that include non-stereotypically portrayed ethnic and racial protagonists. This could be a result of a lack of material that is published or readily available for educators to have in their classroom. Also, while I included a list of suggested transitional series literature to include in the third-grade classroom, the lack of availability could also be tied to a lack of monetary funds that teachers must have to purchase these books for a classroom. Educators, from pre-service teachers to well-seasoned teachers could also just be uninformed about a better selection of literature that include ethnic protagonists because they don't complete research of their own. A second research limitation of mine lies in the fact that I was the sole reader and coder, although I was guided and facilitated by my thesis chair. In the series I selected, I chose to read and code only the first five books from each series, however, *The Boxcar Children* and *The Bailey School Kids* both contain hundreds of books in each series. If I were to broaden the scope of this research, and include more of those books or another transitional series, a single reader and coder would limit the amount, impartiality, and accuracy of the research that could be accomplished. Hopefully, in the future research discussed below, this becomes less of an issue due to an increase in quality children's transitional series that includes ethnic and racial characters that represents all students in the third grade (and all grades) demographics of the elementary school population.

## **Next Steps and Future Research**

After completing this research, based on the results of my equity audit in Chapter 4, I prepared a list of Recommended Transitional Series Literature to distribute to third grade classrooms across schools in Orange County, Florida. I first plan on giving this list to the third

grade team at my internship placement, where I have noticed the teachers include very generic, out-of-date transitional series (books of all genres) in their classroom library. My expectation is that these teachers use this recommended list to educate themselves about more meaningful pieces of multicultural children's literature they can include in their libraries to offer their students more opportunities read literature with characters they can connect with. I then plan to distribute this list to the third grade team at my second internship placement, and any other school I teach at, so that all types of teachers become better informed in different types of multicultural literature they can implement and introduce to third grade students. This list of Recommended Transitional Series Literature is located in Appendix C. Also, as I completed my research, I noticed that there were no transitional series, or multicultural books in general, that included a character of Indo-Caribbean ethnicity like myself. Warikoo (2006) states that students from an Indo-Caribbean descent (such as Guyanese or Trinidadian descent) struggle with self-identity as they become adults due to a lack of representations and understanding about their culture. After I graduate, I plan on writing and illustrating a multicultural children's book with a Guyanese protagonist that will allow students (of this descent) in the future to have a book that relates to their specific race and backgrounds. From personal experience, I can say with certainty that I would have wanted to read one of those books as a student in a majorly-Caucasian elementary school.

Future research in the topic of multicultural literature and ethnic protagonists can definitely be expanded in a multitude of ways. Research should extend to the schools themselves, classroom libraries in elementary schools should see what they have accessible in the genre of multicultural children's literature with various ethnic protagonists. Merely giving access to these books to students in the classroom is a step towards exposing them to the benefits of reading



such literature. Another aspect that would benefit greatly from research would be the amount and effectiveness of multicultural education for teachers in regards to children of different races and ethnicities, their families, and their cultures. Pre-service teachers who are uneducated about different ethnicities and races as well as including multicultural literature turn into well-seasoned teachers ignorant about different ethnicities and races in the classroom and in literature. If pre-service training is lacking, and teachers aren't being exposed to these topics in professional literature in a college course, opportunities for professional development and training seminars should be offered in schools and their subsequent counties. Both of these aspects, improving libraries and multicultural education, have a colossal impact on education for both students and teachers alike.

### **Educational Implications:**

James Banks, an expert in multicultural diversity and education, created different approaches to the integration of ethnic content into the curriculum. Pertaining to this research, teachers can use Banks's Ethnic Additive Approach (1988) to slowly integrate multicultural transitional series literature, such as the books suggested in Appendix C into a classroom's ELA Curriculum. The Ethnic Additive Approach allows ethnic content to be embedded into a lesson through:

“The addition of content, concepts, themes, and perspectives without changing its basic structure, purposes, and characteristics. It also allows ethnic content into the curriculum Without restructuring it, allowing a more radical curriculum reform.” (Banks, 1988)

The combined use of multicultural literature and Banks's Ethnic Additive Approach (1988) would allow educators an authentic way to beneficially inform students about different ethnicities and races either similar or different to their own. Since the Additive Approach adds content to the curriculum without restructuring it, teachers are also able to create lesson plans with informative content that is not extraneous to the Common Core State Standards. Benefits for implication include:

- Stage 1: Benefits from exposure to own ethnic/cultural group perspectives and information
- Stage 2: Benefits from learning about other ethnic/cultural groups and perspectives
- Stage 3: Benefits from support of emerging ethnic/cultural awareness and opinion
- Stage 4: Should help students understand other ethnic/cultural groups other than their own
- Stage 5: Should help students develop a global sense of ethnic/cultural literacy and to master concepts about a large range of groups within the U.S.

The scaffold of benefits help students develop and function more effectively in being global agents of change and in understanding global issues.

(Banks, 1988)

The more a student is introduced and exposed to different types of multicultural material, especially multicultural literature, the more they will become exposed to viewpoints other than their own. If teachers integrate multicultural literature into ELA lesson plans, students not only become informed by an outsider point of view, but also develop the understanding to challenge basic assumptions and stereotypes, eventually allowing students to take social action to change our society or improve injustice. Banks (1988) classified these as the Transformative and

Decision-Making Levels. Multicultural literature can be used as a stepping stone to further enrich student understanding of classroom curriculum if paired with James Banks's curriculum approaches.

How to effectively approach a diverse classroom is the key concept behind multicultural education. That is the reason having multicultural education that addresses the profuse amount of cultures is necessary, even if all outgroups are not yet represented in the educational materials and children's literature. The lack of the multicultural children's literature resources that accurately discuss and portray ethnic protagonists and the lack of implementation of these resources in an elementary school curriculum is concerning. Whether it is building empathy towards people of different races and cultures, promoting a positive relationship with reading, or increasing comprehension potential, children's literature that contain non-stereotypical ethnic protagonist have a resounding effect on those who read it (Green & Hopenwasser, 2017). Providing the opportunity to students who identify with minorities and students who do not is important as our country becomes more diversified. The understanding of the importance of children's literature is a power, and it is one that teachers must learn to wield with careful consideration, as I have learned through my research.

**APPENDIX A: COMMON STEREOTYPES AMONG VARIOUS  
ETHNICITIES AND RACES**

## APPENDIX A: COMMON STEREOTYPES AMONG VARIOUS ETHNICITIES AND RACES

### African American:

- African Americans are good at sports
- African Americans only listen to hip-hop music
- African American are less intelligent
- African American fathers are absentee
- “Magical Negro:” African Americans are wise sidekicks there to help the protagonists

### East Asian/Pacific Islanders:

- “Model Minority”: East Asian are more studious
- “Tiger Mother”: East Asians have overbearing mothers
- East Asians are not good at sports
- East Asians have bowl-shaped haircuts
- Pacific Islanders come from the same country
- East Asians and Pacific Islanders are the same group of people

### South Asians:

- South Asians speak with a thick accents (all accents are the same)
- “Model Minority”: South Asians are more studious
- South Asian traditions are old-fashioned and lack individuality
- South Asians have huge, overbearing families

### Hispanic/Latino/Latina:

- Hispanic/Latino/Latinas are lazy and unambitious
- Hispanic/Latino/Latinas have long, dark hair, brown skin, and brown eyes
- All Hispanic/Latino/Latinas speak fluent Spanish and broken English
- Hispanic/Latino/Latinas take jobs from Americans
- Hispanic/Latino/Latinas are poorly educated and work for minimum wage

### American Indians:

- American Indians dress in buffalo skins and war paint
- All American Indian tribes are the same
- American Indians are compulsive gamblers and alcoholics

Multiracial:

- Mixed-raced people have no heritage
- Mixed-raced people are mixed with only two races
- Mixed-raced people act superior towards others
- Mixed-raced people are unable to identify with the races their mixed with

**APPENDIX B: ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF SERIES  
EXAMINED IN EQUITY AUDIT**

APPENDIX B: ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF SERIES EXAMINED IN  
EQUITY AUDIT

**The Boxcar Children:**

Warner, G. (1942) *The Boxcar Children, Boxcar Children Mysteries*. Foresman, Scott.

Henry, Jessie, Violet, and Benny Alden are orphans. After running away to avoid living with their grandfather, the four siblings find an old boxcar in the woods. They make a living there until Violet gets sick, and end up being taken in by their kindly grandfather.

Warner, G. (1949) *Surprise Island, The Boxcar Children Mysteries*. Foresman, Scott.

Henry, Jessie, Violet, and Benny Alden decide to spend their summer break on Surprise Island. There they meet a mysterious stranger, Joe who helps them through some tough breaks. Eventually, they learn that Joe is their cousin, and reunite him with Grandfather.

Warner G. (1953) *The Yellow House Mystery, The Boxcar Children Mysteries*. Foresman, Scott.

Henry, Jessie, Violet and Benny investigate the mystery of stolen funds from their housekeeper, Mrs. MacGregor. They look for clues in an old yellow house and finally find the culprit, an old hermit named Bill, who turns out to be Mrs. MacGregor's husband.

Warner G. (1958) *Mystery Ranch, The Boxcar Children Mysteries*. Foresman, Scott.

Henry, Jessie, Violet and Benny visit their Great Aunt Jane on her ranch, who is very ill. The children take care of their aunt, who is very cantankerous, and the ranch chores. Eventually the children realize that there is uranium on the ranch, which means their aunt is rich! Using this as an excuse to bring the family together, the four children reunite Aunt Jane with Grandfather, who had not spoken to each other for many years.

Warner G. (1960) *Mike's Mystery, The Boxcar Children Mysteries*. Foresman, Scott.



Henry, Jessie, Violet and Benny investigate a mysterious fire that is set at Mystery Ranch. Their friend Mike is accused of starting the fire, but the four children uncover the real culprit: a man smoking a cigarette too close to the barn.

### **The Bailey School Kids:**

Jones, M., & Dadey D. (1990) *Vampires Don't Wear Polka Dots, The Bailey School Kids.*

Demco Media.

Liza, Howie, Melody and Eddie are getting a new teacher, but Mrs. Jeepers acts like a vampire! The four friends try their best to prove that she is a vampire, but have no luck.

Jones, M., & Dadey D. (1991) *Werewolves Don't Go to Summer Camp, The Bailey School Kids.*

Demco Media.

Liza, Howie, Melody and Eddie are going to summer camp for a week, but think their camp counselor, Mr. Jenkins, is a werewolf because he eats raw meat. The friends try to cure Mr. Jenkins by putting mistletoe and wolfsbane in his camp counselor's bag, but nothing happens.

Jones, M., & Dadey D. (1991) *Santa Claus Doesn't Mop Floors, The Bailey School Kids.* Demco Media.

After Bailey Elementary's old janitor quits, the school gets a jolly man who can clean up the worst mess in record time, as shown throughout the book. After a while, though, Mr. Jolly and his little notebook are getting suspicious. Liza, Melody, Howie and Eddie try to expose the janitor as Santa Claus, but never find out if the janitor really is Santa.

Jones, M., & Dadey D. (1992) *Leprechauns Don't Play Basketball, The Bailey School Kids*. Demco Media.

Bailey Elementary gets a new gym teacher on St. Patrick's Day, but Eddie, Howie, Liza, and Melody begin to notice that Mr. O'Grady is strange. His height, as well as his pouch filled with rocks, make the friends wonder if he could be a leprechaun. After researching Ireland, the four friends try to prove whether the new teacher is a trickster.

Jones, M., & Dadey D. (1992) *Ghosts Don't Eat Potato Chips, The Bailey School Kids*. Demco Media.

Eddie, Howie, Liza, and Melody visit Eddie's Aunt Mathilda, who is very sick and poor. However, strange things start to happen while they visit, like Howie seeing someone staring at him from the attic window and, money appearing in the attic. The four friends try to discover if the ghost of Eddie's Great-uncle Jasper, who died years ago, be haunting his aunt's home.

### **Franklin School Friends:**

Mills, C, (2014) *Kelsey Green, Reading Queen*. Square Fish.

When the principal of Kelsey's school announces a month-long reading contest, Kelsey is positive she will have the most books read. However, she has to compete against Simon Ellis, who is always ahead of her in reading. Certain that Simon is cheating, Kelsey enlists her friends Annika and Izzy to help spy on him. Kelsey realizes winning isn't everything and eventually shares her love of books when she helps out a classmate who struggles with reading.

Mills, C (2014). *Annika Riz, Math Wiz*. Square Fish.

Annika hopes to change her best friends' hatred of math by winning a Sudoku contest, but she does not realize how important their lack of mathematical ability is until they make a mistake at the school carnival. Annika tries to fix the mistake, and wins the Sudoku contest. She is pleased until she realized she was the only one to enter.

Mills, C. (2015) *Izzy Barr, Running Star*. Square Fish.

Izzy Barr is a star athlete, one of the fastest runners in her class. However, her father misses her sport events to go to her half-brother's football games. Izzy pretends she doesn't care but as she practices for class field day, she can't help but hope her class is there. Her father finally makes it to the last minute of her track meet, pleasing Izzy immensely.

Mills, C. (2015) *Simon Ellis, Spelling Bee Champ*. Square Fish.

Simon Ellis is a studious, intelligent boy who is sometimes left out because of how smart he is. Simon and the rest of the third grade Franklin School Friends participate in a spelling bee where Simon's competitive spirit takes over until he realizes that sometimes the best way to win is to take a chance and let other people shine.

Mills, C. (2016) *Cody Harmon, King of Pets*. Square Fish.

Cody Harmon doesn't love school and homework, but he loves animals, especially the ones on his farm. When the school holds a pet-show fund-raiser, it should be his time to shine, however there is a ten-dollar entrance fee per pet. Cody has nine of them, and decides to show them all by allowing his classmates to borrow each of his pets (except his pet pig) so that all of them can participate in the show.

**APPENDIX C: RECOMMENDED TRANSITIONAL SERIES FOR THIRD  
GRADE CLASSROOMS**

APPENDIX C: RECOMMENDED TRANSITIONAL SERIES FOR THIRD GRADE  
CLASSROOMS

*Get Ready for Gabi! (Suitable for ages 7-10)*

**Protagonist:** A third-grade **mixed Puerto Rican and Jewish girl** who speaks Spanish at home with her family, and English at school with her friends. She speaks Spanglish when upset.

Montes, M. (2003) *A Crazy Mixed-Up Spanglish Day, Get Ready for Gabi!*. Scholastic Paperbacks.

Montes, M. (2003) *Who's That Girl?, Get Ready For Gabi!*. Scholastic Paperbacks.

Montes, M. (2004) *No More Spanish!, Get Ready For Gabi!*. Scholastic Paperbacks.

Montes, M. (2004) *Please Don't Go!, Get Ready For Gabi!*. Scholastic Paperbacks.

*Sophie Washington Series (Suitable for ages 7-12)\**

**Protagonist:** A fifth-grade **African-American girl** from Texas, characterized by two thick black braids that stick out the side of her head.

Ellis, T. (2013) *Queen of the Bee, Sophie Washington Series*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform

Ellis, T. (2014) *The Snitch, Sophie Washington Series*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform. First Place Purple Dragonfly Book Award Winner.

Ellis, T. (2018) *Things You Didn't Know About Sophie, Sophie Washington Series*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.

Ellis, T. (2018) *The Gamer, Sophie Washington Series*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform

Ellis, T. (2018) *Hurricane, Sophie Washington Series*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform

Ellis, T. (2018) *Mission Costa Rica, Sophie Washington Series*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform

***Jaden Toussaint, the Greatest (Suitable for ages 5-10)\****

**Protagonist:** A five-year old **African-American** boy genius from New Orleans, characterized by his short stature, big brain, and even bigger afro.

Dumas, M. (2015) *Jaden Toussaint the Greatest Episode 1: The Quest for Screen Time*. Plum Street Press.

Dumas, M. (2016) *Jaden Toussaint the Greatest Episode 2: The Ladek Invasion*. Plum Street Press.

Dumas, M. (2016) *Jaden Toussaint the Greatest Episode 3: Muffin Wars*. Plum Street Press.

Dumas, M. (2016) *Jaden Toussaint the Greatest Episode 4: Attack of the Swamp*. Plum Street Press.

Dumas, M. (2017) *Jaden Toussaint the Greatest Episode 5: Mission Star-Power*. Plum Street Press.

***Bobby vs. Girls (Suitable for ages 7-10)***

**Protagonist:** A shy, studious, skateboard-loving **Chinese-English/German/French** boy who enjoys going to school and keeping to himself.

Yee, L. (2010) *Bobby vs. Girls (Accidentally), Bobby vs. Girls Series*. Scholastic Paperbacks.

Yee, L. (2012) *Bobby the Brave (Sometimes), Bobby vs. Girls Series*. Scholastic Paperbacks.

***Yasmin Series! (Suitable for ages 5-8)***

**Protagonist:** A spirited **Pakistani-American** second grader with a BIG imagination who thinks creatively and loves her family's traditions, from her Baba's beard to her Mama's hijab.

Faruqi S. (2018) \ *Yasmin the Explorer, Yasmin Series*. Picture Window Books.

Faruqi S. (2018) *Yasmin the Fasionista!, Yasmin Series*. Picture Window Books.

Faruqi S. (2018) *Yasmin the Painter, Yasmin Series*. Picture Window Books.

***Lola Levine Series (Suitable for ages 8-12)***

**Protagonist:** A **Jewish-Mexican American**, Spanish-speaking soccer player who learns to balance her mixed-up lives at school and at home.

Brown, M., & Dominguez, A. (2016) *Lola Levine Is Not Mean!, Lola Levine Series*. Little Brown Books for Young Readers

Brown, M., & Dominguez, A. (2016) *Lola Levine Drama Queen, Lola Levine Series*. Little Brown Books for Young Readers

Brown, M., & Dominguez, A. (2016) *Lola Levine and the Ballet Scheme*, *Lola Levine Series*.  
Little Brown Books for Young Readers

Brown, M., & Dominguez, A. (2017) *Lola Levine Meets Jelly and Bean*, *Lola Levine Series*.  
Little Brown Books for Young Readers

Brown, M., & Dominguez, A. (2017) *Lola Levine and the Vacation Dream*, *Lola Levine Series*.  
Little Brown Books for Young Readers

Brown, M., & Dominguez, A. (2016) *Lola Levine Is Not Mean!*, *Lola Levine Series*. Little  
Brown Books for Young Readers

### ***Simply Sarah (Suitable for ages 6-8)***

**Protagonist:** A young **Caucasian** girl who lives on a bustling New York city block and goes on crazy adventure. She meets all sorts of people from **African-American, Chinese, and Mexican** backgrounds.

Naylor, P. (2009) *Anyone Can Eat Squid!*, *Simply Sarah*. Las Vegas, NV. Two Lions.

Naylor, P. (2010) *Patches and Scratches*, *Simply Sarah*. Las Vegas, NV. Two Lions.

Naylor, P. (2012) *Cuckoo Feathers*, *Simply Sarah*. Las Vegas, NV. Two Lions.

Naylor, P. (2013) *Eating Enchiladas*, *Simply Sarah*. Las Vegas, NV. Two Lions.

### ***Jasmine Toguchi (Suitable for ages 6-9)***

**Protagonist:** A **Japanese-American** girl who just wants to make mochi with her family, but they have other plans for a third-grader like her.



Florence, D. (2017) *Jasmine, Toguchi, Mochi Queen*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux

Florence, D. (2017) *Jasmine, Toguchi, Super Sleuth*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux

Florence, D. (2018) *Jasmine, Toguchi, Drummer Girl*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux

Florence, D. (2018) *Jasmine, Toguchi, Flamingo Keeper*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux

***\*Denotes transitional series that are ongoing***

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