

“I THOUGHT CANADIANS WERE WHITE!”
An Intersectional Gendered Visual Analysis of Race, Nation, Gender, and LGBT+
Representation in ESL/ELL Textbooks

by

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Abstract

Despite the international status of the English language, there is a very particular image of who speaks ‘good’ English. Whatever the racial, gender, cultural, national or other identities of the English as Second Language/English Language Learning (ESL/ELL) instructors and their students, there are questions about the images and representations in the teaching materials that are used to guide students into the mysteries of English. Given the assumptions about the source of ‘good,’ acceptable English, how are ‘English speakers’ being represented to English learners, and what role did ESL materials play in students’ perceptions? What representations of race, gender, women, sexuality and nation do the available teaching materials convey to an increasingly diverse range of ESL instructors and their students? This paper examines the implications of intersectional gendered visual representations of people, classes, sexualities and nations in a range of popular teaching materials available in Canada. Visual data from 10 ESL/ELL textbooks was collected, organized and analyzed with the intention of reaching a conclusion about the state of diverse representation in modern teaching materials, and to fill in the gap of Canadian scholarship on intersectional visual depictions in English language education.

Lay Summary

This thesis examines textbooks used in ESL/ELL¹ classes, in order to see how race, nations, gender and LGBT+ people are represented in pictures and illustrations. The goal is to see what kind of diverse representation is in current textbooks, and to add more information to this area of research.

¹ ESL is considered a separate and specialized language program; ELL is often integrated into existing classes

Preface

This thesis was inspired by my experiences as an ESL/ELL instructor, and is based on original, independent research conducted by the author, J. Nelson.

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I must allow myself to become emotional now: to my parents, my grandparents, and my siblings: thank you. Thank you, dad, for tutoring me after school and making me smile. Thank you, mum, for believing that I could achieve anything and for telling me with a sureness that steadies me, always. Thank you, Ashes, Ebz, Ayo. You make me want to be the best big sibling I could possibly be (even if you all are taller than me.) To Miss Milly, thank you for instilling the importance of education in us. I know you're proud.

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Dedication

To Miss Milly and Dr. Michele A. Johnson: Wi Lickle But Wi Tallawah.

Chapter 1. Introduction

“I thought Canadians were white!” This statement was made to me by a young man during one of the many ‘demo lessons’ that I had to perform as part of my duties as an English instructor in Japan. He said it without malice or contempt; rather, he was genuinely surprised to meet a Black teacher from the “Great White North.” Long after I had finished my contract with the English school, moved back to Canada, and entered graduate school, his statement stuck with me. What was it that had led him to this conclusion? Movies? Television? Perhaps the very same assigned textbooks I was using in my English lessons had only served to confirm the ‘truth’ about the whiteness of Canada, where ‘good’ English is spoken.

It was not my first brush with such an attitude. I’d been granted a teaching opportunity in South Korea before – or rather, I had been offered the position until my photograph was submitted; I never heard from them again. There were also teaching visas that only accepted applicants from certain countries (Australia, England, Canada, and the U.S. primary among them,) but discounted my English-speaking home country of Jamaica from consideration, despite my Canadian citizenship.

These experiences helped to fuel my interest in this research project as both a means to satisfy my own personal curiosity and as a way to critically examine one of the aspects of ESL/ELL (English as a Second Language / English Language Learning) instruction that has been taken for granted or seemed to benignly fade into the background – stereotypes and other identity formation in textbooks’ visual representation. The interest was further piqued when preparing lessons more recently: the topics of culture, dating/love and more general discussions involving gender took noticeably more effort to integrate into lessons. Materials found both online, and gathered by experienced teachers into well-organized folders, reflected some troubling patterns:

there were stereotypes regarding race, gender, and culture, a lack of racial diversity, and a noticeable dearth of LGBT+² representation.

1.1. Research Context

With English increasingly operating as the *lingua franca* of international job opportunities, education, business ventures, entertainment, and travel and given the sharp rise of international travel in a significantly more globalized world, ESL teaching is a big business. As a result, there has been an increase in the demand for ESL teachers (Vancouver Public Library). This takes place with a context centuries in the making, with the colonial enterprise of Northern European nations, led by Britain. In every inhabited continent, across sea and oceans, British imperialists imposed English upon diverse peoples, and established its dominance. When imperial Britain was joined as an economic and political force by her former colonies (including those that became the United States, Canada as well as India, South Africa and Australia), the might and power of English was cemented. In the present day, it is not surprising to see that English has become an almost inescapable means of not only signifying success and power, but also the currency of basic international communication. Learning English has become desirable, if not necessary.

Given this context, and the race-based ideologies of both white superiority and non-white inferiority that accompanied colonization, it followed suit that although English was widespread, not all speakers of English were treated equally. These hierarchies, based in racism and racialization, become clear when people from former British white settler colonies (Canada, Australia) are believed to be better speakers and experts of the language than those who come

² The term LGBT+ is being used as a placeholder for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Two-Spirit, Queer/Questioning, and Asexual (LGBTQTQA)

from the empire's 'darker' colonies (Africa, Asia, the Caribbean). These biases are present in subtle and overt ways throughout the ESL industry, and can be observed in the realm of visual teaching materials. The ways in which race, gender, nation, and sexuality are represented in international ESL/ELL textbooks are the bases of this research project.

While there has been an increase in articles analyzing the content of ESL/ELL textbooks by scholars such as Lee and Collins (2010), Johansson and Malmsjö (2009), Giaschi (2000), Gulliver (2011) and Paiz (2015), many are focused on specific regions (such as Hong Kong, Iran or the United States), or one aspect of representation in ESL/ELL textbooks (such as race, gender, or sexuality).

Research projects such as that done by Giaschi (2000) influenced the ways that I organized and conducted my own data collection analysis. Giaschi (2000) conducted a study on gender representation in ESL textbooks, focusing on the "trend in mass-market ESL materials from textual to visual communication" as well as the influence that the cultural context (in the case of his study, British) could have on learners from all over the world. The study proved to be an important tool for my own research materials through a variety of critical lenses. Some common categories included in both this and other scholarship on ESL/ELL were race, gender/sexism, nation, and sexuality, and these are the groupings that I used in my own research project.

1.2. Research Problem and Questions

Stereotypical and other narrow forms of representation are a problem in the visual text of ESL textbooks. "I thought Canadians were white!" was the first thing that came to mind when considering the "problem" parameters of this research project. The person that had uttered the

words had meant no ill intent; his experiences had been shaped by interactions with English speakers in American military bases, as well as his previous ESL/ELL studies. How, then, were ‘English speakers’ being represented to English learners, and what role did ESL materials play in students’ perceptions? What representations of race, gender, women, sexuality and nation do the available teaching materials convey to an increasingly diverse range of ESL instructors and their students? These questions led me to look more closely at the textbooks being used in classrooms, and, more specifically, the depictions of people therein. It is my intention to explore the depictions of race, gender, nation, and sexuality in modern ESL materials, with a focus on the photographs and illustrations that are often thought of as benign.

1.3. Research Limitations

There are several limitations and considerations that have an impact on my research methods, and therefore my results. Firstly, because of the prohibitive cost of purchasing ESL/ELL textbooks, I was limited by what was available free of cost from the institution at which I did my research. Secondly, by choosing to focus on visual teaching materials (specifically photographs and illustrations of people), many textual elements were removed from consideration (except for where they provided a vital explanation). Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, the visual cues that signal race and gender were limited not only by the images chosen by the authors and publishers, but by my own interpretations and biases. Giaschi (2000), quoting Fairclough (1989), states that “[p]eople researching and writing about social matters are inevitably influenced in the way they perceive them ... by their own social experiences and political commitments.” In addition to this, there are undoubtedly some aspects of analysis that will prove to be beyond the

scope of this research.

Chapter 2. Unpacking: What We Already Know About Representation in ESL/ELL Textbooks

British Columbia is undoubtedly a major centre for ESL education. According to numbers from Statistics Canada's 2016 Census, of over 4.5 million respondents, more than 1.2 million spoke a language other than English as a mother tongue (compared to less than 60,000 who spoke French, one of the two official languages). Vancouver, British Columbia's most populous city, boasts over 2.4 million residents (Statistics Canada, 2016) who, like all people, both influence and are influenced by the society in which they exist. Scholars such as Fairclough (1989) have looked closely at the myriad ways in which sociolinguistics encourage a critical look at the divide that Saussure (1916) imagined between social language and individual language (*langue* and *parole* respectively). Fairclough (1989) states that "[p]eople internalize what is socially produced and made available to them, and use this [...] to engage in their social practice, including discourse. This gives the forces which shape societies a vitally important foothold in the individual psyche" (24). The importance of how people are visually represented in ESL/ELL texts can be easily traced from the roots of media analysis.

The examination of ESL texts and Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) materials through a variety of critical lenses has a rich history on which I was able to draw. Some common categories analysed included race, gender/sexism, nation, and sexuality; these are the groupings that I used in my own research project. I elaborate on some of their key findings in what follows.

Gender identity and representation figure heavily in linguistic circles. The ways that women have been represented in ESL/ELL materials have been a subject of research for some

time. Hartman and Judd (1978), Giaschi (2000), Ansari and Babaii (2003), Mustedanagic (2010), and Bao (2016), among others, found that in some texts women were negatively portrayed – either being passive in comparison to men, or embodying traits like gossiping, vanity, disorganization and pettiness. Other scholars found that more recent texts had made considerable efforts to have more equal representation of women, for example, showing both men and women participating in traditionally male-dominated occupations (Mustedanagic, 2010). While my own findings support this shift towards greater inclusion, they also bring up further questions for analysis – what kinds of women are being portrayed, and how are they being portrayed?

When discussing gender representation in this research project, it is essential to acknowledge the impact of Berger et al. (1973) and their influential work, *Ways of Seeing*. Berger (1973) is especially known for his determination to ‘demystify’ high art, and make theories of visual representation accessible for people outside of the academic world (Kalkanis, 2017). Berger et al. (1973) discuss the importance of being aware of the impact of imagery on our everyday life, “posing questions about the kinds of images that we constantly encounter on daily basis” and theorizing that “what we see is always influenced by a multitude of assumptions we hold about such things as beauty, form, class, taste, and gender. Berger asks the reader to consider and even confront these assumptions, and take them into account when interpreting works of art” (Kalkanis, 2017 pp. 10-12). Berger et al. (1973) bring into focus the ways in which female subjects are depicted in ways intended to be appealing to the male eye; while my project does not knowingly examine the male gaze in ESL/ELL textbooks, the concept of a close analysis of the *ways* in which women are depicted is present throughout my research and analysis.

Gender depiction in ESL/ELL textbooks has been a subject of study for some time, with several scholars tackling the subject in previous decades. Hartman and Judd (1978) examined a number of ESL textbooks, and their findings have become a basis (source?) for many other analyses of gender in ESL/ELL materials. Hartman and Judd (1978) discuss the presence of overt sexism in the chosen texts, noting that

ESL materials are ... bound to reflect both the explicit and implicit attitudes of the writers and their societies [and] attitudes [...] [i]n some cases, however, written material are relics of societal attitudes which no longer reflect the present-day realities of the domestic, academic, and work worlds. (p. 384)

The study looks at two texts, and while the results are unsurprising for the time period, some important observations are made by the researchers. Like Berger et al. (1973), Hartman and Judd (1978) challenge the reader to examine their own biases and assumptions, as well as those of the creators of the media that we consume. In the case of ESL/ELL textbooks, the ways that women are portrayed serves as a kind of snapshot of not only the roles they are expected to play (or not play) in their societies, but also serves as a kind of guide of sorts as to how the reader is to see women. In the books analysed by Hartman and Judd (1978), the most obvious examples of sexism exist in the form of stereotypical gender roles (women as existing within the home; men as operating both inside and outside the domestic sphere). Hartman and Judd do not take issue with the mere existence of women and men fitting into said roles – after all, many do – but they take umbrage with the fact that “the true variety of human characteristics, which [does] not depend on sex but on individual inclinations, is not being reflected” (385). Despite the discouraging nature of their results, the existence of studies such as those conducted by Hartman and Judd (1978) provide an excellent point of comparison when looking at more modern

ESL/ELL textbooks. Scholars such as Giaschi (2000), Ansar and Babaii (2003), Otlowski (2003), Mustednagic (2010) and myself have taken inspiration from this research when it came to examining the portrayal of gender in ESL/ELL books through a variety of lenses and perspectives.

Another important study on gender representation in ESL/ELL textbooks was conducted in 2003 by Ansar and Babaii, who looked at the ways that women were depicted in two textbooks. Although the research was published decades after Hartman and Judd (1978), the results were also disappointing in regards to equal representation of male and female subjects. Ansar and Babaii (2003) found that within the parameters of their study, women were underrepresented in every category³, adding that “[i]n light of these findings, one may strongly claim that since the first study of sexism in ESL/EFL materials in the 70’s, little has changed” (pp. 7-8). The authors also issue a warning of sorts – as has been discussed earlier, sexism and other forms of discrimination don’t occur in a void; Ansari and Babaii (2003) state that “images are too ingrained in our unconscious minds to allow us to express nonsexist attitudes” (8). They do not intend this as a statement of defeat, however; rather, they express a desire for more critical pedagogy in the classroom, and language teachers who are willing to abandon a pretense of apolitical attitudes towards sexism. The call to action for a more engaged approach to combating the effect of gender bias in ESL/ELL teaching is a sentiment that aligns closely with my personal pedagogy, as do other axes of biases. Having long noticed the effort I and other teachers put into increasing racial representation in teaching materials, the analysis of depictions of race in ESL/ELL textbooks was a necessity.

³ “[A] systematic quantitative content analysis was carried out with reference to (a) sex visibility in both texts and illustrations and (b) female/male topic presentation in dialogs and reading passages. Secondly, a qualitative inquiry was made into (a) sex-linked job possibilities, (b) sex-based activity types, (c) stereotyped sex roles (d) firstness and (e) masculine generic conception” (2)

When the foci of analysis were being chosen for this project, *race* was one of the more contentious categories. As Brooks and Hébert (2006) say,

[j]ust as gender is a social construct through which a society defines what it means to be masculine or feminine, race is also a social construction. Race can no longer be seen as a biological category, and it has little basis in science or genetics. (p. 297)

Despite being a social construct, gender is nonetheless an important aspect to examine; so too is race. Because the concept of race is so nebulous, the term *racialized* was chosen instead. As discussed by scholars such as Barot and Bird (2001), racialization has been used to mean different things in different contexts and time periods – although a uniting factor is, of course, the relationship to, and, often, critique of race as a concept. The definition that most influenced this study is described by Miles and Brown (2003) as

those instances where social relations between people have been structured by the signification of human biological characteristics in such a way as to define and construct differentiated social collectivities. The characteristics signified vary historically and, although they have usually been visible somatic features, other non-visible (imagined and real) biological features have also been signified. The concept therefore refers to a process of categorisation, a representational process of defining an Other, usually, but not exclusively, somatically. (p. 101)

Put simply, I use *racialized* as a term for a particular group of people whose ‘visible somatic features’ can be boiled down to ‘non-white’ as it is understood through a Western (specifically

North American) viewpoint.

Miles and Brown's (2003) work on racialization is imperative to a study such as mine that analyzes the visual representation of people in ESL/ELL textbooks. Miles and Brown (2003) define racialization as a "dialectical process of signification" (101); in the context of my research project, this phrase requires an acknowledgement of the 'Other'ing of those who are not considered 'white,' and encourages readers to look more closely at what is being signified by the presence of some people in comparison to the absence of others.

As discussed by Miles and Brown (2003), the concept of 'race' that is familiar to many in Europe and North America is based on skin colour,

so that 'races' are either 'black' or 'white' [...] [t]he fact that only certain physical characteristics are signified to define 'races' [...] indicates that we are investigating not a given, natural division of the world's population, but the application of historically and culturally specific meanings to the totality of human physiological variation [...] 'races' are socially imagined rather than biological realities. (p. 89)

The decision to use the categories of 'racialized' and 'white' stem from my agreement with this theory. While it is undoubtedly imperfect to employ these labels, to carry out the task of dividing 'races' from one another based on outdated and racist ideas (Barot & Bird, 2001) would be to reinforce the idea of inherent differences between people based on their physicality. This is not to say that such research does not have its place, however – the depiction of Black, Asian, Latine, Indigenous and white subjects absolutely merits close examination, especially in the context of ESL/ELL teaching materials that could greatly influence both learner and educator.

The unclear nature of ‘race,’ especially when it comes to international media, becomes even murkier when considered against the backdrop of culture and nation.

Studies conducted on race in ESL materials often found an overlap between categories of ‘race,’ culture and nation, such as when Lee (2015) expresses concern regarding “the equating of the English language with Whiteness,” an issue that was also brought to light during my research for this thesis. Lee (2015) goes on to add that

discourses of ‘culture’ can become a proxy for ‘race’. Seemingly innocuous everyday common-sense discussions of ‘culture’ in second language education may thus construct identities in problematic ways. It is therefore imperative [teachers] to critically reflect on how our pedagogies may be ‘doing race’ through ‘doing culture’ in the ESL classroom.

(p. 80)

My own findings support Lee’s (2015) statements – as will be discussed later, nation and culture are often represented in the expected manners: through photographs of subjects ‘doing culture’. Aside from the interchangeable nature of ‘race,’ nation and culture found in several studies of ESL/ELL textbooks, scholars such as Taylor (1997), Yen (2000), Kubota (2002), Ndura (2004), Fleming (2010), Mahmood et al. (2012), Song (2013), Hilliard (2014), and Bao (2016) among others explore the ways that ‘race’ and cultures are (or *aren’t*) represented in teaching materials. Among them, two in particular stood out to me in terms of formulating my own research parameters.

Fleming's 2010 analysis of the Canadian Language Benchmarks⁴ curriculum examines ways in which ESL learners are both racialized and inducted into Canadian culture in such a way that conforming as much as possible is presented as the natural option for newcomers. Fleming (2010) is critical of much of the ESL curricula and "assessment documents" used throughout the country, writing that despite the supposed dedication to multiculturalism, much of the provided material seemed to be "designed to normalize [learners] into a dominant culture" (289). Kachru's (1985) theorization of linguistic circles – the *inner*, *outer* and *expanding* circles which will be discussed in greater detail later on – supports this idea of English being considered the domain of certain nations and cultures, despite its generally accepted status as an international language.

Hilliard (2014) argues that "because culture is such an integral part of language, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to teach a language without teaching at least some aspects of its culture" (238), a fact that became apparent in my own personal experiences as an ESL instructor when the topic of manners or customs came up. Hilliard (2014) also points to issues in representation in ESL/ELL textbooks, as other researchers found material that reinforced racial biases and stereotypes. Although there was an improvement in some areas, Hilliard cautions us not to become complacent – there are some troubling aspects of the seemingly unavoidable intertwining of cultural exchange and ESL education. The presence of cultural ideals such as individualism and materialism is not only ingrained in textbooks and curricula, but is seen and taught as being positive aspects of the target culture.

It is, of course, imperative that one looks at who is being represented and how, but we

⁴ A "descriptive scale of language ability in English as a Second Language (ESL) written as 12 benchmarks or reference points along a continuum from basic to advanced." (CLB website)

must also look closely at who isn't in the picture at all. Much of the literature on LGBT+ representation painted a rather discouraging picture, highlighting the fact that there is little to no representation, or that what little is there is treated as taboo. Vandrick (2001), Gray (2010) and Paiz (2015) discuss the influence of international sales on the choices that ESL/ELL book publishers make to exclude LGBT+ people from being visually depicted. Again, my own research supports the fact that there is a dearth of representation in mainstream ESL/ELL texts, a fact that seems slow to change without outside pressure. Paiz (2015) in particular proved to be a rich source for analysis of LGBT+ presence in ESL/ELL texts, reinforcing the idea that textbooks are not neutral learning materials, but that they reflect and outline what is deemed acceptable by the target culture. Paiz (2015) and Gray (2013) challenge the reader to consider what depictions of family and romantic relationships are being included and excluded in ESL/ELL textbooks. Not only does a complete lack of LGBT+ representation bolster the concept of heterosexuality being the only choice, but, as Gray (2013) points out, even small steps towards more sexual diversity can be reversed if seen as a threat to sales (10).

There is a present and growing body of literature examining representation in ESL/ELL materials; Tang (1992); Stein (2000); Ilieva (2000); Ayaji (2008); LaBelle (2010); and Hall (2014) among others have contributed to this field. Based on my exploration of previous research in this area, as well as my findings on the ways that race, gender and nation intersect, as well as the absence of LGBT+ representation, this research project was undertaken with the intention of doing an intersectional analysis of visual representation in ESL/ELL textbooks. Further examination of race, gender, nation and sexuality will add necessary variety in available studies, as well as new scholarly and personal perspectives.

Chapter 3. What, How & Where: Framework of Analysis and Data Sources

This chapter will detail the elements used to make up the framework I have termed *intersectional gendered visual analysis*, as well as the methodology behind the project. Finally, I discuss the categories within which I sorted the large amount of data that I amassed, as well as the reasoning behind them. The framework used underwent several revisions until I felt that I had come across one that most closely described the way in which I interpreted the information from my chosen ESL/ELL textbooks, and it is my intention to explain as best I can what my framework is, and what it aims to accomplish within the scope of this research project.

3.1. Analytical Framework

The research into the use and impact of imagery in various texts and contexts employs a framework that could be termed *visual analysis*. If one goes back to Berger et al (1972) and the ways in which he looks at representations of women in television, movies, print media, and advertising, integrates aspects of CDA and combines this with the scholarship done on feminism and representations of women by authors such as Mohanty (1984), Giaschi (2000) and Mustedanagic (2010), one would arrive at part of the framework that I intend to use. This could be described as *gendered visual analysis*. Not only is my intent to look at the visual presence of women in the chosen texts, but make note of the ways in which they are portrayed. The number of women is of importance, of course – but so are the jobs they have, family and social roles they are shown to occupy, and their positionality in regards to power. A gendered visual analysis only partially describes the lens through which I intend to analyse the collected data, however.

The ‘backbone’ of the framework that I used employs aspect of intersectional analysis, specifically intersectional feminism. Intersectionality, described by Cho, Crenshaw and McCall (2013) as “a heuristic term to focus attention on the vexed dynamics of difference and the solidarities of sameness [...] [it] has played a major role in facilitating consideration of gender, race, and other axes of power” (787). The contexts within which photographed or illustrated subjects are presented are myriad: racialized, gendered, classed, in various cultures, and embodying differing aspects of society, to name a few. Using a combination of Berger (1970), Fairclough (1989), Crenshaw (2013) and elements of ethnography, it is my hope that an examination of modern ESL/ELL textbooks reveal clear patterns and shows movements towards more thoughtful inclusivity.

3.2. Methodology

This research project seeks to analyze the ways in which *race*, *nation*, *gender*, and *LGBT+* people are visually represented by photographs and illustrations of people in ESL textbooks published between 2008 and 2018. As a part-time employee of a not-for-profit ESL/ELL school in Vancouver, I was able to explain my project to the staff and supervisors and obtain their permission to use texts available to teachers. The textbooks were sorted and chosen according to these parameters: commonly used by instructors in their adult classes; top-selling ESL/ELL textbooks; books containing colour pictures/illustrations; published between 2008 and 2018. An attempt was also made to choose books for learners of a similar level; between beginner and intermediate. A total of ten books fitting these parameters were chosen from hundreds available at the school, and raw data was taken including the total number of pages and the number of pages with photographs or illustrations of people. This data was further divided into numbers of

racialized and white women and men, indicators of nation present in the text accompanying photographs or illustrations, and representations of LGBT+ people.

The categories discussed above were chosen because of the commonality that the texts shared, although the methods used to identify them varied slightly. The category of *nation* was applicable only to illustrations or photographs that had a country or culture listed in either the caption, or in the accompanying textbook exercise; the reason for this choice will be discussed later in this paper. Of the ten books analyzed, nine of them included text or captions indicating the location or culture of the people pictured/illustrated. The category of *LGBT+ representation* was left more open than the others in that it could include not only people (e.g. non-heterosexual couples and families with LGBT+ members), but also indicators such as Pride flags and LGBT events, and captions stating that a pictured subject was LGBT+.

After a careful examination of the selected texts⁵, 528 scanned pages were analyzed, and 2329 subjects that fit the criteria were chosen for analysis. The detailed data extracted from these illustrations and photographs were entered into a spreadsheet, both for ease of recall, and with an intention for both qualitative and quantitative analysis. After the scans were analyzed and the subjects grouped according to the six categories, the numerical data was represented in the form of pie charts and bar graphs; the data obtained from these charts was then examined using what I have termed *intersectional gendered visual analysis*. This term encapsulates the finalized form of my framework, and it seeks to look at the ways that race, gender, and nation inform each other when they are visually depicted in the chosen ESL/ELL textbooks. Through looking more closely at previous scholarship, my own experience, and particular images selected from these

⁵ See Appendix A for a more detailed description of each textbook.

texts, it is my intention to provide a nuanced and engaging look at modern English language teaching/learning materials.

3.3 Data Sources: Framing the Categories of Analysis

Table 1: Table of ESL/ELL textbooks chosen for analysis.

Title	Publishing Information	Level	Page Analysis
Touchstone Student's Book 1	Michael McCarthy, Jeanna McCarten, Helen Sandiford. New York: Cambridge University Press. 2008.	Beginner	150 pages 112 pages with photos/illustrations of people
New Language Leader Intermediate	David Cotton, David Falvey, Simon Kent. Pearson Education Limited: Essex. 2013.	Intermediate	176 pages 73 pages with photos/illustrations of people
Interchange (Fourth Edition) Student's Book 2	Jack C. Richards, Jonathan Hull and Susan Proctor. Cambridge University Press. 2015.	Intermediate	160 pages 99 pages with photos/illustrations of people
Pathways 2: Listening, Speaking and Critical Thinking	Becky Tarver Chase, Kristin L. Johanssen. National Geographic Learning: Boston. 2012.	Intermediate	240 pages 84 pages with photos/illustrations of people
Summit: English for Today's World, Level 2 (Third Edition)	Joan Saslow, Allen Ascher. Pearson Education, Inc: New Jersey. 2017.	Intermediate	176 pages 71 pages with photos/illustrations of people
Pathways 2: Listening, Speaking and Critical Thinking (Second Edition)	Becky Tarver Chase. National Geographic Learning: Boston. 2018.	Intermediate	238 pages 54 pages with photos/illustrations of people
LEAP (Learning English for Academic Purposes) 3: Listening and Speaking (New Edition)	Ken Beatty. Pearson: Québec. 2018.	Intermediate	203 pages 33 pages with photos/illustrations of people
21st Century Communication: Listening, Speaking, and Critical Thinking (Student Book 3)	Lynn Bonesteel. National Geographic Learning: Boston. 2018.	Intermediate	192 pages 42 pages with photos/illustrations of people
Passages (Second Edition): Student's Book 2	Jack C. Richards, Chuck Sandy. Cambridge University Press: New York. 2008.	Intermediate	160 pages 59 pages with photos/illustrations of people

Q: Skills for Success 3: Listening and Speaking	Miles Craven, Kristin D. Sherman. Oxford University Press: New York. 2011.	Intermediate	248 pages 35 pages with photos/ illustrations of people
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The textbooks in Table 1 were selected because they fit the required criteria: a) they were published between 2008 and 2018; b) they had colour photographs or illustrations of people; c) they were of a similar ESL/ELL level, and d) they were textbooks that could ostensibly be used in international settings (e.g. not explicitly being marketed for American or Canadian ESL/ELL learners). After scanning and analyzing over 500 pages and selecting over 2300 photographed/illustrated subjects, I categorized the data both for manageability, and in order to facilitate pattern recognition. The raw data was entered into a spreadsheet (Appendix B), becoming the basis for both written and visual analyses present in this paper.

Before beginning data collection, it was important for me to be aware of what research had already been conducted on representation in ESL/ELL teaching materials, and it was also important for me to embark on this project with the intention of allowing the data to ‘tell’ me something. The data painted a picture of notable progress in some areas of representation, and need for improvement in several others. While I have chosen to present the data in sub-categories of *race*, *nation*, *gender* and *LGBT+ representation*, it is important to keep in mind the overlap in these categorizations, as well as the ways that inform and influence each other.

There has long been a concern with depictions of people in ESL/ELL textbooks; for many learners, it may affect the ways that they view people and cultures different from their own. Fairclough (1989) expresses the apprehension that disseminators of information often have; the fact that “[p]eople internalize what is socially produced and made available to them, and use this ... to engage in their social practice” (24) is something that has come my own mind as I’ve

prepared my lesson plans. In an increasingly globalized and interconnected world, it is prudent to be aware not only of one's teaching materials, but also "the possibility of becoming the medium for any positioning integrated in the materials provided for them without their being fully aware of it" (Giaschi, 2000, 35). It is not enough to come up with engaging activities and grammar drills; instructors should be aware of the texts and realia that they use, as well as their own positionalities and biases.

Chapter 4: Why This, But Not That? Findings and Analysis of Intersectional Gendered Visual Representation

This chapter explains the key findings around representation in the textbooks selected and given critical visual analysis based on gendered intersectionality. Once the raw data had been compiled and analyzed, the best way to represent the important ratios within each chosen category (race, nation, gender, and LGBT+ representation) was by identifying an issue relevant to a particular category. Because of the amount of quantitative data collected, having engaging analyses based on tables and information presented numerically seemed impractical. The decision to use sample images from the text, pie charts, and bar graphs comes partially from my own learning preference, which tends to be visually oriented. Using visual representations to present data based on visual representations in ESL/ELL textbooks is a natural choice for my research project.

Each category of data analysis (with the exception of LGBT+ representation) is presented in the form of one or more pie charts. These charts show the results of my data calculations: the ratio, or amount, of representation that the subject of the sub-section had overall (i.e., counted across all ten texts). After each chart will follow a more in-depth discussion of the findings, incorporating scholarship and research informing the overall framework. Where I deemed it necessary or important, images from the ESL/ELL texts were also included to support my arguments. The categories chosen for closer analysis are *race*, *women and gender*, *nation* and *LGBT+ representation*. As will become apparent in the below discussions, these groupings are

not completely distinct from each other and often overlap and impact one another, making the use of an intersectional lens for analysis a necessity.

4.1. Race and Racial Diversity

Overall Representation of Race in Textbooks

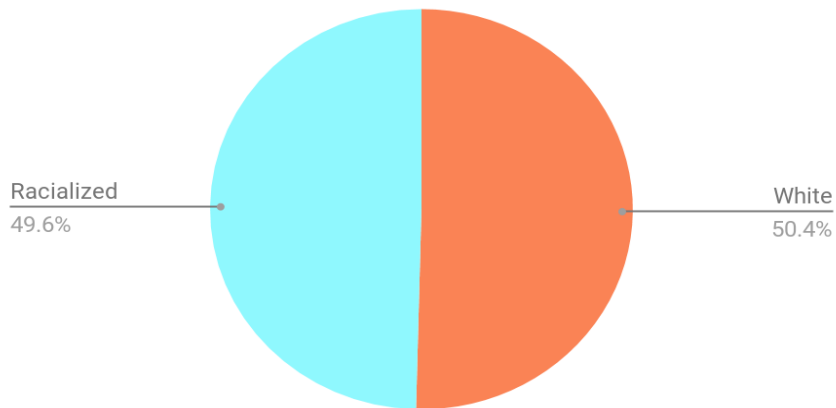


Figure 1: Distribution of racialized and white people across all analyzed texts.

Final Ratios

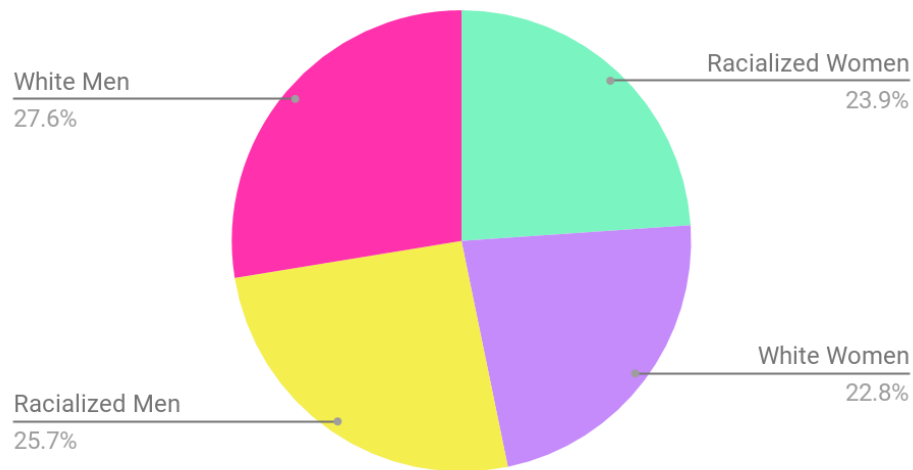


Figure 2: Distribution of racialized and white women and men.

White people are slightly more represented than racialized people in the textbooks analyzed (Figure 1). The representation of racialized women ranged between 16.1% (*Passages 2*) and

30.7% (*Pathways 2*[2018]); racialized men were represented between 11.8% (*LEAP*) and 36.7% (*Pathways 2* [2018]); representation of white women ranged between 11.6% (*Pathways 2* [2018]) and 31.9% (*LEAP*); and white men represented between 20.2% (*21st Century Communication*) and 34.7% (*LEAP*) (see Figure 2). Based on similar research carried out by scholars such as Song (2013), Lee and Collins (2010), Mustedanagic (2010), Otlowski (2003), Hickman and Porfilio (2012), and Giaschi (2000), I expected the findings to follow the general pattern of being dominated by white men and women; however, the overall ratios were more or less even. Although white men did have the most representation at 27.6%, it was only 1.9% more than depictions of racialized men (25.7%); racialized women were next at 23.9%, and white women had the lowest number at 22.8%. Visualized in Figures 1 and 2, the ratios are *almost* even. The same was true of the number of racialized and white people (49.6% and 50.4%, respectively); however, the ratio of women to men was slightly less balanced at 46.8% to 53.2%, respectively.

Scholars such as Sleeter and Grant (1999), Taylor-Mendes (2009), Apple (2001), Madrenas (2014) have found that ESL/ELL textbooks tend to have overrepresentation of both white men and Western cultural markers/values. The results of my own analysis of the images in ten ESL/ELL textbooks would seem to yield more promising results, as white men are represented at 27.6% of the overall depictions; however, it is important to be cognizant of the fact that all other racial groups were put in a group called “visibly racialized.” The reasoning behind this categorization of ‘white’ versus ‘non-white’ stems from a discomfort similar to that described by Sherman (2010), whose research was based on native and non-native English speakers:

[w]hen country of birth is not given, other criteria like name, pictures, audio recordings were used as clues to identify where speakers were most likely born. Because so few of the characters state their country of origin, these criteria were used. Personally, I find equating Caucasian with native speaker status and people of colour with non-native speaker status very troubling but know this idea is common in the EFL/ESL industry ... and among my students. (p. 269)

Put simply, being the arbiter of who ‘looked’ to be of a certain ethnicity, as well as trying to identify cultural markers when the text did not provide the country or culture of origin was a task that I felt was too subjective for me to undertake. Instead, I chose the categories of “visibly racialized” and “white,” a fact that now throws the overall 27.6% of photographs or illustrations of white men into a different light; the ratio of white men and women, compared to the ratio of more intricately categorized racialized groups, would complicate the idea of there being ‘almost equal’ racial representation in the final totals. My choice to use the white/non-white binary does, unfortunately, reflect the Western notion of white people getting their own categorization, while all too often racialized people are lumped into an amorphous group known as ‘people of colour.’

The depictions of racial diversity within the chosen texts varied, but could be roughly categorized into ‘candid’ photographs and ‘stock’ photographs. By *candid* photography, I refer to photographs taken of people carrying out their activities in an environment or context that appears to be organic (see Figure 4); *stock* photography is more ambiguous, with people often posed with a smile or particular facial expression (see Figure 3). Many times, the photograph has a white or other non-distracting background, or a ‘neutral’ environment such as an office.



Figure 3: an example of a 'stock' photograph.
Source: *Summit 2*, p. 3



Figure 4: an example of a 'candid' photograph.
Source: *New Language Leader Intermediate*, p. 110

Of the ten books chosen for examination, seven⁶ did not have sections dedicated to culture outside of Europe and North America, and relied more heavily on stock photography. Two of the textbooks (*21st century communication*, and *Q: Skills for Success*) had visual representation of racialized people more than 50% of the time; *LEAP* had the lowest overall percentage at 33.3%, with *Passages* having slightly more at 39.1%.

While analyzing the databank of images, some patterns became apparent; for example, the fact that of the four books that had 50% or more representations of racialized people, National Geographic, famous for the photography that serves as a kind of anthropological archive, had published three. Books such as the *Pathways* series tended to have more photographs featuring racialized people in clearly stated cultural contexts (provided by the captions), such as participating in festivals and engaging in day-to-day activities, as well as in exercises centred around international cuisine, clothing, and holidays. Poorer countries in particular were represented in exercises relating to social issues such as water shortage, poverty, and pollution. Despite the fact that these are also issues in more wealthy countries (e.g. the ongoing water crisis in Flint, Michigan in the USA), these depictions reinforce the idea of places

⁶ *Touchstone*; *Summit Level 2: English for Today's World*; *Q: Skills for Success 3: Listening and Speaking*; *LEAP 3: Listening and Speaking*; *New Language Leader*; *Passages Student's Book 3*; and *21st Century Communication Student Book 3: Listening, Speaking and Critical Thinking*.

such as India and the African continent as being home to poverty, war and famine.



Figure 5: People sharing a meal.

Source: *Touchstone Student's Book 2*, p. 123



Figure 6: A group of students working together.

Source: *Pathways 2* (2018), p. 188

Many of the texts had stock photographs of fairly diverse groups of people having conversations (see Figure 3), eating at restaurants, working on assignments together, and conducting business meetings (see Figures 5 and 6); however, there were notable scenarios that were more likely to have racialized subjects in photographs or illustrations. The 2012 edition of *Pathways 2*, for example, has a section on Oaxaca, Mexico that focuses on food and traditional dress in a manner that Song (2013) might call a “superficial interaction”, a category of exercise that “involv[es] explanation or discussion of physical cultural products such as food, travel, and festivals” (35); in other books, scenarios involve racialized people (often women) explaining some facet of their ‘home’ culture to their conversation partners, or having some aspect of an English-speaking culture explained to them.



Figure 7: comparing the weekly groceries of the Ahmed family (Egypt) with the Melander family (Canada.)

Source: *Pathways 2* (2012), p. 103

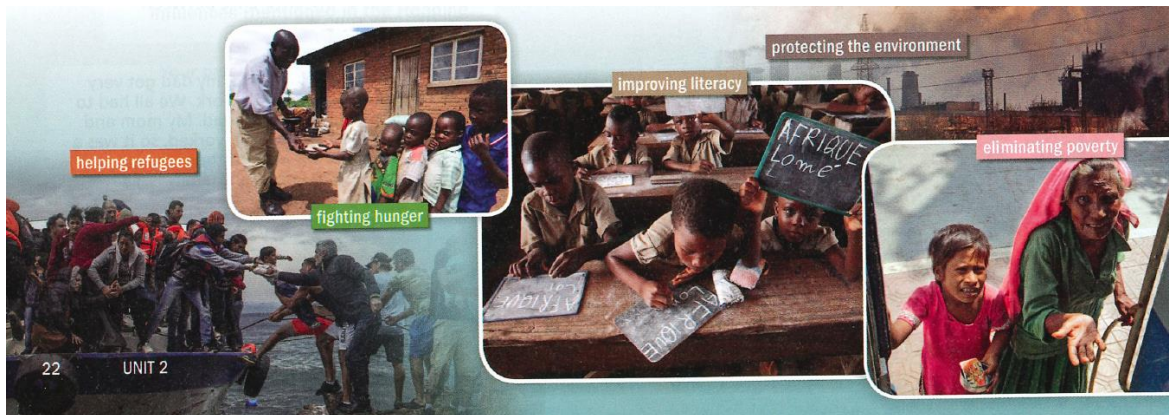


Figure 8: Photographic examples of human rights issues: 'helping refugees,' 'fighting hunger,' 'improving literacy,' and 'eliminating poverty.'

Source: *Summit 2*, p. 22

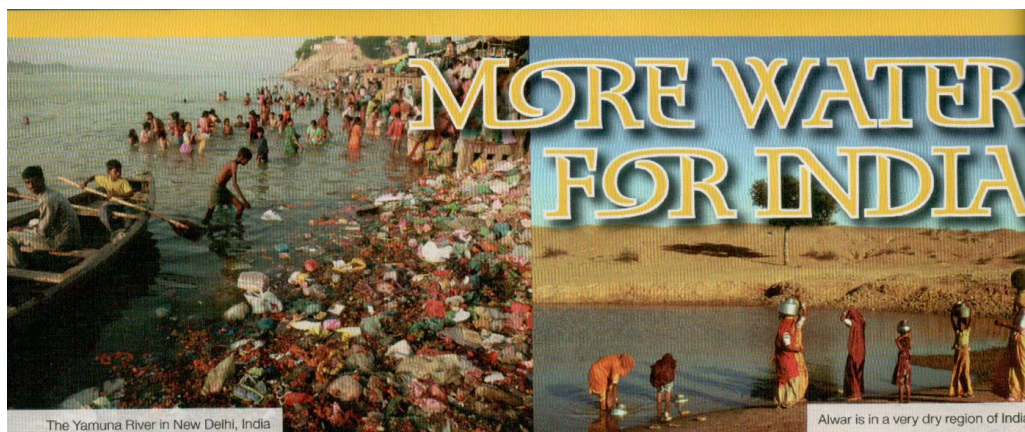


Figure 9: Photographs depicting water pollution in India.

Source: *Pathways 2* (2012), p. 72

Some of the non-stock photography of people of colour involved either comparing aspects of ‘consumable’ cultures (Figure 7) or discussing global issues (Figure 8). It is notable that problems such as water shortage (and some of the solutions that were being implemented), pollution and poverty feature photographs from African countries like Kenya (several of the photographs don’t specify which country the people in the photograph are in), as well as various locations in India (Figure 9). Photographs and illustrations featuring people from outer circle and expanding circle countries did not always focus on negative issues – there were also weddings, cultural events, people running businesses, carrying out daily activities and spending time with loved ones.

If books aimed at ESL/ELL learners have a majority of white men as subjects in photographs/illustrations, then that reinforces the worry expressed by Sherman (2010) that people believe English native speakers to be white, and non-native speakers to be people of colour. I would argue that there are more intersectional issues at play; even people of colour who are native English speakers are considered by some students to be less capable than their white instructors (Amin, 1997). This is a challenge that I faced when teaching abroad in Japan and Thailand; often, I found myself creating more elaborate and time-consuming lesson plans, in order to feel as highly regarded as my white colleagues.

Despite the overrepresentation of white people in some of the material, there is some hope: the numbers of racialized people visually represented in most of the textbooks examined in the sample is between 43.1% and 66.5%, statistics that are an encouraging step in the right direction of increased diverse representation in ESL/ELL textbooks. It is important not to lose

sight of the positive effect that including different kinds of people using English in texts has on both instructor and learner.

4.2. Nation

The categorization for representations of nationhood underwent several revisions, but eventually the decision was made to focus on in-text mentions of locations in the generally accepted ‘world regions’: Africa⁷, Asia⁸, Latin America & the Caribbean⁹, Oceania¹⁰, North America¹¹ and Europe¹².

⁷ Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, South Africa, Kenya, Ethiopia, Liberia, Mozambique, Togo, Sierra Leone, Morocco, Egypt, and five unnamed locations

⁸ Vietnam, India, Malaysia, Hong Kong, South Korea, Thailand, the Philippines, Nepal, Japan, Russia, China, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Cambodia, Oman, Turkey, Jordan and the ‘Empty Quarter’ (a desert that includes parts of Saudi Arabia, Oman, Yemen, and the United Arab Emirates)

⁹ Peru, Mexico, Ecuador, Brazil, Argentina, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Venezuela, Jamaica, and two unnamed locations

¹⁰ Australia and New Zealand

¹¹ The United States of America and Canada

¹² Romania, the United Kingdom, Scotland, Italy, the Canary Islands, Greece, England, Denmark, Hungary, Ireland, Sardinia, Spain, Belgium, France, Switzerland, Finland, Germany, and Austria

Countries / Cultures mentioned in accompanying text

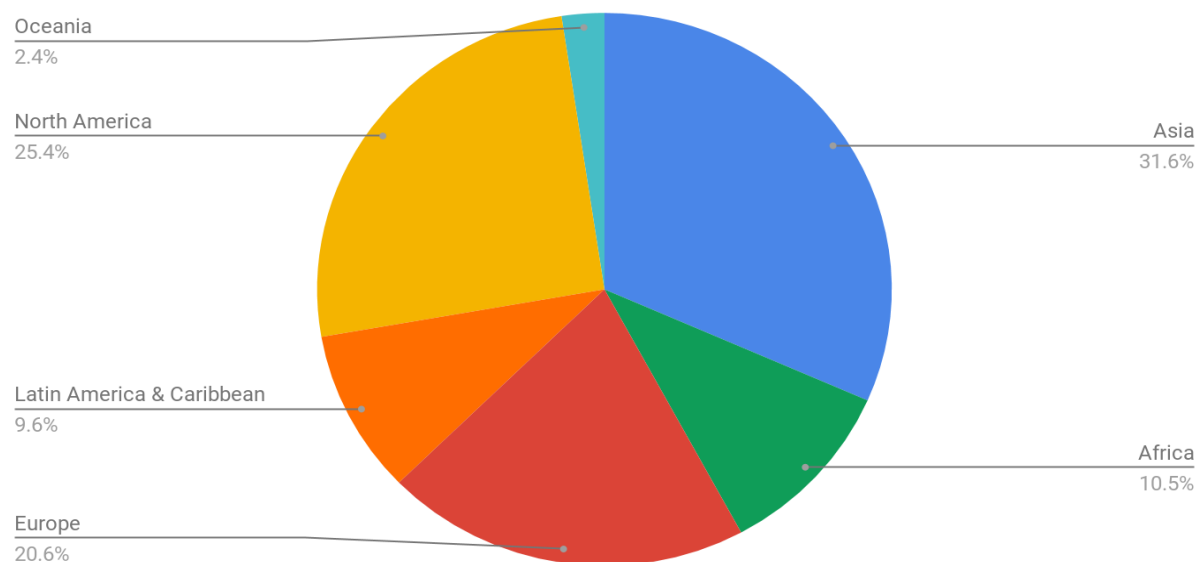


Figure 10: Countries or cultures mentioned in captions accompanying photograph.

World Population by Region

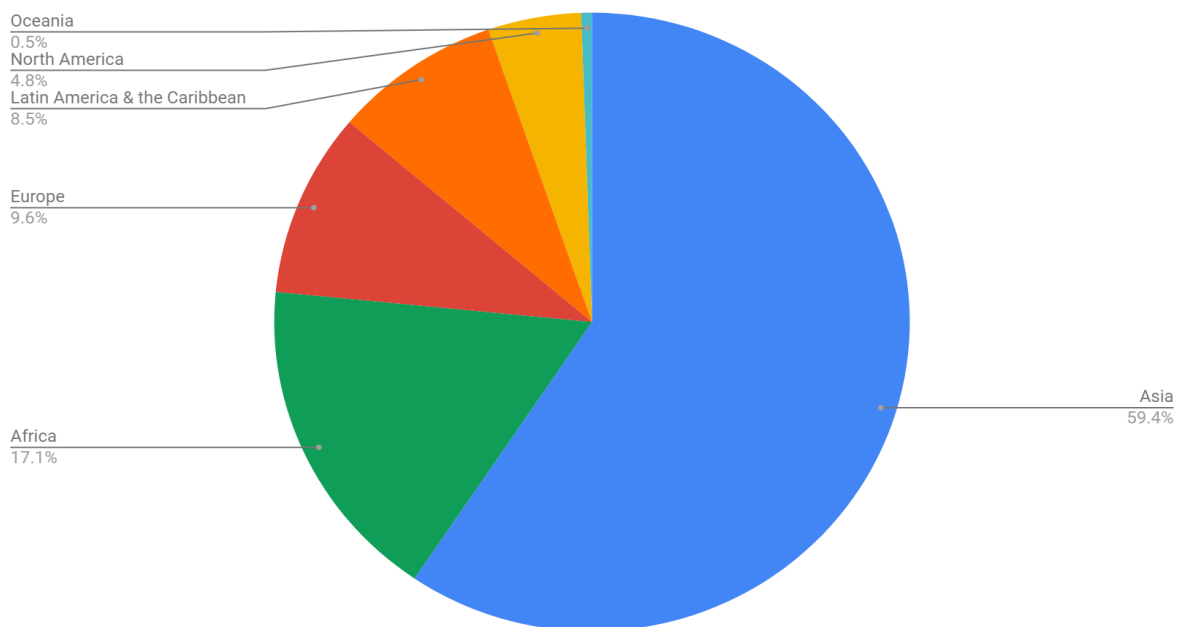


Figure 11: World population categorized by region.

There are several potential reasons for the heavy representation of Asia, Europe, and North America in Figure 10 – for example: the fact that Asia has a large population, and therefore a large market of potential English learners; and the fact that for the most part, North American and British presses published the books chosen for the project, which likely has an impact on the English-speaking cultures that are depicted in said books. With English being spoken by many other nations such as Nigeria, South Africa, St. Kitts & Nevis, Mauritius, and Barbados, the underrepresentation of African and Latin American/Caribbean countries supports the theory expressed by Sherman (2010) that ‘white’ countries are seen as the arbiters of ‘proper’ English, while other English-speaking countries are included in ESL/ELL texts as cultural moments, rather than skilled users of the language. In terms of world population, the nationhood ratios are also unbalanced; as depicted in Figure 11, Asia is the most populous region followed by Africa

and then Europe.



Figure 12: Two people having a conversation in a cafe or restaurant.

Source: *Passages 2*, p. 15.

It is clear that depictions of people in North America and Europe have a greater visual presence than is reflective of the world's population, which could be argued because of the large numbers of English speakers, and the international dominance of so-called "Western" (usually meaning North American or British) culture and media. While the chosen texts reinforce the idea of who English speakers are, and where they live, this emphasis raises the question of the *responsibility* of said texts to represent a more accurate picture of what the English-speaking world looks like and where it is located. It is tempting to brush off the importance of having a stock photograph of people having a conversation in a Starbucks-like coffee shop (Figure 12) versus a different kind of cultural/visual setting, but the supposed benign nature of photos and illustrations in texts is precisely why they are important. Having English linked so closely with either generic "Western" settings, or with specifically named European and North American locations, keeps 'good' English in the realm of what Kachru (1985) terms the *inner* circle. Kachru's theory of

World Englishes, while imperfect, is a strong basis for discussing the role of English as an international language.

According to Kachru (1985), “World Englishes” can be thought of as concentric circles: the *inner* circle, the *outer* (or *extended*) circle, and the *expanding* circle. The inner circle encompasses countries that are considered the “traditional bases of English – the regions where it is the primary language” (242); this group consists of the USA, Canada, the UK, Australia, and New Zealand. The next group is the outer circle, whose member-nations share certain characteristics in that they “have gone through extended periods of colonization, essentially by the users of the inner circle varieties,” meaning that “[t]he linguistic and cultural effects of such colonization are now a part of their histories” (p. 242). The third and largest group is the expanding circle, which Kachru (1985) describes as being different but not necessarily completely apart from the outer circle. The expanding circle has many countries that use “performance varieties” of English, meaning that English is used in certain circumstances, but is not necessarily a part of the culture nor used in policy/legal realms. This circle includes large numbers of people in nations such as China, Korea, Japan, Saudi Arabia, and Zimbabwe.

While Kachru (1985) has been a strong foundation for more contemporary analyses of the existence of English as an international language, several aspects make it necessary to adopt a more critical lens of this useful, but perhaps outdated, theory. Rajadurai (2005) points out that Kachru himself acknowledged the imperfection of his concentric circle model, as there were some nations such as South Africa and Jamaica within the model. According to Rajadurai (2005), the categories first proposed by Kachru (1985) are not meant to be thought of as static and completely separate; he knew that the nature of language was to change and shift. Bolton (2005), quoted by Rajadurai (2005), emphasizes that “the three circles [were] never intended to

be monolithic and unchanging, but was formulated in the 1980s as a potent rewrite of centrist orthodoxies at that time” (113).

One of the most obvious issues with Kachru’s (2005) model is the circles themselves – especially the *inner* circle. Graddol (1997), Modiano (1999) and Rajadurai (2005) himself criticize the Eurocentric nature of the model, with the latter noting the irony that the “tri-circle inadvertently reinforces the concept of the native speaker as the centre of reference, thus promoting a form of linguistic imperialism and language hegemony that Kachru was determined to avoid. Rajadurai (2005) proposes a different kind of model, then – one that has the *inner* circle comprising of English speakers who are both proficient in the language and able to adjust between international and national/regional Englishes; the second circle would be English speakers who only communicate using regional Englishes, having limited expertise with intranational language; the outer circle would be learners of English. Rajarudai (2005) suggests that this new three-circle model would both allow for movement from outer circle to inner circle, and by not discounting regional Englishes, it “creates space for localized identities” (p. 125).

Although I find Rajadurai’s (2005) proposed model extremely appealing, the categorization of images in ESL/ELL textbooks using the metric of language proficiency would be impossible. An analysis of dialogue and text-based activities and exercises could very likely benefit from Rajadurai’s model, however. I must agree with Mollin (2006), who admits that “[t]he three-circle model of English use world-wide does have its limitations”, adds that “it is well-established and should thus not easily be discarded” (p. 54). Because of the necessity of a model that operates by nation, not English language ability, I chose to proceed with the Kachruvian model, acknowledging that it could be seen as a flawed model. It is, however, appropriate for the scope of a research project of this size.

It is of note that the texts chosen for analysis by and large seem to depict people in inner circle countries. As to whether this is problematic or pragmatic is a somewhat complex thought exercise. In terms of appealing to ESL/EFL schools and learners, an argument could be made that depicting mostly ‘native’ English speakers is a sensible move, as it reinforces the idea that the textbooks can help learners to improve their language skills to the point of being able to speak easily with native English users. As discussed earlier, however, the influence that images exert on the ways that people perceive the world cannot be discounted. Is it the representation of only certain global regions that led that man to question why a Canadian was not white? What level of responsibility should ESL/ELL textbook authors have in terms of how they represent the world? As pointed out by Kachru (1985), the largest number of English users exist in *outer* and *expanding* circle nations; therefore, it might be prudent to be cognizant of who is and is not being represented visually as English users in ESL/ELL texts. While the idea of troubling the inner circle subject being visually depicted as a goal (i.e. reinforcing the idea that ‘good’ English speakers live *here*, and look like *this*) is intriguing, such a discussion exceeds the scope of this project.

4.3. Women & Gender

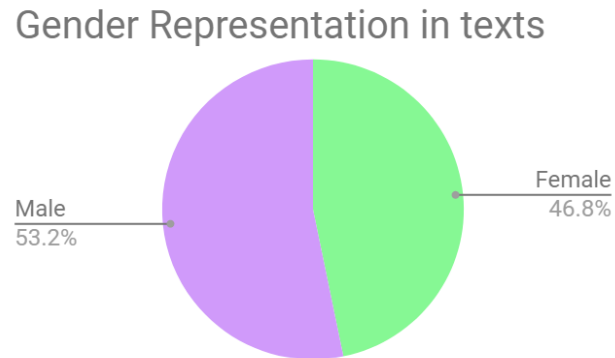


Figure 13: Ratio of female and male subjects visually represented in selected texts.

According to the 2017 report authored by the United Nations Population Division, “the numbers of men and women are roughly equal, with the male population being slightly larger than the female population [...] there are 102 men for every 100 women” (UN, 2017). This is reflected in the analysis of the collected data, which shows that visual representation of women and men¹³ are also roughly equal at 46.8% and 52.3% respectively (Figure 13). In the selected texts, both women and men are shown living active lives as businesspeople, entrepreneurs, public speakers, farmers, teachers, parents, pilots, and chefs, among other roles. In stock photos especially, both men and women are shown participating in childcare and household activities, as well as frequently being in co-ed groups of people participating in meetings, classes, leisure activities, etc.

¹³ I acknowledge that having male/female labels for gender is imperfect, as it relies on Western binary gender categories.

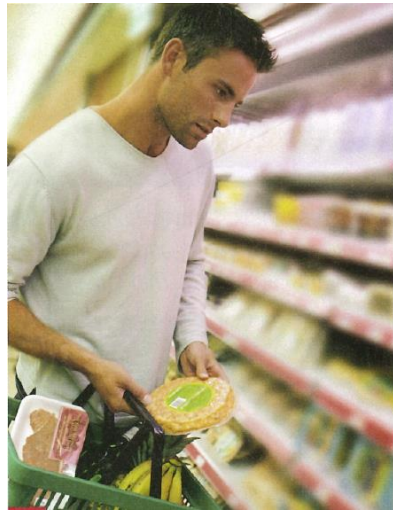


Figure 14: A man shops for groceries.
Source: *Touchstone Student's Book 1*, p. 97.

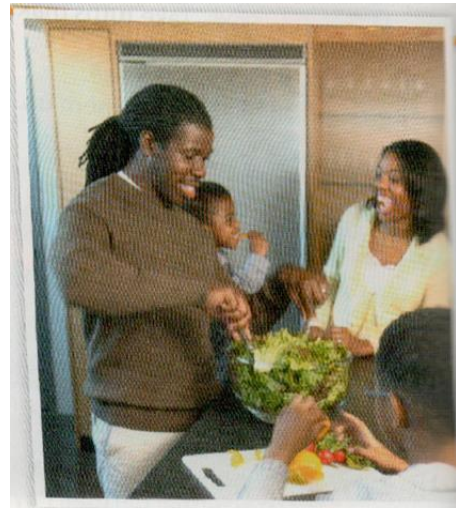


Figure 15: A man serves dinner; his son appears to be helping to prepare the food.
Source: *Interchange Student's Book 2*, p. 38.



Figure 16: A photograph of a man wearing an apron and dusting is used to depict the action 'clean the house.'
Source: *Touchstone Student's Book 1*, p. 36



Figure 17: A woman and man drink tea or coffee as they talk.
Source: *Summit 2*, p. 113.

Unlike findings by Hartman and Judd (1978) that showed more rigid gender roles, I found that men were depicted in 'domestic' activities, such as grocery shopping, cooking for their families and doing household chores (Figures 14-16), as well as engaging in 'passive' activities like having coffee with friends, watching TV/movies, or having a conversation in their living rooms (Figure 17). Candid photographs and stills from video exercises seemed to support this attempt at visual equality – the textbooks published by National Geographic especially tended to have exercises centred around people in real-world contexts about their lives, countries, businesses,

and problem-solving (Figure 23). While representation of women and men in the selected texts was more equal than those examined by Hartman and Judd (1978) and Bao (2016), it was not necessarily free of stereotypical depictions (Figure 18) and other issues, especially when it came to how racialized women were depicted.



Figure 18: A woman thinks of shopping as she talks to her companion.

Source: *Interchange Student's Book 2*, p. 100.

Hartman and Judd (1978), although rightly lauded for their work on sexism in ESL/ELL materials, have an undeniable blind spot that can be demonstrated by the following quote:

Surely the same effort which has been given to erradicating [sic] racial stereotypes can be exerted to benefit our sexual images. A book portraying Blacks chiefly in the roles of football players, field laborers, singers and watermelon lovers would be offensive in America today, not because Blacks are not sometimes found in these roles, but because

such images by implication discount the full participation of the race in the diversity of human life; similarly we women and men need to see ourselves represented in ways more closely approximating our own multiformity. (pp. 385-386)

This kind of thinking – that there are racialized people, and there are women – is still prevalent today. Even with more modernized language (‘Blacks’ are now ‘people of colour, for example), there is an implicit assumption that the categories are White Men, People of Colour, and Women. The distinction between racialized people and women is not lost on me, and often the calls for more representation of women and people of colour leave an uncomfortable gap where racialized women reside. In the examined textbooks, the roles that racialized women played were both admirably varied and potentially problematic.

In exercises showing famous world leaders, or people who have made a cultural, scientific or social impact, women were underrepresented, and even when represented there tended to be more of a focus on white women, with few mentions of racialized female leaders. In fact, the most photographs of racialized women and girls outside of both inner circle nations and outside of a stock photography environment tended to portray either cultural ‘teaching’ moments or scenes of social issues such as extreme poverty, water shortage, and pollution (Figure 24). In several of the texts analyzed, photographs of women engaging in non-Western cultural moments are used as examples of diversity – performance, cooking, and marriage ceremonies are some common choices (Figures 19-22). These photographs are a source of analytical conflict for me; while on the one hand it supports the idea of black and brown women and girls being in a constant struggle, it would be remiss for books utilizing real-world issues and situations to ignore very real-world problems.



Figure 19: Two women in traditional clothing and makeup peer out from behind a curtain.

Source: *21st Century Communications 3*, p. 82



Figure 20: Maria Juana makes tortillas in a restaurant.

Source: *Pathways 2 (2018)*, p. 112



Figure 21: A newlywed couple in India.

Source: *Pathways 2 (2018)*, p. 34

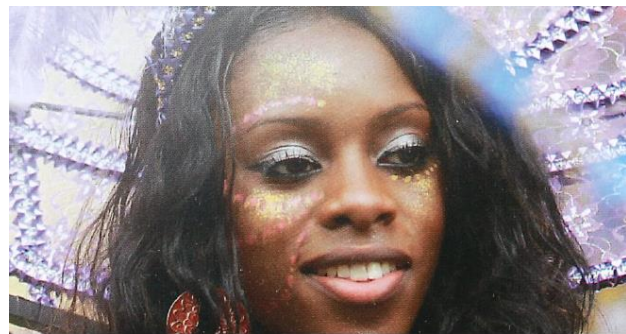


Figure 22: A woman participating in a carnival or festival.

Source: *New Language Leader Intermediate*, p. 114



Figure 23: Archel Bernard, entrepreneur in Liberia.

Source: *Pathways 2 (2018)*, p. 183



Figure 24: Girls gather water from a trough in Kenya.

Source: *Pathways 2 (2012)*, p. 61

Mustedanagic (2010) brings forth this tension by asking “whether textbook authors should attempt to make the ... roles of men and women in textbooks mirror those of society, or create positive role models” (41). In other words, showing male and female pilots or firefighters is attempting visual gender equality, but the actual numbers of female pilots and firefighters are significantly lower than their male counterparts. This challenging analysis is further complicated when race is considered. Taking the example of female pilots further, we can observe the ways in which sexism and racism affects racialized women, increasing the hurdles that they must overcome in order to achieve goals that are considered to be the realm of men. Despite the fact that women had been involved in aviation since its beginnings, it wasn’t until 1910 that Raymonde de Laroche of France became the first woman to be granted a pilot’s licence. Other women followed close behind, almost all from Europe – until 1916, when Zhang Xiahun became the first female pilot in China (Henriot and Yeh, 2013). While Zhang faced some discrimination because of her gender, it would seem that she eventually became a celebrated female pioneer in aviation (Figure 25). Contrast the stories of de Laroche and Zhang with the first Black female pilot, an American woman named Bessie Coleman (Figure 26) was “forced to gain her pilot’s license in France due to racism and sexism in the United States” (Dorothy Jemison Foundation, 2017). Although Coleman also became an acclaimed aviator in her home country after earning her pilot’s license in 1921, she had to overcome the daunting issues of anti-Black racism combined with sexism (Clemens, 2019).



Figure 25: “China’s Aviatrix, Zhang Xiaohun [...] (1916)”
Source: *Visualising China, 1845-1965: Moving and Still Images in Historical Narratives*, p. 161



Figure 26: A portrait of the first Black female pilot, Bessie Coleman.
Source: National Women’s History Museum.



Figure 27: A female pilot.
Source: *Interchange Student’s Book 2*, p. 71



Figure 28: A group of students pose with their flight instructor.
Source: *21st Century Communications 3*, p. 122

With even a brief glance at the history of racialized women in aviation history, then, it is significant that in *Interchange Student’s Book 2* there is a photograph of a pilot that is not only a woman, but also non-white (Figure 27); in another book, Black teenagers are shown posing on a plane wing with a caption indicating that they are aviation students in (Figure 28). Mustedanagic

would perhaps argue that this book is fulfilling depictions of gender equality both as presenting a role model, and reflecting the real world. Seeing a racialized woman in a position that is most often associated with men is the kind of subtle choice on the part of textbook editors that can have a notable impact in a larger context.

While having more women visually contemporary ESL/ELL textbooks is a positive development, the depiction of equitable treatment and the success of girls and women is more complex and nuanced than my initial assumptions. Scholars such as Mohanty (1984) take issue with the idea that Western feminism is apolitical and applicable in exactly the same way regardless of culture. Mohanty discusses the Western feminist assumption that

all of us of the same gender, across classes and cultures, are somehow socially constituted as a homogenous group identified prior to the process of analysis [...] The homogeneity of women as a group is produced not on the basis of biological essentials, but rather on the basis of secondary sociological and anthropological universals. Thus, for instance, in any given piece of feminist analysis, women are characterized as a singular group on the basis of a shared oppression. What binds women together is a sociological notion of the “sameness” of their oppression. (p. 337)

Having previously unthinkingly following the biased thinking that leads to viewing racialized women in the global south¹⁴ almost solely through the lens of oppression, I found that a more critical view of Western feminism challenged my initial reading of the visual depiction of these

¹⁴ A term more recently favoured over “Third World,” the “Global South” is defined by Freeman (2017) as nations that exist in “marginal positions within global systems of decision-making” (72)

women in the analyzed ESL/ELL texts.



Figure 29: Chandra Shroff works with female embroiderers in Kutch, India.

Source: *Pathways 2* (2018), p. 194

The photograph of the women in Figure 29 can be interpreted a number of ways based on both the image and the accompanying text – these are women who were dealing with issues caused by low income; women who became entrepreneurs; cultural keepers who are sustaining an artform. This picture is a visualization of successful racialized women living in the global south, at which an initial glance led me to think not of success, but oppression through poverty – just as Mohanty (1984) says that some Western feminists use one particular lens in viewing third world women. Both Giaschi (2000) and Hilliard (2014) highlight the ways in which certain aspects of Western cultures focus on individualism and materialism, which is then reflected in ESL/ELL textbooks produced within said cultures. Awareness of one’s positionality and biases is important; what is even more important is educators and researchers using this knowledge to inform one’s own practices.

Overall, women were represented in numbers comparable to men in the analyzed ESL/ELL texts, which is close to the distribution of men and women in the global population. They are presented by and large as active participants in photographed or illustrated scenes, with a higher likelihood of being depicted in previously male-dominated careers than in older ESL/ELL textbooks. Racialized women, however, tended to have more negative representation – while they, too, were shown as CEOs, entrepreneurs and world leaders, they were also depicted as victims of world issues such as poverty and pollution. The complexity of ESL/ELL textbooks balancing between realistic visual representation of the ‘real’ world, and positive depictions of female diversity, is something that bears further research.

4.4. LGBT+ Representation

As previously mentioned, one of the driving forces behind this research project was my perception of a lack of diversity in visual teaching materials. In the process of defining what ‘diverse’ meant, something became clear: the presence (or absence) of LGBT+ representation needs to be considered. When selecting the categories for analysis, the possibility of an ‘LGBT+’ focus was both intriguing and troubling – intriguing, because I was interested in seeing how modern ESL textbooks stacked up against those of the past; troubling, because much as I had done with the category of ‘racialized’ vs. ‘white,’ I would be asking the question to which there was no simple answer: ‘What does LGBT+ representation *look* like?’

The lack of LGBT+ representation in popular ESL/ELL textbooks is not a new phenomenon, and is one of the more contentious areas in mainstream educational publishing. According to authors such as Gray (2013), Vandrick (2001) and Paiz (2015), one of the main problems regarding sexuality in ESL/ELL materials is that they, by and large, avoid discussing

or portraying anything that is not heteronormative¹⁵ in nature. This is supported by my own research, which found no examples of LGBT+ representation, such as same-sex couples and spouses, LGBT+ symbolism such as the iconic rainbow Pride flag, or families with LGBT+ members. Even when well-known LGBT+ figures such as Elton John and Oscar Wilde are included in text, their sexuality is completely avoided (Gray, 2013); my research again supports this with the example of Alan Turing, a famous mathematician, being pictured in the textbook *Pathways 2* on page 23, with no reference to the fact that he was gay. The effects of these omissions are severalfold; firstly it reinforces the idea that heterosexuality is the only option, thereby othering real-life persons that the learner will likely encounter in their real life; secondly, it can have a negative effect on LGBT+ learners as their textbooks ignore their existence entirely (Sayer, 2005); and thirdly, it puts the onus on educators to procure or produce their own materials if they wish to include LGBT+ representation in their lessons. This is a position that I have found myself in as an ESL instructor, and the anxiety that I felt introducing the topic of same-sex marriage, even in the context of a classroom in Canada (a country which has had legalized same-sex marriage since 2005), was palpable. Gray (2013), quoting Sayer (2005), stresses that “repeated refusal of recognition to an individual can produce serious psychological damage and refusal of recognition to a group also damages its well-being” (17). As an educator who is LGBT+ myself, this left me in the uncomfortable position of ‘outing’ myself during class discussions and exercises about sexuality, both in the interest of showing my support for any potential LGBT+ learners in the classroom, and to use myself as an example of the fact that LGBT+ people exist in all walks of life despite the lack of visibility in the official texts.

The reason behind ESL/ELL book publishers choosing not to portray can more or less be

¹⁵ Heteronormativity is the portrayal of heterosexuality, or ‘being straight,’ as “the only natural, acceptable, and normal form of sexual identity” (Paiz, 2015)

boiled down to “money.” Although Paiz (2015) brings up the fact that there is often “an apparent lag between social change and its representation in published materials” (79), it cannot be denied that publishers are *choosing* to avoid the topic of non-heterosexuality. Because these texts are being produced for an international market, the avoidance of ‘controversial’ topics may be something that publishers see as necessary for maximum profit. Gray (2013) even goes so far as to cite an interview that he conducted with an editor, who admits that while she was uncomfortable and unhappy with how ‘unrealistic’ it was to exclude LGBT+ representation in textbooks, that the amount of compromise necessary would be “very hard.” The editor also expresses concern that teachers would not want to be ‘forced to raise certain topics,’ and that the most important thing was that the publisher’s course was a financial success. The mere existence of LGBT+ people is still discussed in the hushed tones of discussing the taboo, and texts have a role in reinforcing this discomfort around the topic.

Textbooks are not benign or unbiased, because they are undoubtedly products of “a particular social, economic, political, and ideological environment” (78). It would seem that the push to have LGBT+ people be represented in ESL/ELL texts will have to have some financial incentive behind it, or the shift towards more acceptance of LGBT+ people will offer an opportunity for social capital (which can, of course, translate to monetary capital) for publishers willing to take the risk.

Chapter 5. Summary and Conclusion

Based on the data collected from the ten ESL/ELL textbooks selected for analysis, some intriguing findings emerged. As noted earlier, one of the stipulations for a text being chosen was that it had to have been published between the years 2008 - 2018. This was done in order to ensure a contemporary array of books was being examined, and the results were informed by the era in which they had been published. With previous scholarship done on similar research questions as examples, the project took shape and the categories of race, nation, gender and LGBT+ representation were selected. The numerical data of the groups (with the exception of LGBT+) seemed to indicate that representation was more or less equal, but when an intersectional gendered visual analysis – a framework with the purpose of dissecting the ways in which race, nation, and gender are intertwined in the chosen ESL/ELL texts – was used to more closely examine the results, a somewhat different story emerged. The analysis of intersectionality in terms of race, nation, and gender in ESL/ELL texts in this small-scale exploratory study is not intended to be generalizable. However, the findings of this project raise important issues regarding representation and these dimensions. Applying an intersectional gendered visual analysis allowed for an appreciation of improvements such as more equitable representation of women and men, more overall visual representation of racialized people, and the cultures of outer/expanding circle nations being spotlighted. This same lens, however, highlighted the glaring issues of the *negative* representations of outer/expanding circle nations and racialized women in the global south, as well as the complete lack of LGBT+ visual representation.

5.1 Intersectional Race, Gender and Nation

When race was taken into consideration, the ‘almost’ equal representation was problematized once one acknowledged that the categorization of ‘racialized’ was potentially othering because much like ‘non-white,’ it still centred whiteness as the average and anything else as outside the norm. The choice to include all racialized subjects in one group was fraught, and there was concern about reinforcing a categorization that was, in many cases, forced upon people in the name of white supremacy.

The fact that white men had the highest amount of visual representation would not be necessarily obvious to educators or learners; for the most part, scenes with two or more people depicted were visually diverse. While a major cornerstone of my framework rests on the importance of images despite their perceived benignity, there might be something said for the fact that the disparity between white and racialized people is not immediately noticeable without close scrutiny. The ratios of white and racialized subjects depicted in ESL/ELL textbooks indicated that there was a movement towards more racially diverse human subjects; however, the ways in which racialized people, specifically women, were represented indicated that there was more to representation than mere numbers. Women of all races were shown in positions of power such as being successful business owners and community leaders, and participating in traditionally male-dominated careers. Racialized women in ‘outer circle’ and ‘expanding circle’ nations, however, were more likely to appear in settings about culture (such as traditional dress and food), or in sections addressing social and environmental issues. The intersection between race and gender was unavoidable, as was the connection between racialized women and nation.

Utilizing Kachru’s (1985) theory of “World Englishes”, it became evident that women in

the global south were represented in the kinds of scenarios in which white women were not. Despite the overrepresentation of Europe and North America in comparison to actual world population, the subjects in these photographs or illustrations generally had issues that were minor when compared to racialized people in the global south. The fact that the Asian region was mentioned the most at 31% of the analysed texts was logical, given the fact that Asian countries make up about 60% of the world population (see Figure 6); however, when examined more closely, there was a discrepancy in which nations in East Asian¹⁶, West Asian¹⁷, South Asian¹⁸ and Southeast Asian¹⁹ regions were represented the most. Both Japan and India had almost the same number of mentions (sixteen and fourteen, respectively) despite the difference in populations being massive²⁰; China, with a population rivalling India's at 1.4 billion, only has 5 mentions in the texts. The way that the Asian nations are depicted in North American or British ESL/ELL textbooks is an area of research that, while fascinating, cannot be addressed by a project of this scale. The second most populous world region, Africa, is comprised of Southern African²¹, East African²², Middle or Equatorial African²³, West African²⁴ and North African²⁵ was underrepresented across all the texts, with the highest number of 'mentions' being five unnamed regions, followed closely by Egypt with four mentions.

It is important to remember that many, including some citizens of the region themselves, don't think of North African countries such as Morocco and Egypt as being African, due in part

¹⁶ China, South Korea, Hong Kong, and Japan

¹⁷ Oman, Turkey, Jordan

¹⁸ India, Nepal

¹⁹ Vietnam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand

²⁰ Japan in 2019 is estimated to have 126.9 million people, compared to India's population of about 1.4 billion. (Worldometer)

²¹ South Africa, Mozambique

²² Kenya, Ethiopia, Somalia

²³ Democratic Republic of Congo

²⁴ Sierra Leone, Togo

²⁵ Morocco, Egypt

to what journalist Iman Amrani admits is “north Africans trying to distance themselves from “black Africa,” adding that “[t]his is as much about sources of influence and power [...] as it is about the racism that exists here as it does everywhere else in the world” (2015). Why, then, is such a large region relegated to a few mentions, most of which are North African? Much like the question of why certain Asian countries are represented over others, the lack of depictions (especially positive depictions) of people in African nations in ESL/ELL textbooks should absolutely be explored in another research project. Who isn’t visually represented is as, if not *more* important than who is included, as will be discussed below.

5.2. Lacking Sexuality in Intersectionality

The lack of depictions of LGBT+ people in the selected ESL/ELL textbooks represents the cultural taboo (or, in some cases, outright rejection) associated with people outside the cis/heteronormative. While several of the texts had sections about marriage, dating, and families, the assumption based on the visual information given is that heterosexuality and cisgender is the ‘normal’ and expected identity of the reader, as well as the world in general. Texts that tackle world issues such as pollution and poverty have an opportunity to discuss LGBT+ rights and progress, but as explored in an earlier section, the fear of financial repercussions (poor sales) keeps many publishers from doing this. The absence of visual representation in textbooks such as the ones chosen not only fail to normalize the existence of LGBT+ people, but deprive learners an opportunity to potentially see themselves represented in the materials that they use. In addition, it adds pressure to ESL/ELL educators to create their own materials and navigate sources that might suggest a debate on whether or not gay relationships and marriage should be allowed as a good classroom activity. In much the same way that race can be seen as a ‘touchy’ subject and therefore avoided by ESL/ELL educators and institutions, LGBT+ representation

should not be seen as a specialty subject or add-on to the ‘norm’ of assumed heterosexuality, but presented as a reflection of the real world *and* as a role model for existing in a diverse world.

5.3. Directions for Future Research

While compiling data and investigating scholarship done by others on similar topics, I came to realize that there was a need for a large-scale project. I believe that not only would a larger sample size reveal even more interesting results, but that including elements such as interviews or questionnaires with educators and/or learners that had used the texts would give a real-world picture of the ways in which visual representation in ESL/ELL textbooks were affecting both teachers and students. Other potential projects were mentioned earlier: looking into which Asian nations were visually represented over others, and why; and the role that anti-Blackness and classism may play in the lack of depiction of many African nations. In addition, other aspects of representation such as education, class, disability and others (and the ways that they intersect with the categories presented in this project) should be more vigorously explored. More research on the actual effects of representation (or lack thereof) could be an important tool in pushing ESL/ELL textbook publishers to look more closely at the photographs and illustrations that they choose to include in their materials. As Paiz (2015) rightfully points out, textbooks are products of “a particular social, economic, political, and ideological environment” (78); it is therefore up to researchers, educators, learners, authors, and publishers to push for positive change in depictions of people in textbooks.

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Appendix A

Below are short descriptions and quantitative figures of the ten textbooks that were analyzed for this research project.

***Touchstone Student's Book 1* (2008). Cambridge University Press.**

The book focuses on basic English language exercises, such as introducing oneself, classroom vocabulary, everyday activities, shopping, and talking about other people. It makes frequent use of both photographs and colourful illustrations to accompany its exercises.

Touchstone Student's Book 2

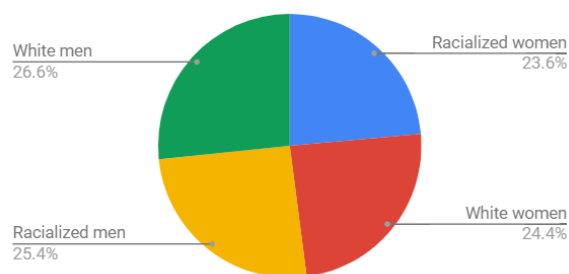


Figure 30: Racial/gender representation in *Touchstone*.

Touchstone Student's Book 2

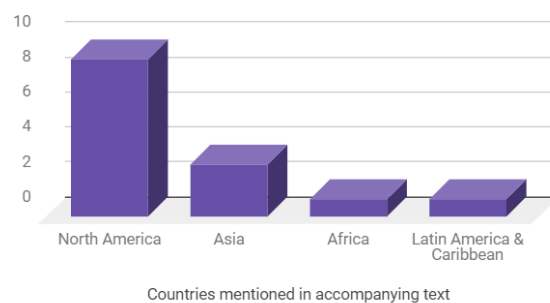


Figure 31: Nations/cultures depicted in *Touchstone*.

***Passages: Student's Book 2* (2008. Cambridge University Press.)**

Passages covers a variety of topics, including science and technology, personal appearance, musicians and music, and consumer culture. It uses both illustrations and real photographs as either embellishments or as part of the English language textbook exercises.

Passages

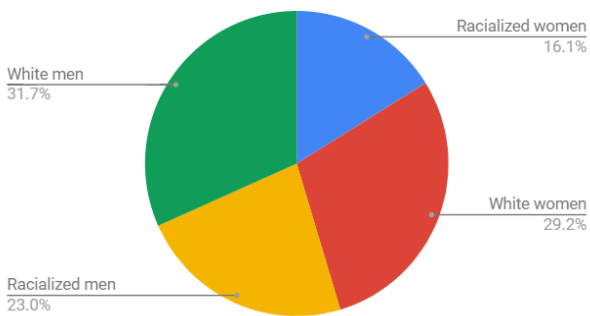


Figure 32: Racial/gender representation in *Passages*.

Passages

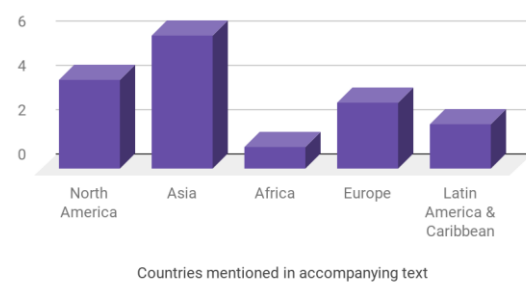


Figure 33: Nations/cultures depicted in *Passages*.

***Q: Skills for Success 3: Listening and Speaking* (2011. Oxford University Press.)**

Q: Skills for Success 3 is a general English language textbook that covers topics such as nutrition, advertising, and responsibility. It has few illustrations, using mostly photographs as its visual components.

Q:Skills for success

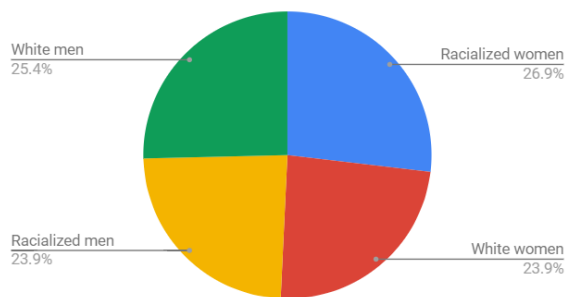


Figure 34: Racial/gender representation in *Q:Skills for Success*.

Q: Skills for Success 3: Listening and Speaking

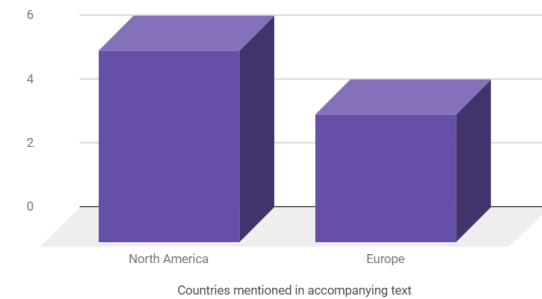


Figure 35: Nations/cultures depicted in *Q: Skills for Success*.

***Pathways 2: Listening, Speaking and Critical Thinking* (2012. National Geographic Learning.)**

Pathways 2 (2012) is a general English textbook that uses examples rooted in both the natural world and a variety of countries to accompany its exercises. It almost exclusively uses photographs, with the occasional illustrated graph or diagram.

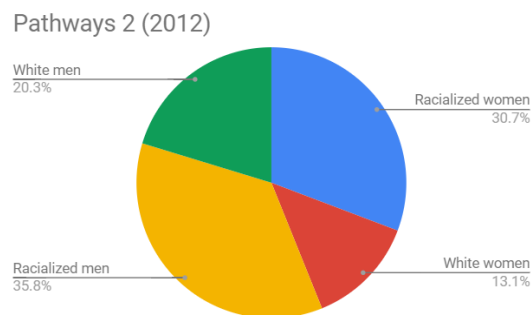


Figure 36: Racial/gender representation in *Pathways 2* (2012)

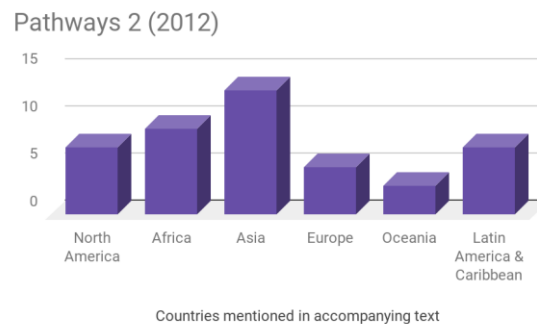


Figure 37: Nations/cultures depicted in *Pathways 2* (2012)

***New Language Leader Intermediate* (2013. Pearson Education Limited.)**

New Language Leader Intermediate is an English language textbook with a range of topics such as arts & media, education, and design. It makes use of mainly photographs, with a few illustrations making appearances in exercises or examples.

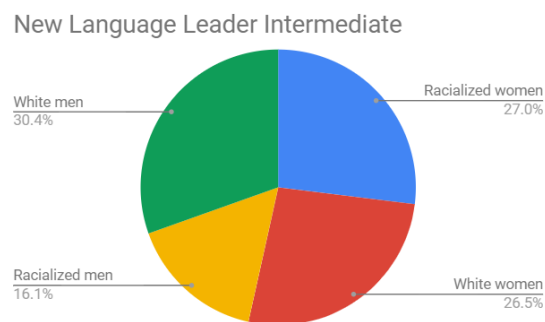


Figure 38: Racial/gender representation in *New Language Leader*.

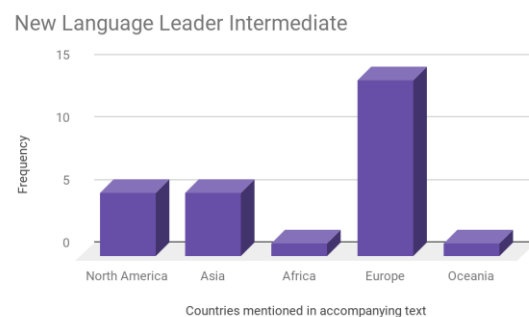


Figure 39: Nations/cultures depicted in *New Language Leader*.

***Interchange Student's Book 2* (2015. Cambridge University Press.)**

Interchange covers a range of topics much like the other texts that were examined for this project – it has lessons on introductions, food, and transportation, in addition to other basic aspects of English usage for intermediate learners. The visual representation of people in the book consists of frequent use of both illustrations and photographs.

Interchange Student's Book 2

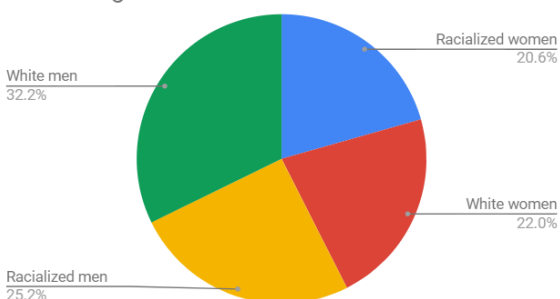


Figure 40: Racial/gender representation in *Interchange*.

Interchange Student's Book 2

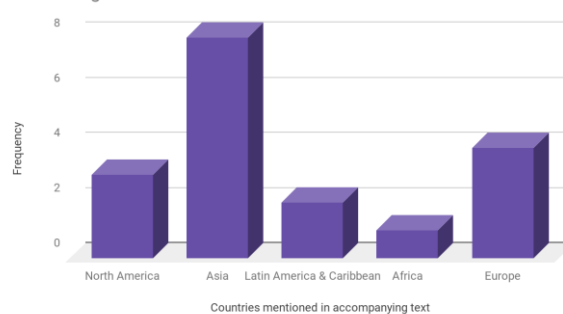


Figure 41: Nations/cultures depicted in *Interchange*.

***Summit: English for Today's World, Level 2* (2017. Pearson Education, Inc.)**

Summit's topics tackle different aspects of life from several of the other books that have been examined: chapter themes include humour, 'fears, hardships, and heroism' (26) and 'dreams and goals' (14). People are visually represented mostly through photographs, with a fair number of illustrations also making an appearance.

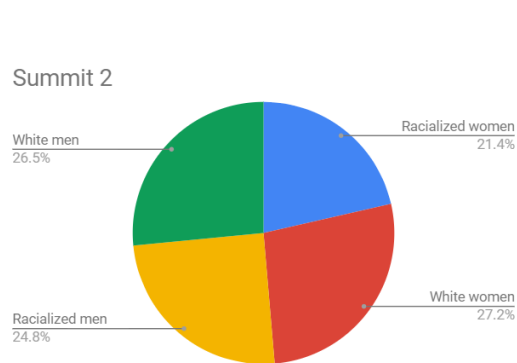


Figure 42: Racial/gender representation in *Summit*.

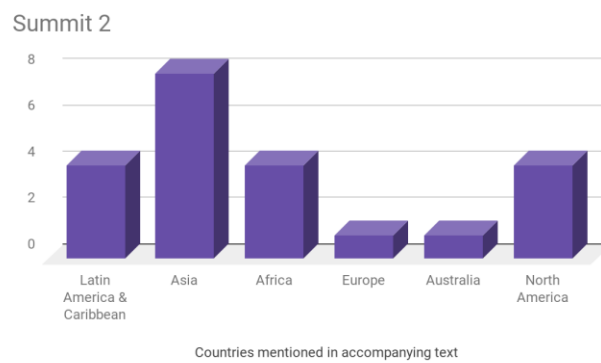


Figure 43: Nations/cultures depicted in *Summit*.

***Pathways 2: Listening, Speaking and Critical Thinking* (2018. National Geographic Learning.)**

The 2018 edition of *Pathways 2* covers some of the same topics as its predecessor – examinations and exercises based on different cultures and social issues in various countries. Much like the first edition, this text has representation of people almost entirely through photography.

Pathways 2 (2018)

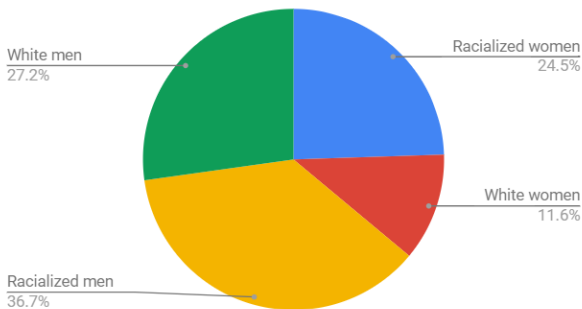


Figure 44: Racial/gender representation in *Pathways 2* (2018).

Pathways 2 (2018)

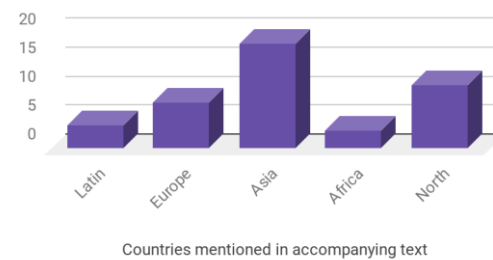


Figure 45: Nations/cultures depicted in *Pathways 2* (2018).

***Leap 3: Listening and Speaking* (2018. Pearson.)**

Leap 3 differs from the other texts that were analyzed, in that its focus was more specific. The other texts would likely be categorized as ‘general’ English, whereas this text is (as its title suggests) more focused on academic and, to an extent, workplace English. The representation of people in this text is comprised of both traditional photographs, and photo illustrations (for example, adding text or altering a photograph in some way).

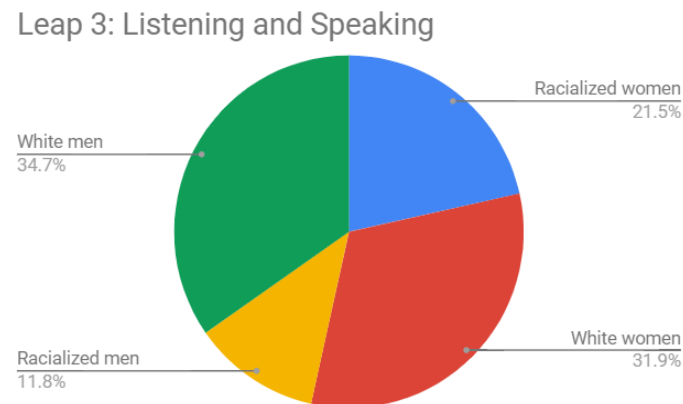


Figure 46: Racial/gender representation in *LEAP 3*.

***21st Century Communication: Listening, Speaking and Critical Thinking* (2018. National Geographic Learning.)**

21st Century Communication differs from the other selected textbooks in that it uses specific TED Talks²⁶ as the realia around which lessons and exercises are formed. Representations of people appear mostly in the form of photographs and video stills from the accompanying TED Talks, as well as in a few illustrations.

21st Century Communication: Listening, Speaking and Critical Thinking

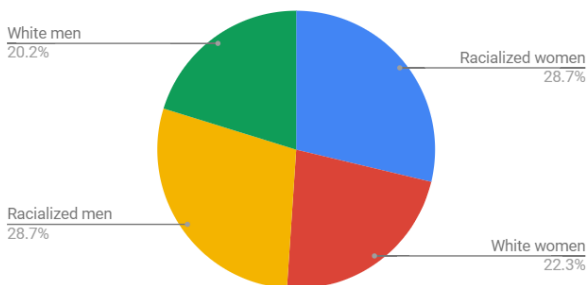


Figure 47: Racial/gender representation in *21st Century Communication*.

21st Century Communication: Listening,

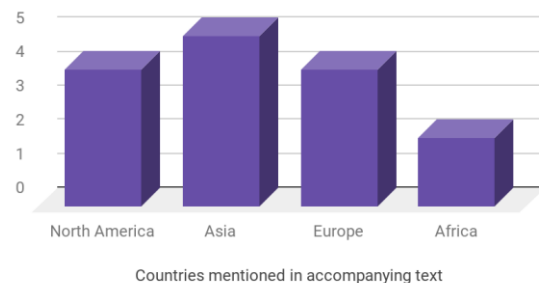


Figure 48: Nations/cultures depicted in *21st Century Communication*.

²⁶ A series of publicly available speeches, originating from the TED (Technology, Entertainment, Design) conferences started in 1984. (Cadwalladr, 2005)

Appendix B

Sample of Data Collection Spreadsheet

Source	Description of scene	White women	Women of colour	Men of colour	White men
21st century communication 3					
p. vi	4 people; previews of TED talk speakers that will be basis of lessons in book	3			1
p. vii	"	1		1	2
p. viii	2 people; preview of book + how to use the lessons	1	1		
p. ix	1 person; preview of book + how to use the lessons	1			
p. 3	1 person; large cover page for chapter	1			
p. 4	1 person; food shop owner as example of entrepreneurship		1		
p. 6	1 person; college graduate in her parents' home as an example of difficulty of finding work	1			
p. 13	1 person; header image for TED talk	1			
p. 20	2 people; 'employees at a small business take a moment to celebrate a success'	1			1
p. 26	2 people; men playing checkers in Morocco			2	
p. 33	1 person; header image for TED talk	1			

Table 2: data collection of pp. vi-33 of *21st Century Communications 3*