

See, Hear, and Speak No Evil: A Content Approach to Evaluating Multicultural Multimedia Materials

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Abstract:

In this article, I offer evaluation criteria for librarians, teachers, parents, and others who are responsible for selecting and providing multicultural multimedia materials (text, sound, and graphics). These criteria can be used to evaluate multicultural content in the context of building library collections, developing programs and readers' advisories, providing Internet links or bookmarking World Wide Web pages, weeding collections, and other activities that entail the assessment of the quality of multicultural multimedia. Previously published guidelines and criteria available to evaluate multicultural materials, whether print or multimedia, were developed for specific types of materials, audiences, or multicultural content and, as such, are limited in their usefulness. The proposed criteria require the examination of four components: objectivity, language, subject mastery, and resources. These criteria are designed to be applied broadly in evaluating multicultural content of any multimedia, for any audience and level of coverage, and in any language.

Article:

With the greater availability of multicultural multimedia materials, libraries have been increasing their multicultural multimedia collections. Multimedia content incorporates multisensory data (text, sound, and graphics) and includes both recent formats, such as CD-ROM products, distributed resources (Internet and online), and laser disks, and older formats, such as videocassettes, floppy disks, films (8 mm and 16 mm), and mixed-media kits.

Multicultural multimedia materials focus on one or more cultures or languages. Multiculturalism is broadly defined as the inclusion of all cultures, where culture includes racial, religious, or social groups and is manifested in customary behaviors, cultural assumptions and values, patterns of thinking, and communicative style.

Currently, libraries lack criteria for evaluating multicultural multimedia materials. The few publications on this topic are limited to specific media, such as software and film. Reference and collection development courses focus on the broader, and often technological, issues of multimedia selection; few courses exist for multicultural resources and services, thus leaving librarians with limited training in developing multicultural multimedia collections. In addition, libraries often do not tap local resources (the multicultural expertise available in our respective communities).

I aim to help remedy this situation with this article. Here I offer criteria that can be used to evaluate the multicultural content of multimedia materials in the context of building library collections, developing programs and readers' advisories, providing Internet links or bookmarking Web pages, weeding collections, developing multimedia resource lists, and other activities that focus on analyzing and determining the multicultural quality of multimedia. The criteria are intended for librarians, teachers, parents, and others who are responsible for providing multicultural information. I have not incorporated technological factors, because such information is readily found in works on evaluating and building multimedia collections.

A note about the producers of multicultural multimedia is needed in order to understand the non-neutrality of these media and their need to be scrutinized. Currently, much of the multicultural multimedia materials are

developed in the western world, especially if we consider information on the World Wide Web (Web or Internet). Of these, a significant number use the English language and are generated in the United States by middle-class white males. Thus, these individuals have developed the new digital technologies and products, and their view of the world is represented in them. Educators have expressed concern that educational software generated within a society's dominant culture will not only contain a very limited selection of the universe of knowledge but will embody a particular vision of legitimate knowledge and culture.(1) This legitimacy is further amplified with the use of quantifiable data, lending computer software an appearance of neutral objectivity. A cultural selection-amplification-reduction phenomenon takes place where "particular views of particular groups are chosen to be amplified while, at the same time, alternative or conflicting images of society or other aspects of culture are reduced or silenced."(2) Research has shown that educational software programs are heavily biased and expose students to dominant explanations, values, beliefs, assumptions, and ideologies and reinforce patterns of global misinformation and social inequalities, such as gender and ethnic bias.(3) Recognizing these biases is the first step in creating criteria for evaluating multicultural multimedia materials.(4)

Literature Review

Most works on evaluation of multicultural materials have focused on ethnic bias and sexism found in the text and illustrations of print library and educational materials. The publication of Larrick's seminal work, "The All-White World of Children's Books," spurred discussion on the lack of diversity in children's books.(5) Works published from the 1970s onward fall into two categories. The majority recommend multicultural books that include annotated reviews or a bibliographical essay and do not state their review criteria.(6) A minority are publications that provide both the evaluation criteria (instrument, checklist, guidelines, or standards) and annotated reviews, which are more informative for reviewers or selectors.(7)

The Racism and Sexism Resource Center for Educators, a division of the Council on Interracial Books for Children, published a number of works in the 1970s and early 1980s on the evaluation of bias in book content.(8) Its brochure *10 Quick Ways to Analyze Children's Books for Racism and Sexism* offers easy-to-follow guidelines for children's librarians.(9) Other published evaluation guidelines present similar criteria or provide criteria with a narrower focus, such as that of specific ethnic groups.(10)

The education literature contains numerous publications on the evaluation of ethnic content in educational materials.(11) Gollnick, Sadker, and Sadker have identified six forms of sex and race bias that should be used to examine instructional materials: invisibility, stereotyping, imbalance/selectivity, unreality, fragmentation/isolation, and linguistic bias.(12) These elements, with the exception of "linguistic bias," are applicable to either text or illustrations found in print materials and, therefore, offer a conceptual rather than a prescriptive approach. These concepts have partially influenced the development of the criteria proposed in this article.

In 1997, *Educational Technology* published a special issue dedicated to making instructional technology more responsive to the diverse backgrounds of students.(13) In one of the articles, Reeves proposed "sensitivity to cultural diversity and pluralism [as] a 'meta-value' that should influence virtually every aspect of human activity, including instructional systems design and evaluation."(14) Likewise, Banks, one of the most influential proponents of multicultural education, expressed concern that "some of the books and other materials on ethnic groups published each year are insensitive, inaccurate, and written for mainstream perspectives and points of view."(15) By using Banks's guidelines, educators have a greater chance of identifying the exceptional materials.

In April 1996, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) adopted a position statement on technology for the learning and development of young children (three to eight years of age) that recognized cultural diversity as a significant concern. It is NAEYC's position that in evaluating the appropriate use of technology, a professional judgment by the teacher is required to determine if a specific use of technology is age appropriate, individually appropriate, and culturally appropriate. Technology can be used to

eliminate stereotypes and to affirm children's diversity, and teachers should actively select software that promotes positive social values.(16) Cultural diversity also has been recognized recently in several evaluation criteria issued for young children's software.(17)

A few works on the evaluation of multicultural multimedia materials have been published, but they are limited to the evaluation of specific formats and their content. These include evaluation criteria for the development of videocassette and 16 mm film collections to service multicultural or multiethnic communities, a review of twenty-five children's software programs, and three analyses of educational software.(18)

Educational software, like textbooks, constitute forms of knowledge control that transmit selected values and role models to students.(19) The following three articles evaluating educational software illustrate the cultural selection, amplification, and reduction process that takes place when computer programs are developed. As Biraimah explained, technology (for example, the telephone) and now educational computer software "amplif[y] selected aspects of the human experiences, while reducing the significance of other experiences."(20) The telephone amplifies sound over distance while simultaneously limiting our ability to use nonverbal forms of communication. Biraimah was concerned that the database software used in K-12 classrooms "amplify selected quantifiable data, while ignoring or reducing other material; and they do so under the guise of neutral objectivity.... And these restraints, in turn, limit the objectivity of solutions arrived at by students using such databases."(21) When she analyzed thirty randomly selected educational software programs used in U.S. schools for their treatment of gender, ethnicity, and multicultural perspectives, Biraimah found that similar to textbooks, if not worse, educational computer software reinforced patterns of global misinformation and social inequalities, such as gender and ethnic bias. Agalianos and Cope discovered in a content analysis of twenty-one primary and secondary educational software programs that the programs were heavily biased and exposed students to dominant explanations, values, beliefs, assumptions, and ideologies.(22) Similarly, in a comprehensive review of The Oregon Trail CD-ROM, Bigelow found:

Loaded with facts, it feels comprehensive. Loaded with people voicing contrasting opinions, it feels balanced. Loaded with choices, it feels democratic. But the simulation begins from no moral or ethical standpoint beyond individual material success; it contains no vision of social or ecological justice, and hence, promotes a full litany of sexist, racist, and imperialist perspectives, as well as exploitive perspectives of the earth. And simultaneously, it hides these biases.(23)

Bigelow concluded that the combination is insidious, making interactive CD-ROMs such as The Oregon Trail more difficult to critique than traditional textbooks and films. It is this type of in-depth critique that is needed and possible with the criteria suggested here; otherwise, librarians and educators will err by relying on software critics who, in the case of The Oregon Trail, gave the original and new versions the highest ratings and recommendations.

As this literature review reveals, the published criteria for evaluating multicultural materials have appealed for cultural accuracy, respect, sensitivity, recognition, objectivity (in contrast to bias), and where appropriate, use of universal issues, concerns, situations, and themes. In the case of children's and educational materials, the way multicultural content impacts a child's self-image is an essential concern. Most of the published literature has focused on providing evaluation criteria for specific types of multicultural materials (e.g., printed books, educational software), for particular audiences (e.g., printed books for children), for evaluating content dealing with specific ethnic groups, or for narrower combined purposes (e.g., American Indian reference work). Therefore, the published criteria, although invaluable, are limited in their application to specific conditions and fail to provide one set of criteria to evaluate any multimedia material on any multicultural topic and language.

Criteria for Evaluation of Multicultural Content on Multimedia Materials

The evaluation of multicultural multimedia information requires knowledge of cultures, languages, the non-neutrality of multimedia materials, and the ways multisensory data (text, sound, and graphics) can introduce

bias in language, subject matter, and visual content. The more knowledge the evaluator has in these areas, the better and critical the evaluation.(24) Based on a conceptual approach, these criteria are used to examine the quality of multicultural content rather than the technological factors associated with multimedia materials.(25)

Development of Criteria

After reviewing prior research and the published literature (see appendix A for a summary of the authenticity/accuracy debate) and drawing on professional expertise and personal experience, four evaluation components have been identified. I propose that (1) content objectivity, (2) language use, (3) subject mastery, and (4) resources are valid and vital elements in the critical examination and assessment of multicultural content in multimedia materials.(26) Instead of a checklist or guidelines, the approach used in this article is a conceptual one, whereby the criteria have been organized into the four components in order to identify and show bias in multicultural multimedia.(27) These criteria represent those factors or characteristics that should be observed in the process of selecting, evaluating, or weeding multicultural multimedia collections, recommending and using multicultural multimedia materials for library and educational programs, and developing multicultural multimedia resource lists.

In a creative context, biased language and graphic matter might be used. In a multilingual context, terminology that is appropriate for one language might not be appropriate in another. For example, the Spanish word for the color black is "negro," but such a word appearing on a Web page could be offensive to Americans who don't know Spanish.

The use of certain symbols, icons, or colors might be appropriate or meaningful in one cultural context but not another. For example, in Chinese culture, the colors red and gold are very auspicious and used extensively, and white, not black, is the color of mourning and death. The evaluator needs to consider the value of prejudiced materials, weighing the extent to which it misrepresents and offends members of the cultural group involved, and the degree to which organizational objectives are achieved by acquiring or maintaining such materials. Publication (or copyright) date and universality are not criteria recommended here, because their usefulness in determining the quality of multicultural content is limited. The publication date can provide evidence of the historical accuracy of a publication or the historical context in which a work was produced, but it is not always a valid measure. To determine historical or situational validity of a work, it is more accurate to examine the actual content. The use of universal issues, situations, or themes with which everyone can identify is ideal in order to demonstrate common values and shared circumstances to gain a global perspective of the world, but it is also important to demonstrate the unique aspects of a culture, and the unique conditions and experiences of cultural groups. The criteria presented below advocate for legitimacy, pride, respect, appreciation, and acceptance of cultures, including one's own and that of others.

Evaluation Criteria

The multicultural evaluation criteria listed in table 1 emphasize the evaluation of subject content--that is, the examination of multimedia materials for multicultural substance, biases, and inaccuracies. Each of the four components--objectivity, language use, subject mastery, and resources--is applicable to text, sound, and graphics and is made up of specific evaluation characteristics. Hypothetical examples are provided to illustrate the evaluative characteristics of each criterion.

Table 1
Evaluation Criteria for Multicultural Content on Multimedia Materials

Criteria	Target of Evaluation
Objectivity/Bias usually a result of a form of prejudice, such as racism, sexism,	Text, sound, or graphics

ethnocentrism,
homophobia, and ageism;
can have a
hidden agenda or be
subtle propaganda

Language Text or sound

Subject Mastery Text, sound, or graphics

Resources Text, sound, or graphics

Criteria Characteristics

Objectivity/Bias * Imbalance/selectivity (one
usually a result of a perspective)
form of prejudice, * Unrealistic/misrepresentation
such as racism, sexism, (unrealistic portrayal of history
ethnocentrism, or contemporary life experiences)
homophobia, and ageism; * Invisibility (omission)
hidden agenda or be can have a Fragmentation/isolation
subtle propaganda (separate treatment)
* Stereotyping

Language * Language diversity (monolingual,
bilingual, multilingual,
and nonwritten languages, such
as Braille and sign language)
* Language variance (dialect,
regionalism, slang, colloquialism,
idiom, creole, pidgin, accent, and
language complexity)
* Language bias, such as racist,
sexist, homophobic, and
ageist language use (loaded
terminology; offensive or
derogatory terminology: ridicule,
slur, and slander; exaggeration
of accent and mannerism;
unnecessary use of
accent or mannerism;
mispronunciation; tonal quality;
accurate representation of written
script; and inaccurate
translations)

Subject Mastery * Scope (breadth/depth as intended,
complexity)
* Authority (established reputation)
* Authenticity (true to culture)
* Accuracy (error-free, factually
correct)

Resources

- * Imbalance/selectivity (one perspective)
- * Invisibility (omission)
- * Scope (breadth/depth)
- * Diversity of formats and types

Objectivity/Bias. Multicultural bias (in contrast to objectivity) can be found in the textual, graphical, or aural elements of multimedia and is usually a result of a form of prejudice, such as racism, ethnocentrism, sexism, homophobia, or ageism. The absence of objectivity might be inadvertent, due to the author's lack of cultural knowledge, or it can be purposive, such as when the author has a hidden agenda or is subtly promoting propaganda. This subtle form of bias is found in each of the bias characteristics below, but it is harder to detect because it is typically indirect, found below the surface, and not readily apparent. Often, works on a controversial topic or issue have a hidden agenda. For example, a laser disk documentary on Mexican traditional medicine would fit in the Unrealistic/Misrepresentation category described below, because of its reference as a primitive or folk medicine, giving the sense that it is a form of healing that might be substandard, not fully established, proven, or acceptable to Western society. A self-help Web page for Latinas and Chicanas would be classed in the Imbalance/Selectivity category because it includes topics relating to marriage, children, and family planning, thus offering only domestic options as a life choice. It is important to keep in mind that the following characteristics of objectivity and bias need to be considered in multimedia terms. Each characteristic needs to be used to analyze all aspects of a multimedia product, such as the music (background or not), sounds, moving and still images, and text, as appropriate.

* **Imbalance/Selectivity.** This form of bias takes place when there is selective presentation of a culture, which results in exposure to one particular perspective and interpretation, usually the one reflecting the dominant culture. The multimedia creators leave out or give less emphasis to what they consider to be less significant. This cultural control provides imbalance in the coverage of the topic and minimizes the role of minority groups of all types. For example, a video on the civil rights movement in the United States might be presented from a male African American perspective, without any oral or graphic reference to the role of Asian Americans, Jews, or women in the movement. A Web site on world travel might only describe, illustrate, and provide links to travel locations in developed countries. A mixed-media kit on multicultural literature and music might only contain stories and songs with origins in North America and Europe, not including those from other continents or regions.

* **Unrealistic/Misrepresentation.** Bias of this type is found in the unrealistic portrayal of history or contemporary life experiences; often either the negative or positive aspects of the cultural topic are emphasized, or controversial and unpleasant issues are neglected. In the case of materials for a younger audience, a cultural topic can be oversimplified, providing children with a superficial knowledge and misrepresentation of the culture, event, or people. For example, misrepresentation might be evidenced in a video on Japanese American internment camps in the United States by portraying internment as a way to protect people and help them lead normal lives, and not addressing the dysfunctional, disruptive, or other negative aspects of these camps. A career Web site for women that only provides information on traditional women's careers and jobs is not realistic in addressing the needs of women. A CD-ROM on Christopher Columbus for children might emphasize his travels as adventures and the spirit of discovery (the background music and illustrations also reflect this tenor) and not mention his actual travel destination when his ships landed in the Americas and the devastation that followed.

* **Invisibility.** This type of bias occurs where one characteristic, aspect, or group is not covered. This omission or absence of coverage of the cultural topic reveals its insignificance in the larger societal context. For example, in a video documentary on the Holocaust, groups such as the Roma (gypsies), Catholics, or gays might not be

addressed at all, and in a video on Japanese American internment there might be no mention of the Japanese Latino internees. A CD-ROM on Chinese culture might not include any of China's ethnic minority cultures.

* **Fragmentation/Isolation.** This form of bias gives separate treatment to cultural topics or groups and separates them from the main body of a work or the larger society. The treatment becomes a bias when it is meant to be exclusionary rather than a separate and equal method of organization and presentation of the topic or cultural groups. For example, a mixed-media kit for high schools on religious festivals and holidays might primarily emphasize the Judeo-Christian tradition, and only in the final unit cover other festivals and holidays. A Web site on American music might describe and include sound clips on many forms of music and include photographs of famous musicians, but only link to other pages for jazz and blues.

* **Stereotyping.** In this aspect of bias in context or content, commonly held misconceptions, inappropriate generalizations, or set characteristics are attributed to all members of a group or to the whole culture. The use of stereotypes overlooks the complexity and diversity of cultures, and the uniqueness and distinctiveness among individuals or subgroups within a culture. Stereotypes often perpetuate incorrect images of a culture. For example, a European Web site for gay travelers might include clubs, discos, performing arts, accommodations, and restaurants, but not historical sites and monuments, recreational parks, or other forms of culture and entertainment. This same Web site might have a pair of clogs as the icon for the Netherlands and a frog as the icon for France. A martial arts simulation game may have an Asian man as the "bad guy" and a Caucasian man as the hero. Men might portray the major roles in an adventure game while women and minorities might be subservient or commodities.

Language. The use of language, whether written or oral, as prose, lyric, slogan, or other forms, is another main factor to consider in evaluation of multicultural multimedia materials. The various language characteristics might not be present in all multicultural multimedia materials, but they should be evaluated based on the needs of the audience, language proficiency and literacy level of audience, and focus of the work. Each characteristic below needs to be used to analyze all linguistic aspects of a multimedia product, including the type of language and words used, the way a written script is represented, and the way a language is spoken, as appropriate.

* **Language Diversity.** A multimedia work can use one or more languages, or a nonwritten one, such as Braille or sign language. Technology facilitates the translation of languages and multilingual presentation, and multimedia are able to present languages in both written and oral forms. The more languages offered, the better the accessibility of a work to multilingual communities while potentially increasing the complexity to use it. For example, CD-ROM software for children in two or more languages increases the accessibility of the same material to speakers of different languages, to bi- or multilingual children, to language learning and maintenance, and to bilingual education. A bi- or multilingual Web site makes its contents more accessible worldwide but adds minor technological complexities, such as the additional step of hyperlinking to the page with the language of interest and installing necessary viewing software.

* **Language Variance.** Variations in language exist due to temporal, regional, or contextual conditions. They include dialects, regionalisms, historical or ancient forms of a language, slang, colloquialisms, idioms, creole, pidgin, accents, and language at different levels of comprehension, such as technical, popular, or simple. These variant uses of language should be appropriate in the context of the work and used realistically, not forced or exaggerated. The level of specificity and sophistication of language used should be related to the needs of the audience. Evaluation for language variance and its appropriateness for local needs should be conducted by someone not just fluent in the language but also knowledgeable of its temporal, regional, or contextual differences. A CD-ROM story in Spanish should be reviewed for any use of regionalism or an accent that might be difficult for a diverse Spanish-speaking population to understand. A video in Cantonese without Chinese subtitles would not be accessible to all Chinese speakers. A CD-ROM used in an introductory French language class depicting French history and culture should contain language that is historically appropriate, written as well as spoken, and at a comprehension level for beginner French speakers.

* **Language Bias.** Bias in language can take the form of racist, sexist, homophobic, or ageist language use. An example of racist language is the use of the word "chink" to refer to a person of Chinese descent, and the use of "girl" for a woman and "he" as a generic term for an individual for sexist language. Other forms of language bias include loaded, offensive, or derogatory terminology, ridicule, slur and slander, exaggeration, or unnecessary use of accent and mannerisms. Tonal quality, voice, and accents can have subtle forms of linguistic bias. Mispronunciations, inaccurate translations, incorrect representations of written language, especially non-Roman script, are not acceptable forms of language use. An example of linguistic bias could be the use of the phrase "exotic Chinatown" on a Web site for San Francisco tourists when other ethnic cultures are not presented in the same manner. In the Japanese language version of an Italian film, the use of nonnative Japanese speakers for the voiceover would be offensive to a Japanese audience. A computer adventure game that is supposed to depict an Indian character speaking Hindi but instead uses gibberish with an exaggerated accent is an example of ridicule. The use of such terms as "Dutch treat" and "Indian giver" in multimedia is offensive because these terms are inaccurate portrayals of the cultures concerned and result in inappropriate stereotypes.

In the case of language bias, it is important to stress that the context in which these kinds of terms are used is critical, whether they are used within or outside of a creative work, spoken by members of the ethnic group involved, or directed toward an audience of the targeted ethnic group. Some instances of such use can be appropriate or acceptable, while others are unsuitable and offensive.

Subject Mastery. Cultural bias can be found in the coverage, treatment, and making of any particular element (text, sound, or graphics) of a multimedia product. This bias occurs when the cultural topic (individuals, groups, events, music, dance, arts, language, values, traditions, and other practices) does not receive the coverage intended and there is a lack of subject mastery by the creators of the multimedia.

* **Scope (breadth or depth, complexity).** A topic should have the scope (breadth or depth) intended by its authors and other producers. It should present the complexity, narrowly or broadly, of the cultural topic. "Depth" refers to coverage of a topic in a detailed manner and "breadth" refers to coverage that spans the entire topic. An example of lack of depth would be a video documentary on American Indians that covers just the last fifty years instead of the whole spectrum of this group's history. An example of lack of breadth would be a Web page of African American music where the rap category only includes videoclips and music samples of mainstream rap artists.

* **Authority (established reputation).** In another aspect of subject mastery, authority, or expertise, a work is created by experts (individuals, organizations). Expertise is a result of reputation gained through academic training or extensive experience, or established or proven through prior work. As well, authority is reflected in the way that factual evidence is presented or documented in a work by footnotes or references. For example, a Web site by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People would have been developed by experts who represent the national interests of African Americans and have extensive experience advocating their rights. A film produced by UCLA's Latin American Center on indigenous groups of Latin America would have tapped its academic expertise.

* **Authenticity (true to culture).** A work is authentic when it is realistic and true to the cultures presented, to the situation, and to life based on the actual experience or perspective of the culture itself or created by members of the particular cultures. It presents the internal perspective rather than external perspective of a culture. An example would be a laser disk on American Indians produced by an Australian filmmaker that focuses on cultural artifacts and celebrations with no reference made to issues of cultural preservation, family life, and other aspects of daily life.

Subtle inaccuracies can occur when the creators, including writers, musicians, artists, and other producers, do not belong to the culture or don't have experience regarding the culture. For example, a children's CD-ROM on birthday celebrations around the world could show a Chinese girl giving a clock as a gift to her mother and the birthday meal being eaten with Japanese style chopsticks. The incorrect chopsticks might be easy for someone

with basic knowledge of the Chinese culture to recognize, but it would require actual cultural experience to know what constitutes an appropriate gift in specific cultural settings. A clock in Chinese culture signifies the marking of time and the approach of death, so that this gift would make it appear that the Chinese daughter is wishing death for her mother.

* **Accuracy.** Another important aspect of subject treatment is accuracy, being error-free, factually correct, historically and situationally accurate, and using appropriate labels. All aspects of a work should be accurate. A film on the life of Mexican artist Frida Kahlo, or another historical figure, should be historically and situationally appropriate in terms of language, dress, music, living conditions, and other factors. Labeling should be appropriate, based on the preference of the cultural groups involved, the locale, and time period. For example, a Web site on artists might use the terms American Indians rather than Native Americans, and African Americans rather than blacks. The context, audience, and point of view need to be considered in evaluating the accuracy of a work, since one label might be appropriate within one context and not appropriate in a different context. For example, a video on major events in Los Angeles might refer to the L.A. "riots" or "rebellion" or "uprising," depending on whose perspective is being presented: mainstream media typically use the term "riots," while the ethnic communities involved tend to use the term "uprising." Poor or inaccurate organization of information and labeling can result in the invisibility of the provided information. For example, a Web site that has grouped information on Asians and Asian Americans using the label Asian Resources makes the latter invisible, and thus, inaccessible.

Resources. While the preceding factors were concerned with evaluation of the multicultural substance found within a work, any listed resources that extend beyond the body of the work also need to be examined. Where applicable, multimedia materials may list resources to enhance, support, or expand the content presented. By examining the resources offered, users can be informed about what was used to develop the work and what is being recommended to further pursue the topic. Resources come in the form of lists of publications, organizations, collections (e.g., photo, video, etc.), databanks, or individuals, and links to electronic sites (e.g., Web pages, gopher sites, and e-mail addresses). When examining or reviewing these resources, several of the characteristics already mentioned and discussed should be used. These include: imbalance/selectivity, invisibility, and scope (breadth/depth).

These three characteristics can be considered separately, as described earlier, but they can all be applicable to one particular case because of the overlap in the conceptual nature of the terms. For example, the three biases can be found in a Web page on Asian American foods that only provides information and links to Web sites on Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Filipino foods, cooking, cookbooks, restaurants, grocery stores, and chefs in the U.S. The site is biased by its (1) imbalance in selecting to only including foods from the four major Asian American ethnic groups in the United States, (2) invisibility in omitting foods from other Asian American ethnic groups, and (3) scope by not delivering the coverage intended.

* **Diversity of formats, perspectives, and languages.** The best set of resources includes a diversity of formats, perspectives, and languages to reflect the multimedia and multilingual nature of the work.

Conclusion

When examining a particular work, it can sometimes be difficult to identify and evaluate all aspects of the four major factors or criteria, but it is important to be aware of their existence and significance in the process of evaluating and selecting multicultural multimedia materials. It is essential to consider them all and apply the relevant ones for a particular work and targeted audience. In this way, quality, useful, and used collections of multicultural multimedia materials can be developed.

Currently, the quantity of multicultural multimedia is still low and subject coverage is still sparse. Therefore, providers of multicultural multimedia not only need to evaluate these materials for their cultural integrity but, as in the case of printed materials, they need to advocate for the production of more materials, of the highest quality. With the availability of multicultural multimedia in libraries, schools, home, and the workplace,

multisensory features have the ability to promote learning in multiple ways. However, the excitement for these educational possibilities needs to be tempered. The problems of cultural selection, amplification, and reduction encountered in educational software programs are likely to be encountered in other multimedia. Therefore, the solution is found in not limiting learning to published resources but going beyond them to tap the resources in nonpublished forms, such as archives, artifacts, and community experts.

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- (8.) Publications by the Council on Interracial Books for Children, Racism and Sexism Resource Center for Educators include *Human and Anti-Human Values in Children's Books: A Content Rating Instrument for Educators and Concerned Parents* (New York: Council on Interracial Books for Children, 1976) and *Stereotypes, Distortions, and Omissions in U.S. History Textbooks* (New York: Council on Interracial Books for Children, 1977).
- (9.) Council on Interracial Books for Children, Racism and Sexism Resource Center for Educators, *10 Quick Ways to Analyze Children's Books for Racism and Sexism* (New York: Council on Interracial Books for Children, 1979).
- (10.) Janice J. Beaty, *Building Bridges with Multicultural Picture Books: For Children 3-5* (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1997), 24: See for example Suzanne Lo and Ginny Lee, "Asian Images in Children's Books: What Stories Do We Tell Our Children?" *Emergency Librarian* 20 (1993): 14-18, and Barbara J. Kuipers, *American Indian Reference and Resource Books for Children and Young Adults*, 2d ed. (Englewood, Colo.: Libraries Unlimited, 1995).

- (11.) In addition, educational standards with which education districts must comply might be available at the state level. For example, technology resources used to teach that the California K-12 curriculum had to comply with standards established by the California State Department of Education, "Appendix D: Legal Compliance. Standards for Evaluation of Instructional Materials with Respect to Social Content," in *Guidelines for the Evaluation of Instructional Technology Resources for California Schools*. Accessed April 13, 2000, <http://clearinghouse.k12.ca.us>, 1996.
- (12.) Donna Gollnick, Myra Sadker, and David Sadker, "Beyond the Dick and Jane Syndrome: Confronting Sex Bias in Instructional Materials," in *Sex Equity Handbook for Schools*, eds. Myra Pollack Sadker and David Miller Sadker (New York: Longman, 1982), 60-95.
- (13.) Gary C. Powell, ed., *Educational Technology* 37, no. 2 (1997). Special issue for those who wish to make educational technology more responsive to learners' diverse backgrounds.
- (14.) Thomas C. Reeves, "An Evaluator Looks at Cultural Diversity," *Educational Technology* 37, no. 2 (Mar./Apr. 1997): 27. Reeves offers a rating scale to determine multicultural sensitivity in instructional materials but does not state what rating value is indicative of strong multicultural sensitivity.
- (15.) James A. Banks, *Teaching Strategies for Ethnic Studies*, 6th ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1997), 124.
- (16.) National Association for the Education of Young Children, "NAEYC Position Statement: Technology and Young Children--Ages Three through Eight," *Young Children* 51 (Sept. 1996): 11-16.
- (17.) Daniel D. Shade, "Software Evaluation," *Young Children* 51 (Sept. 1996): 17-21, and Virginia A. Walter, "Starting Early: Multimedia for the Tricycle Set," *Book Links* 6 (May 1997): 26-33.
- (18.) Barbara L. Flynn, "Developing Media Collections to Serve Multicultural/Multiethnic Communities," *The Acquisitions Librarian* no. 9/10 (1993): 29-40; Lyn Miller-Lachmann, "Bytes and Bias: Eliminating Cultural Stereotypes from Educational Software," *School Library Journal* 40 (Nov. 1994): 26-30; Agalianos and Cope, "Information Technology and Knowledge: The Non-Neutrality of Content-Specific Educational Software"; Bill Bigelow, "On the Road to Cultural Bias: A Critique of 'The Oregon Trail' CD-ROM," *Language Arts* 74, no. 2 (1997): 84-93; and Biraimah, "The Non-Neutrality of Educational Computer Software."
- (19.) Biraimah, "The Non-Neutrality of Educational Computer Software."
- (20.) *Ibid.*, 283.
- (21.) *Ibid.*, 284.
- (22.) Agalianos and Cope, "Information Technology and Knowledge."
- (23.) Bigelow, "On the Road to Cultural Bias: A Critique of 'The Oregon Trail' CD-ROM," 90-91.
- (24.) Evaluators require cultural preparedness and sensitivity; otherwise, they can miss nuances--temporal, regional, or contextual. In cases where there is absence of cultural expertise, assistance in evaluation is recommended. Evaluators can draw on individuals (e.g., community members, faculty, etc.); ethnic electronic discussion lists (see for example ALA's Web page at www.ala.org); and ethnic community, library, or educational organizations (e.g., Center for the Study of Books in Spanish for Children and Adolescents, http://public.csusm.edu/campus_centers/csb/1999; National Association for Bilingual Education, www.nabe.org).
- (25.) Libraries collect and provide access to multimedia materials that address diverse topics. Therefore, general selection criteria for multimedia materials, which are readily available, are not addressed here, e.g., the consideration of the cost, technical expertise, and equipment necessary to use and maintain multimedia materials, the extent of interactivity, the ease of use of an interface, the capacity to hyperlink, the quality of the packaging, and the durability of the product.
- (26.) The criteria attempt to be broad to examine the multisensory media, text, sound, and graphics of multicultural multimedia materials (refer to working definitions in the first section of this paper) of any reading level, audience, language, and cultural topic. Text refers to written language, meaning or knowledge represented in the text used, and the use of lyrics in one or more languages. Sound deals with spoken language, music, and other aural elements. Graphics deal with illustrations, photographs, videoclips, animation, icons, written script, colors, and other visual elements.
- (27.) The criteria are made up of concepts to allow for a qualitative critical review, because the types of multimedia, topics, and uses and objectives of the materials can be varied. Quantitative methods, such as a checklist or rating system, are more suitable for evaluation with a narrower focus on a particular type of multimedia, content, or audience. These criteria are not meant to provide a conclusive decision for each work in

all circumstances but to allow for informed decision making in order to meet the multicultural needs of a targeted community or specific situation.

Appendix A

Summary of the Authenticity vs. Accuracy Debate

The development of the proposed multicultural evaluation criteria was informed by an understanding of authenticity and accuracy, the two most contentious issues in any discussion about writing and evaluating multicultural materials. Furthermore, the debate is more fervent in the discussion about writers of children's multicultural books. Authenticity refers to a work that is written by a member of the respective culture and accuracy refers to the error-free representation of a culture. The debate is split between those who consider a work accurate only if it is authentic (provides the insider and lived perspective) and those who maintain that writers should be able to "trust their passions [and cross cultures] while still demanding the highest standards of artistry, honesty, and understanding," according to Aronson, who makes his argument with noteworthy examples of cultural crossing in music.[1] Seto, an Asian American of mixed-race, considers such actions in the printed world to be cultural thievery.[2] She likens writers, in many cases Euro-Americans, who write outside of their culture, to children who wear Halloween masks in order to portray non-Europeans (e.g., Little Black Sambo, ninjas, and samurais). In other words, the Halloween costumes are racist misrepresentations but considered cute or funny or even poetic by mainstream Americans.

According to Rochman, when striving for authenticity writers of the particular culture can get too bogged down in details and ethnic minority writers might be confined to only writing about their own culture.[3] The gap in the debate can be bridged by determining the reason writers are crossing cultural borders and jumping on the multicultural literary bandwagon. If the reason lies in following their passion, as Aronson suggests, then it will be more likely that the necessary time and research will inform the work to achieve accuracy.

It is not acceptable to overlook a few minor inaccuracies in illustrations if the story is creative and captures the imagination, as suggested in one article.[4] By doing so, such authors would be committing cultural imperialism.[5] These authors are not recognizing their privilege of originating from the dominant culture that is taught in U.S. classrooms and having readers who would be able to recognize creative modifications to the dominant culture. On the other hand, readers who are being introduced to a specific culture for the first time will have no prior knowledge of it and even though they might enjoy or appreciate a work, they will take away with them incorrect notions of the particular culture. Other biases that might occur in writing originate from too much trust in the objectivity and truth of published research data. Anyone who solely relies on published materials to learn about a culture needs to recognize that the content of any work is selective and limited to what information the author was able to access and chose to include.

With such an ongoing debate, writers of any background will be held to a higher standard of accuracy and publishers will require someone with firsthand knowledge of the cultural topic of the book, if not the author or illustrator, to be involved in its publication. Salle presents both sides of the argument and advocates for librarians to be open-minded so they can evaluate multicultural literature regardless of the ethnoracial background of the writer.[6]

The debate will no doubt continue, and inevitably publishers, authors, and readers will influence what gets published. The most important consideration is accuracy, without compromising on creativity. Writers should have the freedom to write about any culture they choose, and should have the honesty to recognize their limitations and integrity to learn as much as possible about the cultural topic of concern. However, when a work can be written and illustrated by someone of the same culture it gives voice to the people whose culture is invisible to mainstream U.S. society.

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[2.] Thelma Seto, "Multiculturalism Is Not Halloween," *Horn Book* 71 (Mar./Apr. 1995): 169-74.

- [3.] Hazel Rochman, *Against Borders: Promoting Books for a Multicultural World* (Chicago: American Library Assn., 1993).
- [4.] Jane Kurtz, "Multicultural Children's Books: The Subtle Tug-of-War," *School Library Journal* 42 (Feb. 1996): 40-41.
- [5.] Seto, "Multiculturalism Is Not Halloween," 171.
- [6.] Ellen Salle, "Ethnicity and Authenticity, or: How Black (Hispanic, Native American, etc.) Do I Gotta Be?" *Emergency Librarian* 22 (Nov./Dec. 1994): 22-27.