
CULTURE AND CONFLICT: THE PORTRAYAL OF BLACKS IN U.S. CHILDREN'S PICTURE BOOKS THROUGH THE MID- AND LATE-TWENTIETH CENTURY*

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Using three sets of children's books, we document changes in racial images and examine the relationship between culture, gatekeeping, and conflict in society. In terms of the representation of Blacks, four findings stand out. First, the portrayal of Black characters over time is nonlinear and can be divided into reasonably distinct phases: declining representation from the late 1930s through the late 1950s, nearly zero representation from that point through 1964, a dramatic increase from the late 1960s to the early 1970s, and a leveling off after 1975. Second, images vary significantly over time. For example, in award-winning books, Black characters reappear during the latter half of the 1960s in "safe," distant images. Third, the depiction of intimate, egalitarian, interracial interaction and the portrayal of Black adults as focal characters are rare. Fourth, gains in multicultural portrayals have not been maintained consistently across the different sets of children's books, with prize-winning books more likely to depict Blacks. We link these trends to gatekeeping activities and to strains in Black-White relations in the larger society. Specifically, advertisements from publishing houses are more likely to include Black characters than are award panel selections or editorials in leading professional journals. Prize-winning books continue a trend toward increased representation of Blacks and account for most of the books featuring only Black characters. Finally, when African American challenges to the dominant societal norms are strongest (measured by the numbers of conflicts, protests, and legal actions) Blacks virtually disappear from U.S. children's picture books.

One of the most enduring struggles in the United States centers on social relationships between Blacks and Whites. This struggle has produced not only dramatic changes in the legal, social, and economic

power of African Americans, but also changes in cultural portrayals of race and race relations. Accompanying the social oppression of Blacks in the United States has been, in Tuchman's (1978) term, their "symbolic annihilation." Blacks have been ignored, stereotyped, or demeaned in cultural images. For example, in the early part of this

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century, popular cultural objects that degraded Blacks (e.g., Black caricatures on salt shakers) reflected their low social status, served as a mechanism of social control, and alleviated status anxiety among Whites (Dubin 1987). As the civil rights movement began to unravel the tripartite system of economic, political, and personal oppression (Morris 1984), it also challenged the symbolic embodiments of domination.

Cultural images are intimately tied to these social relations and to power shifts through market, organizational, creative, and legal factors (Gans 1979; Griswold 1981; Peterson 1976). During "unsettled" times of heightened conflict, when social movements are attempting to gain social and cultural power, cultural producers face the challenge of presenting "collective" sentiments among the tensions, struggles, and crises of contested norms (Dubin 1987; Swidler 1986; Wuthnow and Witten 1988). Linking social and cultural change articulates more fully and in a more nuanced way the practices and values of an era (Williams 1981). Exploring cultural continuities and changes that are an intricate part of critical periods in history furthers our understanding of the interconnections between symbolic and social relations.

We examine how race relations are manifest in one cultural form over time and how power struggles, reflected in racial conflict in the larger society, relate to patterns of symbolic representation. We focus on the portrayal of Blacks in U.S. children's picture books from 1937 to 1993. First we describe, using quantitative and qualitative methods, the extent and character of the portrayal of Blacks and of Black-White interaction over time. Second, we link these portrayals to tensions in U.S. race relations and to cultural gatekeeping. This examination of changing images in popular culture provides a dynamic view of how social relations and ideological challenges to them are represented in simple yet powerful tales for children.

CULTURE AND SOCIAL CHANGE: BLACK-WHITE RELATIONS AND CHILDREN'S PICTURE BOOKS

Schudson (1989) argues that the study of cultural objects, while not an exhaustive account of culture, provides a key and privileged ac-

cess to it. Children's picture books, by his definition, are potent cultural objects—they are readily available, have rhetorical force, resonate with children and adults, and are retained in institutions. In addition, the intended clarity and moral certainty with which adults provide children with tales of their world offer a fortuitous opportunity to examine social relations and belief systems.

Bettelheim (1977) contends that literature represents one of the most powerful vehicles through which children assimilate their cultural heritage. The depiction of race relations to the newest members of a society via children's picture books subtly colors children's understanding of status arrangements, social boundaries, and power. As social significance is manifest through the presence and varied depictions of a social group, so too can the devaluation of groups be transmitted through "symbolic annihilation"—absence, stereotyping, and trivialization (Tuchman 1978).

Previous studies of children's books indicate that depictions of African Americans have been stereotyped and narrowly focused (Klein 1985; Larrick 1965; Sadker and Sadker 1977). Blacks tend to be relatively invisible in children's literature, and when they do appear they are depicted in negative ways, especially prior to 1945 (Children's Literature Review Board 1977). Research on other cultural objects such as newspapers, television, magazine advertisements, popular novels, cartoons, and motion pictures across many time periods generally point to lower visibility and more constrained portrayals of Black characters compared to White ones (Humphrey and Schuman 1984; Merelman 1992; Thibodeau 1989; Van Deburg 1984).

Controversy exists over whether this representation has improved. Claims that the portrayal of Blacks has improved over recent decades are countered by concerns that the number of children's books dealing with Blacks has declined in recent years (Miller 1986; Sims 1985). Rather than a simple depiction of whether images are better or worse, we expect a more complex web of symbolic race relations throughout recent U.S. history. Social and cultural advances are often accompanied by countervailing retreats. As Allen and Farley (1986) document, we can easily sketch a glowing picture of ra-

cial progress (e.g., increasing Black voter registration, higher educational and occupational attainment, and a fading of traditional social stereotypes), or with equal persuasiveness, a dismal view (e.g., low college attendance and graduation rates, high Black unemployment, Black-on-Black violence, and new subtle racial stereotypes). Stereotypes of Blacks may not have been eliminated but changed in character, taking subtler and more indirect forms (Jackman 1994; Karins, Coffman, and Walters 1969; Pettigrew 1985).

Literary work on racial images during a key era of social change suggests such a paradox. Before the Civil War, when great social restriction for African Americans existed, Blacks sometimes appeared as multi-dimensional central characters in juvenile novels (Pickering 1980). For example, Harris's *Uncle Remus* tales reveals a deep interest in Black life and folk stories of the plantation. After the Civil War and throughout the early twentieth century, however, Black characters were absent from the most prominent works for children (e.g., Alger or Fosdick novels), and, when they were portrayed, Blacks were "imprisoned in a comic stereotype," portrayed as "they shuffled along smiling on the fringe of the narrative" (Pickering 1980:229; also see Madsen 1980). This literary description bears a close correspondence to Woodward's (1974) insights on the complexity of Black-White relations before and after the Civil War. He notes greater interracial contact in the slave-owning South and greater segregation in the North before the War. The postwar period saw a receding of intimate contact between Blacks and Whites in the South and greater social distance generally.

Thus, we are unlikely to see a simple relationship between social phenomena and the quantity or quality of cultural representations of subordinated groups. When the position of Blacks has been less challenged or when relations between Whites and Blacks are more clearly defined by social custom or law, portrayals may not necessarily be fewer or uniformly negative. However, when social norms defining Black-White interactions are contested and unsettled, images may not reflect this decreasing subordination, but rather may depict more qualified or subtle stereotypes or retreat from challenges to norms en-

tirely by limiting portrayals, creating more or continued social distance (Jackman 1994).

Cultural objects are sites of struggle along the racial fault line in the U.S. cultural landscape (Erikson 1976; Gamson et al. 1992). Cultural institutions, in subtle and not so subtle ways, recreate dominant systems of order (Gitlin 1980; Lamont and Fournier 1992), yet cultural schema are inherently transposable and hold a potential for reproduction as well as the capacity for change (Sewell 1992). Social movements present both problems and opportunities to artists, publishers, editors, and award panels. In unsettled times, new ideologies compete with established traditions, making the "highly uncertain environment" (Hirsch 1972) which cultural producers face even more uncertain. The implicit rules, the "business as usual" mentality of what is acceptable and appealing to the public, what the public buy and what award panels select as "distinguished" are often laid bare and held up to scrutiny during times of social change.

We argue that attempts to rearrange power, which are reflected in racial conflict, change the way in which artists and cultural gatekeepers draw from their cultural "tool kits" (Swidler 1986). Periods of contested race relations should exhibit altered symbolic representation of Blacks in U.S. children's literature. Radical changes in race relations during the civil rights era were preceded by legislative, migratory, organizational, and ideological developments in the 1930s. However, World War II dramatically destabilized Black-White relations (McAdam 1982; Morris 1984; Woodward 1974). We expect this period of high uncertainty and radical change, the years of rising Black insurgency from World War II to the mid 1960s, to present a crisis in symbolic representation.

We also consider the production of culture—in which power and control over cultural representations are defined in terms of the industrial and organizational processes (Turow 1984). We examine how cultural gatekeepers, those who determine which images will be available to the public, may be influenced by racial tensions in society. We argue that what these gatekeepers promote influences future symbolic representations. We consider two aspects of gatekeeping. First, we assess whether award-winning

books, whose images are widely distributed and modeled, present a different set of racial images than do other books. Consideration of two distinct sectors of the market for children's books, the library market and the mass market, provides insight into how images in "the best" books differ from those in "ordinary" books. Those charged with bestowing honors may be more dramatically affected by contested norms of social relationships, knowing that their choices will be highly scrutinized and culturally esteemed. Second, we consider changes in publishers' advertisements and editors' selections of images that appear in specialized professional journals. Examining the choices of panels that accord prestige to particular books as well as to the marketers and editors who choose from the wide array of potential representations of Blacks allows us to see more complex aspects of the relationship between conflict and culture. Not only are the gatekeeping efforts of award panels, marketers, and editors important for understanding the cultural production of contested symbols, but these groups influence subsequent images in children's books. For example, editors in the library market look to award-winning books when making decisions about future books (Turow 1982, 1984).

In summary, then, we pose two research questions. First, we examine trends in the visibility of Black characters in children's picture books and the substantive nature of these portrayals over time. We expect that trends in the symbolic representation of Blacks will not be linear in nature but will vary systematically from 1937 to 1993. Second, we seek to explain why images change over time by exploring the roles of racial conflict and cultural gatekeeping.

DATA AND MEASURES

Data

Our study spans the period from the late 1930s, when major publishing efforts and awards in children's literature began, to the 1990s. We consider three sets of books. (1) One set includes picture books that received the Caldecott Medal or were designated Caldecott Honor books for high quality illustration. These awards have been given annu-

ally since 1938 and include 235 books published from 1937 to 1993). Among the most prestigious and influential books in children's literature, they are targeted to a narrow market and are relatively expensive. (2) We selected a sample of picture books from the *Children's Catalog*, a broad compilation of books that is a mainstay among librarians who make book purchases. A stratified random sample of books listed each year from 1937 to 1993 was drawn ($N = 1,190$).¹ (3) We also examined the most popular and readily available set of children's books, the *Little Golden Books*. All books in the "standard" series from its inception in 1942 to the present were included ($N = 1,023$).² Reissued books were included *only* if there was a change in length, illustrations, or story. (A list of all books included is available upon request.)

Data on racial conflict were based on descriptions of events involving African Americans listed in the *New York Times Index*, 1936 through 1993; the *Index* has been used and discussed in previous analyses of ethnic conflict (McAdam 1982; Olzak 1992). Gatekeeping is examined in part by comparing award-winning books with other books. Variables capturing the production of culture were obtained from issues of the *Horn Book*, 1936 through 1993. The *Horn Book*, established in 1924 by children's librarians from the Boston Public Library, is the "gold standard" professional journal for children's li-

¹ The *Children's Catalog* data were collected in two parts. First, 270 books were selected over the entire period, 76 percent of which were located and coded. If a book could not be located in over a dozen university, public, and rare-book libraries, we randomly selected another book to replace it. Second, because the number of books listed was extremely small for several years, a larger sample was drawn based on year of publication. We randomly selected 25 additional books per year. In early years, when fewer than 25 books were listed (e.g., 18 books in 1947), all books were included. Caldecott books, drawn as part of the *Children's Catalog* sample, were included. Of this second sample, 920 books (77.1 percent) were located and coded.

² We could not locate a small number of books from this series (e.g., books were unlisted or unavailable); Greason's (1991) guide listed books through 1990 only and Western Publishing does not provide lists.

brarians. It contains book reviews and comprehensive listings of new releases, interviews with authors and illustrators of children's books, advertisements, and articles of interest to the publishing industry, artists, librarians, and teachers.

Coding and Measures

Cultural representations. The coding of over 2,400 children's books involved at least one researcher (and often two) coding each book, with another researcher resolving ambiguities (of which there were few for racial variables). For the Caldecott books, for example, we found high levels of inter-rater reliability (in the 85-percent range) for all relevant variables. Basic information on text and illustrations was recorded through a manifest coding—a strict count of “objective” information (Holsti 1969)—such as whether Blacks, Whites, or others appear in the book. The quantitative measures of the overall visibility of Blacks included the percentage of books each year in which (1) at least one Black character was portrayed in text or illustrations and (2) *only* Black characters were portrayed. The values for both variables theoretically range from 0 (i.e., no books with even a single Black character for that year) to 100 (i.e., at least one Black character in each book that year).

We also recorded how Blacks were portrayed in these books by coding geographical and temporal location (e.g., rural versus urban; United States versus other; past versus contemporary), occupational roles, and whether there was interracial contact. We complemented this with a qualitative analysis of the nature of the images and story lines (i.e., latent content; Holsti 1969). Coders kept notes and attended regular sessions focused on these qualitative data. The *nature* of Black representations and Black-White interactions were targeted, including the centrality of the Black characters and the degree to which interracial contact was central (e.g., whether it involved the main character or background characters), intimate (e.g., brief or sustained interactions), or egalitarian (e.g., similar occupational or other social circumstances).

Racial conflict. The count of racial conflict events each year measures the struggle

for the redistribution of social power between Blacks and Whites. Event summaries (excluding editorials and review articles) listed in the *New York Times Index* under the following categories were examined: Negroes (Blacks starting in 1977), education and schools, colleges and universities, labor, housing, Ku Klux Klan, and assaults/disorderly conduct (starting in 1948), and all related subcategories. Any summary that described an unambiguous instance of public racial strife was counted as an event and coded under the year of occurrence. Events included conflicts (involving violence, physical confrontation, or arrest), protests (actions related to racial tensions that did not involve direct confrontation), and legal actions (particularly Black-initiated lawsuits). An event was counted only if it was “public” (i.e., conventions, conferences, or meetings were omitted), about the United States, took place in the United States, and was clearly a confrontation concerning the racial order. Only the first of multiple entries about a particular event or action was coded.³ The natural log of this variable was used to stabilize variation.

Cultural gatekeepers. Gatekeeping can be examined by comparing the subset of prize-winning books, the sample from the universe of “quality” books, and “popular” books. Two additional measures came from the professional journal for children's literature, the *Horn Book*. Advertising and editorial content were coded separately to determine the influence of professional gatekeepers in the marketing and editing of children's books. Because of the extensive reach and influence of the *Horn Book* (Turow 1982), we chose to examine its impact on subsequent images in children's picture books. As an indicator of the types of books being marketed, we counted the number of Blacks and Whites

³ We did not code events from New York City or New York State because this would have resulted in a significant over count, particularly for racially motivated assaults. Even with this strategy, we probably have an over count of events in New Jersey and Connecticut given the *New York Times's* role as a regional newspaper. Further, our coding scheme may be less sensitive in recent years when articles on “racial tension” on college campuses and in neighborhoods do not fit our event-based approach.

pictured in advertising events. For consistency with the measures for the children's books, we computed the percentages of the *Horn Book's* six issues each year in which at least one Black was portrayed in an advertisement. These percentages reflect publishing houses' choices of books to highlight in costly ads and which images from these books are used. We also computed the percentage of the *Horn Book's* six annual issues in which Blacks are portrayed in an editorial. This includes illustrations from books that editors chose to highlight, pictures related to the discussion of issues in the field (occasionally race-related), and pictures of prominent Black authors, illustrators, or others. These two measures from the *Horn Book* are compared to each other, to racial conflict data, and to the book trends to provide a more nuanced understanding of gatekeeping processes.

ANALYSIS

Our analysis encompasses the period from 1937 to 1993. Years are the units of analysis, and each book is considered as part of a set of images for a particular year. To determine the visibility of Blacks, we use both the entire set of books ($N = 2,448$) and the subset of books that eliminates those books that have only animals or inanimate objects as characters ($N = 1,967$). We examine and rely on the consistency between the qualitative analyses, graphic presentations of the data, and the use of time-series modeling to draw our conclusions.

For the quantitative analysis, we rely on cross-tabulations and graphic analysis. Yearly means for Blacks in picture books are computed in two ways. First, examining all books sampled, the percentage of books with Blacks is used. Second, the same percentage is computed within each series and then averaged. The second set of percentages gives greater weight to the Caldecott series to reflect its greater prominence; this measure is also used in the time-series analyses. For the graphic presentation of trends, figures show three-year moving averages for book and gatekeeper data, and a monthly average for the racial conflict data. However, actual yearly data rather than moving averages are used in the time-series analysis.

We use time-series analysis to test whether the trends in cultural representations over time are significantly different from chance fluctuations and to test for the effects of the racial conflict and cultural gatekeeping variables. Ordinary least-squares analyses of the time-series data are employed. When modeling the effects of gatekeeping and racial conflict, we employ recursive regression to assess the temporal stability of parameter estimates and to delineate particular historical periods for closer examination. Because this procedure breaks the trend into segments, we can explore the constancy of effects over time. In all specifications, the dependent variables focus on visibility (i.e., quantity) of Blacks in children's books. The independent variables used are racial conflict and *Horn Book* editorials and advertising, variables that examine the effects of power shifts and gatekeeping, respectively. These independent variables are lagged by one year because we posit, considering how children's books are produced, that the inclusion of Blacks in marketing activities and the editorial content of a prominent professional journal may affect the representations of Blacks in the next year.⁴

⁴ The three series were not purged of systematic variation, for example through ARIMA processes or differencing. We assume that the dramatic increase and subsequent decrease in racial conflict during the 1950s and 1960s are a result of a social movement centered on racial crisis, not chance fluctuations or "drift" more common in economic indicators. Because our theory posits a set of relations between the series, we model the series rather than use a black-box approach (McCleary and Hay 1980; chap. 2; Ostrom 1990: 6). A common problem in time-series analysis is serial correlated errors, which can cause serious problems with estimates and affect t -ratios and the interpretation of the significance of effects (Ostrom 1990). We examine each regression model using autocorrelation and partial autocorrelation functions output compared to a template of stylized depictions. We also use the Durbin-Watson statistic to test for the presence of autocorrelation, appropriate for models that include an intercept but not a lagged endogenous variable as a predictor. For models that indicated autocorrelation, corrections in the statistical program REVIEWS were added to the equations (Pindyck and Rubinfeld 1991). This procedure incorporates the residual from the past observa-

Table 1. Percentage of Books Portraying Black Characters: U.S. Children's Picture Books, 1937 to 1993

Measure	Average of Means for Three Series	All Books Pooled	Caldecott Award Books	<i>Children's Catalog Books</i>	<i>Little Golden Books</i>
<i>All Books</i>					
Percentage with at least one Black	15.1	14.8	16.2	17.0	12.0
Percentage with only Blacks	3.3	1.8	7.7	2.0	0.1
Number of books	2,448	2,448	235	1,190	1,023
<i>Books Featuring People</i>					
Percentage with at least one Black	18.4	18.5	19.0	20.8	15.4
Percentage with only Blacks	3.9	2.2	9.0	2.5	0.1
Number of books	1,967	1,967	200	970	797

Following Isaac and Griffin (1989), we attempt to avoid ahistoricism in the analysis, both empirically and theoretically. As they suggest, requirements of quantitative and statistical analysis of historical data have been privileged at the expense of thinking theoretically about historical movement in a series, thereby possibly masking variations across time and reducing history to "homogeneous relations in homogeneous time" (Isaac and Griffin 1989: 876; also see Griffin and Isaac 1992). We test the stability of equations, for example, using Chow tests, and employ recursive regression, which allows the introduction of one data point at a time (years), in order to examine the strength and variation of effects over time. Theoretically, racial conflict is unlikely to have the same impact during the 1930s, 1960s, and 1990s, because conflict was of a different character and intensity and was located within a complex web of unique political and social circumstances.

RESULTS

Trends in the Portrayal of Blacks in U.S. Children's Picture Books

Table 1 reports the overall visibility of Blacks in children's books. The percentage

tion of the regression model into the current observation, correcting statistical problems associated with autocorrelation. The interpretation of coefficients, standard errors, and *t*-statistics remain the same after this correction.

of all books examined in which at least one Black character appears is relatively small: only 15 percent depict one or more Black characters (18 percent in books featuring human characters). This percentage differs little whether it is computed using the average of the three series' means or the pooled sample. Within series, 16.2 percent of the Caldecott Award books, 17 percent of the *Children's Catalog* books, and 12 percent of the *Little Golden Books* depict at least one Black character. These percentages increase by about three points when calculated for those books that feature human characters. Difference-of-proportion tests indicate that the percentage for the *Children's Catalog* series is significantly larger than that for the *Little Golden Books*.

On average, about 3 percent of all books published over the period focus exclusively on Black life (about 4 percent in books featuring people). However, this percentage varies depending on the base of the percentage—all books pooled or the separate series. Nearly 8 percent of the Caldecott Award books, 2 percent of *Children's Catalog* books, and less than 1 percent of the *Little Golden Books* feature stories about African, Caribbean, or African American communities. Considering only books with human characters changes these percentages very little. The three series are significantly different from each other in whether they portray exclusively Black characters.

Our focus in this paper centers not on these overall profiles but on change over time. Figure 1 shows that the visibility of

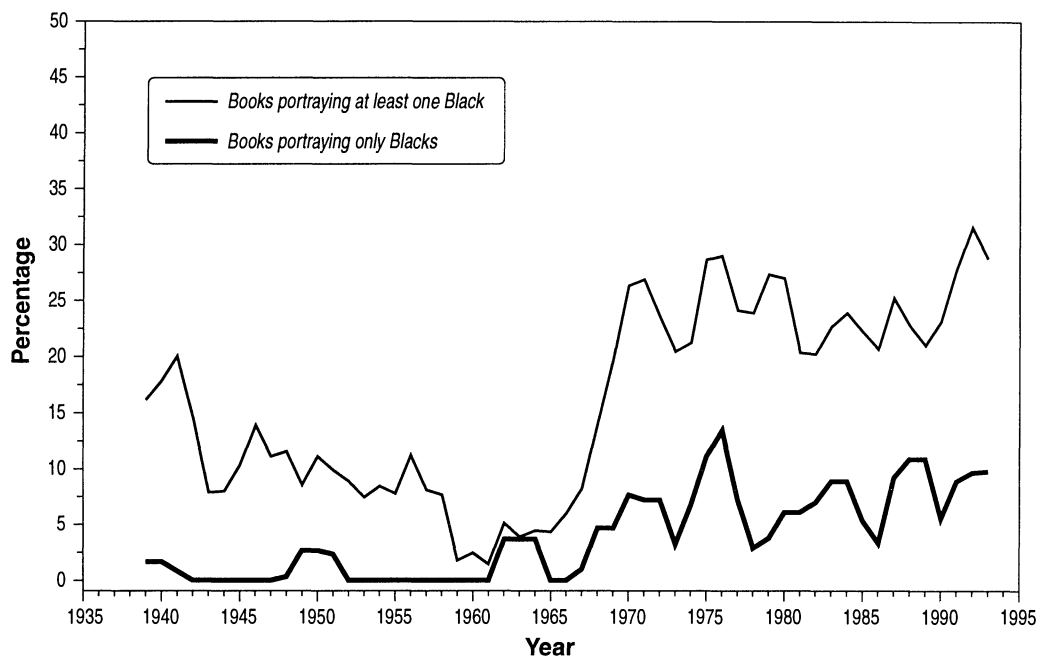


Figure 1. Percentage of Children's Books that Portray Black Characters, by Year: All Three Book Series, 1937 to 1993

Note: Percentages are three-year moving averages.

Blacks in children's picture books varies systematically across the time period studied. The nonlinear time trend reveals roughly four phases of the dependent variable "visibility of Blacks" in these books. In the earliest phase, from 1938 to about 1957, Blacks are represented in modest percentages, with percentages decreasing significantly throughout this period. The second phase, 1958 through 1964, is marked by a virtual absence of Blacks. In the third phase, from the mid-1960s to the early 1970s, Blacks reappear. In the fourth phase, from 1975 to 1993, the percentage stabilizes, fluctuating between 20 and 30 percent for portrayal of at least one Black.

Depictions in the Early Years

From 1937 through the mid-1950s, Blacks are present in modest though declining proportions. About one-half of Caldecott Award books and one-third of *Little Golden Books* that include at least one Black character depict only one Black character, and virtually all the books are about Whites, with Blacks playing only minor, peripheral roles. When

Blacks do appear in children's books, they usually appear briefly and are depicted in subservient positions such as menial workers, servants, or slaves (e.g., *All Aboard*, a 1952 *Little Golden Book*, depicts a Black train porter dusting off a White girl's doll).

In this early phase, Black-White relations can generally be characterized as depicting "surface contact" (Levinger and Snoek 1972), showing no deep relationships, behavior as role-determined, and emphasizing physical appearance and social status position. Interaction reflects the superior status of Whites and the inferior position of Blacks. The text of *They Were Strong and Good* (a 1940 Caldecott Medal book) is illustrative:

When my father was very young he had two dogs and a colored boy. The dogs were named Sextus Hostilius and Numa Pompilius. The colored boy was just my father's age. He was a slave, but they don't call him that. They just called him Dick.

To conclude, however, that these were the only types of portrayals of Blacks in the early phase would be misleading.

A second theme during this phase involved



Plate 1. Illustration from *Small Rain*, a 1944 Caldecott Award Book

Source: From *Small Rain: Verses from the Bible*, by Jessie Orton Jones, illustrated by Elizabeth Orton Jones. Copyright © 1943 by Jessie Orton Jones and Elizabeth Orton Jones; renewed in 1971 by Jessie Orton Jones and Elizabeth Orton Jones. Illustration reprinted with permission from Viking Penguin, a division of Penguin Books USA, Inc.

Black characters in multiracial groups of children and occasionally adults, depicting the “family of man” or “all God’s children.” The latter, characteristic of religious books popular during the 1930s and 1940s, include illustrations of children of different races and cultures, make no specific reference to race, and often have a central White character. In many of these books, the appearance of Black characters reflects only “unilateral awareness”; there is a joint presence but no interaction (Levinger and Snoek 1972). In other books, however, for example *Small Rain: Verses from the Bible* (1944), there is no single, central character, and the inclusion of Black children as part of a group depicted throughout the book and engaged in group activities goes beyond superficial contact (see Plate 1).

Other exceptions to the stereotypical and background depiction of Blacks are rare but

nonetheless are present. These rare portrayals indicate “mutuality”—egalitarian and intimate relationships that involve the disclosure of unique information and shared experiences (Levinger and Snoek 1972). For example, *Two Is a Team*, a 1945 *Children’s Catalog* book, centers on two friends, one Black and one White, who build coasters, race them, damage the belongings of Black and White children and adults, and work to earn money to repay the damages. Also included in our sample from the *Children’s Catalog* is a book from the “Negro American Series,” *Negro Boys and Girls* (1938), which depicts Black children in typical activities.

The Disappearance of Black Characters

The second phase, from the late 1950s to the mid-1960s, represents the nadir for portray-

als of Blacks: Virtually no Blacks appear in children's picture books published from 1958 through 1964.⁵ Only one of 24 Caldecott Award books, one of 120 books in the *Children's Catalog* sample, and 10 of 240 *Little Golden Books* depict even one Black character.⁶ Representations of Blacks are varied considering their extremely small number and include background images of Blacks, one all-Black book, and another virtually all Black book. One book portrays mutuality between a Black girl and her Brownie troop (*Brownie Scouts*, a 1961 *Little Golden Book*), while others present stereotypes that represent symbolic annihilation. For example, *Boats*, a 1958 *Little Golden Book*, depicts over 200 Whites and 3 Blacks. The Blacks appear on the top deck of a large paddleboat while Whites socialize below—one Black character is asleep, one plays the banjo, and one eats watermelon.

Ironically, however, during this phase when Black characters virtually disappear from children's books, *The Snowy Day* (the 1962 Caldecott Medal book) introduces U.S. children to one of the most prominent Black children in contemporary picture books. In

the story, author Jack Ezra Keats follows a young Black boy, Peter, through a day of playing in the snow. The text makes no mention of his race and few other characters appear in the book. *The Snowy Day* has been controversial, often praised as an important break from an invisible past and equally criticized for continuing racial bias because, according to critics, the mother resembles a "mammy" (Miller 1986; Sims 1982; Thompson and Woodard 1985).

The Reintroduction of Black Characters

From the mid-1960s through the 1970s, the percentage of books depicting Blacks rises dramatically, and portrayals improve considerably from the earlier explicit stereotypic images. What is most curious about this increase is the way Black characters are reintroduced into picture books. The qualitative analysis suggests that this reintroduction occurred differently across particular series. In addition to new titles in which Blacks are included (but rarely as central characters), in several reissued *Little Golden Books*, Blacks simply replace some Whites. For example, *Prayers for Children*, a popular 1952 title by Eloise Wilkin, depicts all White children. When the book was reissued in 1974, two illustrations replaced White children with Black children. No *Little Golden Book* during this third phase portrays *only* Blacks.

The reappearance of Blacks in the Caldecott Award books is striking. In contrast to *Little Golden Books* and the *Children's Catalog* books, much of the increase in portrayals of Blacks in the Caldecott series occurs because the award panel selected books that featured Black characters only (see Figure 2). Generally, from 1937 through 1964, the first two phases, just six books across all series focused on Black characters alone, whereas the percentage of books with only Black characters rises dramatically during this reintroduction phase to over 10 percent, reaching a peak around 1975 (Figure 1). However, this is largely a function of the Caldecott panel choosing Black images that are far removed from the contemporary United States (see Figure 2).

The first book written and illustrated by Black authors to be awarded a Caldecott Medal was *Moja Means One* by Tom and

⁵ We considered whether the percentage of books that portrayed Whites may also have declined during this period (owing to an increase in books dealing with animal characters). This is not the case—neither the Caldecott Award books nor the *Little Golden Books* show a significant decrease in the percentage depicting at least one White character (data are not available for the *Children's Catalog* books).

⁶ The number of reissues of one title, *The Little Golden Book of Hymns*, and the surviving printings do not make it clear whether the addition of Black characters occurred in this period or later. We err on the conservative side by including it in this period. Larrick (1965) surveyed children's book publishers about books published from 1962 through 1964 and found that 6.7 percent of 5,206 trade books depicted one or more Blacks, a slightly higher figure than the percentage in our three sets. Among books published by the four largest firms, only 4.2 percent portrayed a Black; eight firms reported publishing no books with Black characters. Larrick (1965) reported that some publishing executives found her results surprising and saw them as problematic. Sims (1982) contends that Larrick's article and related critiques may have spurred changes at publishing houses.

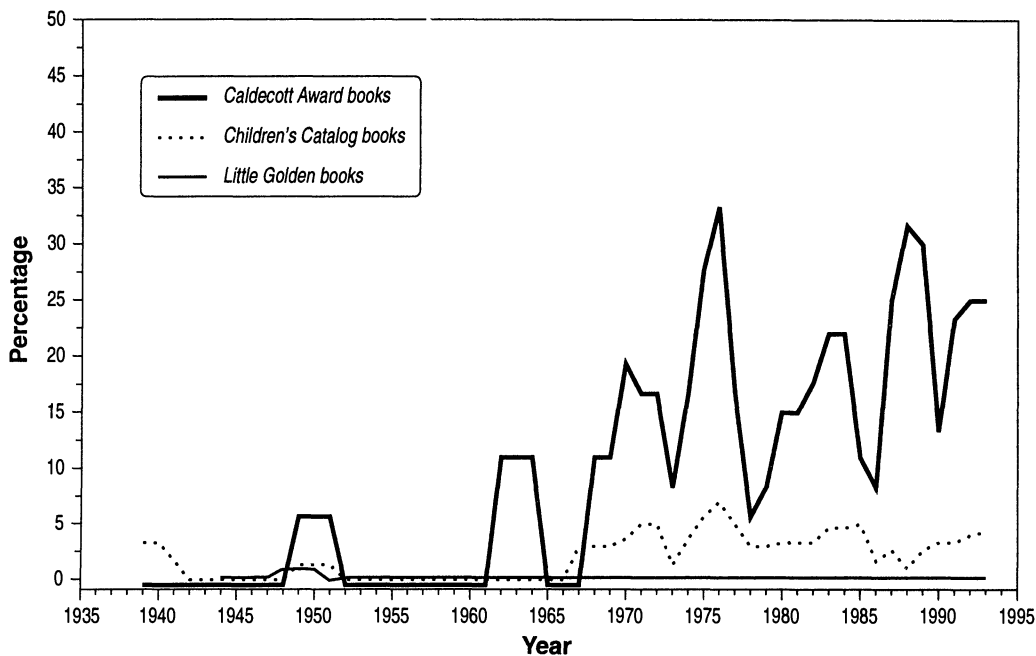


Figure 2. Percentage of Children's Books in Three Book Series that Portray Only Black Characters, by Year: 1937 to 1993

Note: Percentages are three-year moving averages.

Muriel Feelings.⁷ This book, as well as all of the Caldecott Award books that featured only Black characters published from 1965 through the mid-1970s, depicts “safe” and distant images of Blacks in Africa.⁸ Strong community and family life is depicted in several of the books with African themes—parents interacting with their children, families engaged in work activities, children playing, and groups active in storytelling, dance, and play. These depictions are unusual, not only for books about Blacks, but for the Caldecott books as a whole in which family structure is often difficult to discern in either text or illustrations. While many of these books focus on counting, the alphabet, or language, the African families are central, although the books follow no particular

characters throughout the story and the characters are not singled out and named.

One of three books published during this phase in which Blacks are main characters, *Goggles* (a 1969 Caldecott Honor book), features contemporary, urban Blacks in the United States and continues the adventures of Peter from *The Snowy Day*. A few books in the *Children's Catalog* series target race issues, but even in this extensive series, such titles are rare and messages are often indirect. For example, *Black is brown is tan* (1973 *Children's Catalog* book) pictures an interracial family and its relatives who exhibit a wide spectrum of skin tones and hair colors. The text repeats two phrases:

Black is brown is tan/ is girl is boy/
is nose is face/ is all the colors/ of the race
this is the way it is for us this is the way we
are. (Original spacing)

⁷ In analyses not presented here, we examined whether trends were affected by the race of authors and illustrators and found these variables not to be significant.

⁸ Others have noted this striking absence of contemporary U.S. Blacks in a range of cultural products during the 1960s (Larrick 1965; Thibodeau 1989:489).

The story describes each person's racial identity through a number of activities. These kinds of books are absent from the *Little Golden Books* entirely and from the Caldecott books until the 1990s.

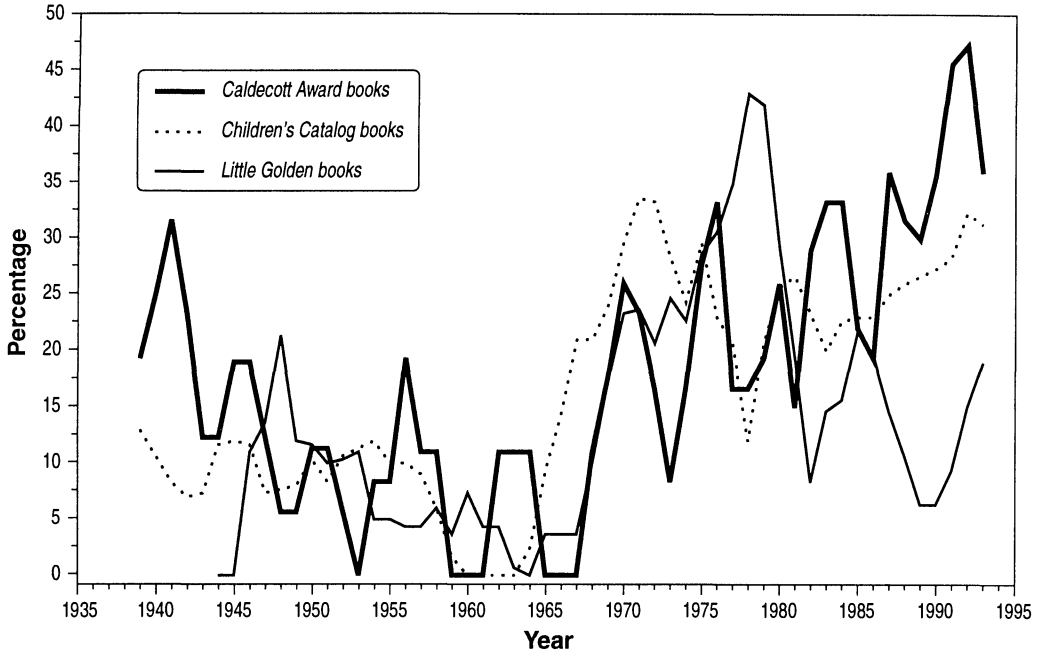


Figure 3. Percentage of Children's Books in Three Book Series that Portray at Least One Black Character, by Year: 1937 to 1993

Note: Percentages are three-year moving averages.

After 1975: Stabilization at New Levels

The increase in representations of Blacks alone or with other races ends after 1975. Since the mid-1970s, the percentage of all children's picture books that portray Black characters has stabilized at about 20 to 30 percent (Figure 1) and from 30 to 50 percent in books featuring human characters (data not shown), levels significantly higher than those of the early years.

There is little change in the character of Black-White relations in either the *Little Golden Books* or the *Children's Catalog* books—they continue to portray mainly surface contact, such as "crowd scenes" on city streets, playgrounds, or in classrooms. Less often, these books depict mutuality between Blacks and Whites, but even then, it is rarely central to the story line. The *Little Golden Books* series has a smaller percentage of books depicting Blacks in this final phase than in the previous phase, and about the same percentage it had in the earliest years (see Figure 3). In the Caldecott series, three phenomena are relevant. First, books featuring only Blacks after the mid-1970s focus on

both Africans and African Americans. For most of this phase they continue to focus on historical themes, the depiction of folk tales, or feature social and temporal locations that are difficult to pinpoint (characteristic of other ethnic tales as well). Second, not until the 1990s do Caldecott books present explicit interracial themes or address political issues. For example, *Tar Beach*, published in 1991, recalls a Black woman's childhood in an urban area. In a fantasy, she flies throughout the city and over a union building where her father was denied membership for being "colored" or "a half-breed Indian." Third, the recent award-winning books display more racial ambiguity. In *Yo! Yes?* (1993, see Plate 2) the colors and style of the art, as well as the dark skin and hair of the "White" boy, make it difficult to discern racial status. Author and illustrator Chris Raschka indicated his intent to portray an interracial situation while noting that the characters were deliberately drawn ambiguously to allow for "depth and resonance" with more people (Chris Raschka, telephone interview, October 5, 1994). This plate also depicts a rarity—intimate interracial relations.

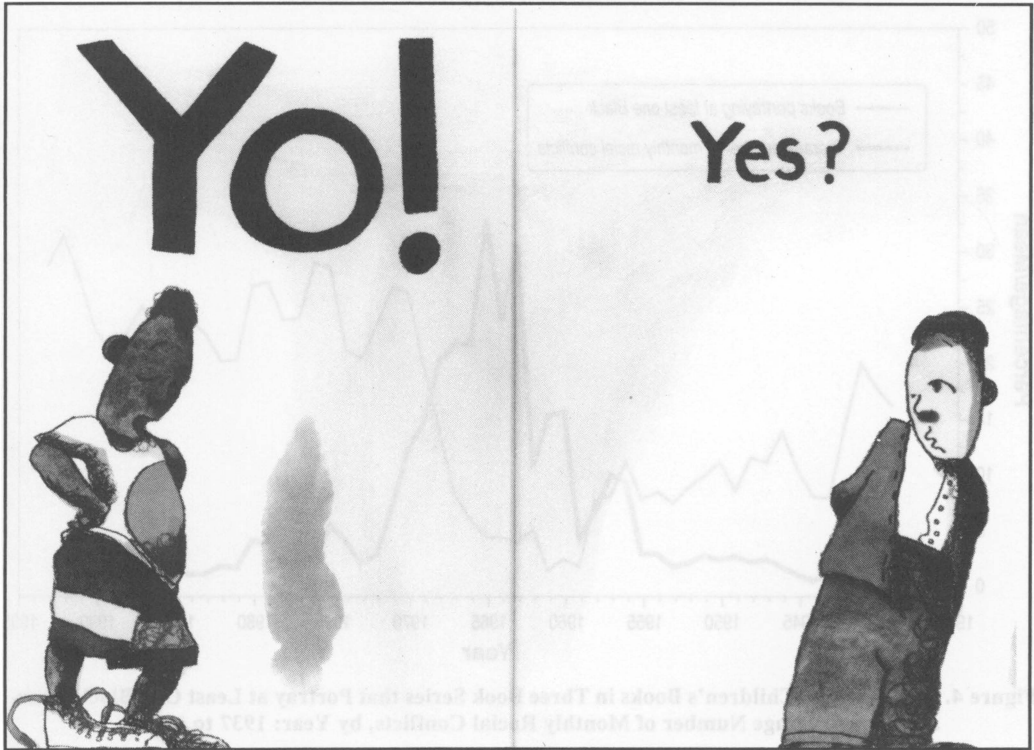


Plate 2. Illustration from *Yo! Yes?*, a 1993 Caldecott Honor Book

Source: From *Yo! Yes?* written and illustrated by Chris Raschka. Copyright © 1993 by Christopher Raschka. Illustration reprinted with permission from Orchard Books, New York.

Standing Back: Neglected Depictions

While each phase has distinctive features, the books as a group display two interesting characteristics that point to a subtle yet telling phenomenon about a lack of improvement in race relations. First, even when Blacks and Whites appear in a book, their interactions show a striking absence of mutuality—intimate, egalitarian relations central to the story line—throughout the entire period and across series. Second, books that depict Black men and women as central characters, especially contemporary U.S. characters, are extraordinarily rare.

Among Caldecott books, only one-third of the 24 books receiving awards since the dramatic rise since 1965 are interracial, showing Blacks and Whites in the same story. In three-quarters of these cases, portrayals are either as background images, much like the group images in the early religious books, or Whites and Blacks do not appear on the same page. Background images sometimes indi-

cate more than racial awareness or even surface contact, yet these interracial relations are not central to the story line. For example, in *A Chair for My Mother*, a 1982 Caldecott Award book, the central character's mother works at a diner that also employs a Black woman in a similar position.

Interracial childhood friendships and, less frequently, interracial adult relationships appear rarely and haphazardly through each series during all phases with no clear trends. For example, in *First Grade*, a 1944 *Children's Catalog* book, the story focuses on David's exploits throughout his first school year. Four other children, Beth and Mac (schoolmates), Timothy (his brother), and Isaac (a Black child, also called "Little Ben" after his grandfather) appear at various times. The depiction of the relations among these children indicates intimate contact. While there are stereotypic aspects (e.g., Little Ben never wears shoes while the White children sometimes do), Little Ben is featured by himself, is thought to be very knowledgeable,

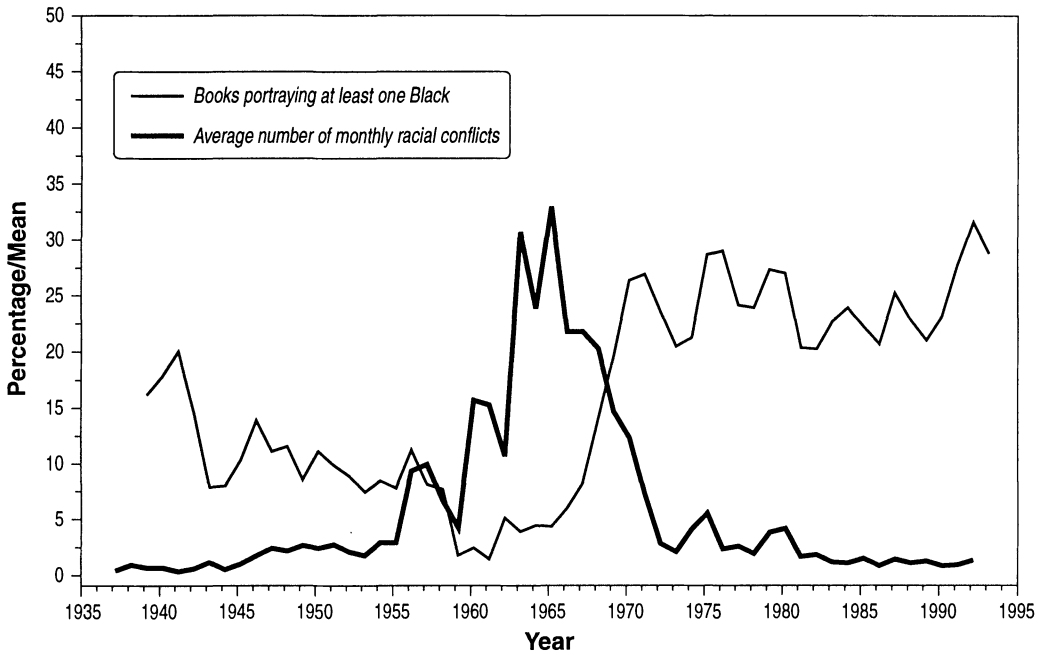


Figure 4. Percentage of Children's Books in Three Book Series that Portray at Least One Black Character and Average Number of Monthly Racial Conflicts, by Year: 1937 to 1993

Note: Percentages are three-year moving averages.

and initiates activities (he plans the playhouse). A 1984 *Little Golden Book, The Good-by Day*, portrays a White girl and an African American girl on their last day together before one moves.⁹

Stories that feature Black adults as central characters are also rare. While children's books generally feature children, White adults, especially White men, are fairly common central characters. Black men and women appear in stories in the early years, but they are never central. Like other Black characters, they disappear in the second phase, and when they reappear in the Caldecott books, they are distant, "safe" images, such as protagonists in African and African American folk tales or fantasy characters. For example, *A Story, A Story* (a 1970 Caldecott Medal book) retells the story of Kwaku

Ananse (the "spider man" and the basis of many African stories, "Anancy" stories of the Caribbean, and "Aunt Nancy" stories of the U.S. South). The two books with Black women as central characters, *The Talking Eggs* (1989) and *The Grey Lady and the Strawberry Snatcher* (1980) have folk and fantasy elements as well. No Caldecott book features a contemporary Black man. In a counting book, *Ten, Nine, Eight* (a 1984 Caldecott Honor Book), a Black father's nighttime ritual with his daughter involves reading while they sit together on a rocking chair. The text focuses on counting rhymes, not the relationship. However, the depiction of this contemporary father-daughter relationship is rare among books that feature Blacks. Men of other ethnic groups appear as central characters (e.g., recent books in the Caldecott series include *Hey, Al!* [1986], *Song and Dance Man* [1988], and *Hershel and the Hanukkah Goblins* [1989]; earlier books include *Mr. T. Anthony Woo* [1951] and *Mr. Penny's Race Horse* [1956]). Among the *Little Golden Books*, *Noises and Mr. Fliberty Jib* (1947), *The Lone Ranger and Tonto* (1957), *Tarzan* (1974), and *Daniel in*

⁹ Western Publishing issued two versions of this book. The cover of the first depicted both friends in the foreground and a Black moving man in the background. A later printing, retitled *Moving Day* (1987), removed the Black friend from the cover and replaced the Black moving man with a White man. No other pictures or text were changed.

Table 2. Coefficients for Time-Series Regressions of Black Visibility in U.S. Children's Picture Books on Selected Independent Variables: All Books, 1938 to 1993

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	
	Percentage with at Least One Black	Percentage with Interracial Images ^a
<i>Gatekeeping Variables</i>		
Percentage of <i>Horn</i> books with at least one Black in editorial pages	.11** (2.46)	.07* (1.69)
Percentage of <i>Horn</i> books with at least one Black in an advertisement	.19*** (3.90)	.18* (2.20)
Level of racial conflict (ln)	-1.43* (-1.68)	-1.41* (-1.75)
Constant	2.90	6.67
Adjusted R ²	.50	.28
Durbin-Watson statistic	1.86	1.94
Number of years	56	56

Note: Number in parentheses are *t*-statistics; dependent variables use the average of the means for the three book series.

^a Percentage of books that portray at least one Black; excludes books featuring only Blacks.

p* < .05 *p* < .01 ****p* < .001 (one-tailed tests)

the Lion's Den (1985) are a few of the hundreds of titles with central, adult males. Perhaps most striking, in the more than 1,000 *Little Golden Books* that we coded, only one (*Bravest of All*, 1973) features a Black adult as a central character (an older fireman). Ironically, this book presents one of the most "real," positive, and active depictions of a contemporary Black man portrayed in any of the books we reviewed in any of the series.

Racial Conflict and the Visibility of Black Characters

We examine whether race relations in the larger society can explain trends in the portrayals of Blacks. Figure 4 shows the average number of monthly conflict incidents over the 57-year span. The rise and fall of racial conflict as reported in the *New York Times* offers an inverse image to the greatest change in the visibility of Blacks in U.S. children's picture books. The data indicate a slight rise beginning in 1945 corresponding to a gradual decline in portrayals of Black characters, a sharp rise between 1955 and 1965 corresponding to the disappearance of Blacks in illustrations and story lines, a sharp decline in the late 1960s paralleled by the dramatic

reintroduction of portrayals of Blacks in books, and a return to earlier low levels of conflict corresponding to stabilization in the portrayals of Blacks in overall trends. The year 1965 marks the beginning of a dramatic fall in racial conflict (McAdam 1982) and a dramatic rise in the percentage of books with Black characters as well as portrayals of a qualitatively different, more positive nature.

The time-series analysis (Table 2) indicates that the level of racial conflict has a negative impact on the percentage of books portraying at least one Black (including books featuring only Blacks) and Black-White interactions (percentage with at least one Black but excluding books featuring only Black characters) over the period.¹⁰ Various tests indicated discontinuities in the temporal structure of the model, most notably a break-point in about 1965, with the relationship showing less stability during the second half of our time period. Given this re-

¹⁰ This is not a precise measure of the percentage of books portraying Black-White interaction, perhaps overestimating it slightly. For example, on occasion, Blacks and Whites appear in the same book but in different scenes (no interaction) or in crowd shots in the same scene (unilateral awareness).

Table 3. Coefficient for Regressions of Black Visibility in U.S. Children's Picture Books in Selected Independent Variables, by Series: 1945 to 1964

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable				
	Percentage with at Least One Black (All Books)	Percentage with Interracial Images ^a			
		All Books	Caldecott Award Books	<i>Children's Catalog</i> Books	<i>Little Golden Books</i>
<i>Gatekeeping Variables</i>					
Percentage of <i>Horn</i> books with at least one Black in editorial pages	.06** (2.35)	.03 (1.13)	-.01 (-.18)	.04 (.93)	.16** (2.39)
Percentage of <i>Horn</i> books with at least one Black in an advertisement	-.10** (-2.40)	-.05 (-1.37)	-.14 (-1.10)	.03 (.50)	-.10 (-1.06)
Level of racial conflict (ln)	-3.20*** (-5.86)	-3.93*** (-7.07)	-4.55** (-2.62)	-3.00** (-2.97)	-3.77** (-2.33)
Constant	21.70	22.80	29.73	15.09	20.30
AR (1) coefficient	-.54*	-.56*	-.34	—	—
Adjusted R ²	.61	.60	.14	.25	.30
Durbin-Watson statistic	2.18 ^b	1.68 ^a	1.89 ^a	1.51	2.15
Number of years	20	20	20	20	20

Note: Numbers in parentheses are *t*-statistics.

^a Percentage of books that portray at least one Black but exclude books featuring only Blacks.

^b Estimated assuming a first-order autoregressive process.

p* < .05 *p* < .01 ****p* < .001 (one-tailed tests)

sult and our theoretical reason for noting this period as most important for Black visibility owing to the increase in racial conflict, we employed a diagonal method of recursive regression (Griffin and Isaac 1992). We moved the model over each possible 20-year period, noting the strength and stability of coefficients and significance levels. Compared to forward or backward regression, this method avoids the potential problem of adding data points that may stabilize due to methodological artifact rather than genuine historical shifts or discontinuities.

Results for the 1945–1964 period, presented in Table 3, show that as racial conflict escalated, Black characters and interracial images were systematically excluded from children's picture books. This relationship is similar and statistically significant across all sets of books, offering statistical evidence that racial conflict was most important for the visibility of Blacks and the portrayal of Black-White interaction during the 20-year period of rising conflict from 1945 to 1964.¹¹

Gatekeeping and the Visibility of Black Characters

Although each series of books repeats the broad time trend discussed earlier, two key discrepancies occur (Figures 2 and 3). First, the gatekeeping function of the Caldecott award panel produces some dramatic differences. The Caldecott books have been more likely to include Black characters compared to the universe of books from which they are drawn (i.e., the *Children's Catalog*). Caldecott books show a continuing increase in the visibility of Black characters, not the pattern of stabilization that we see in the *Children's Catalog* or the decrease apparent in the *Little Golden Books* (Figure 3). This is particularly interesting because their small numbers would predispose the pattern to be less smooth across the time period. Second, the *Little Golden Books* show more dramatic

coefficients and significance levels were different (i.e., generally not statistically significant) during other 20-year periods (e.g., 1965–1984), and were more variable across series during other periods.

¹¹ Recursive regression indicated that coeffi-

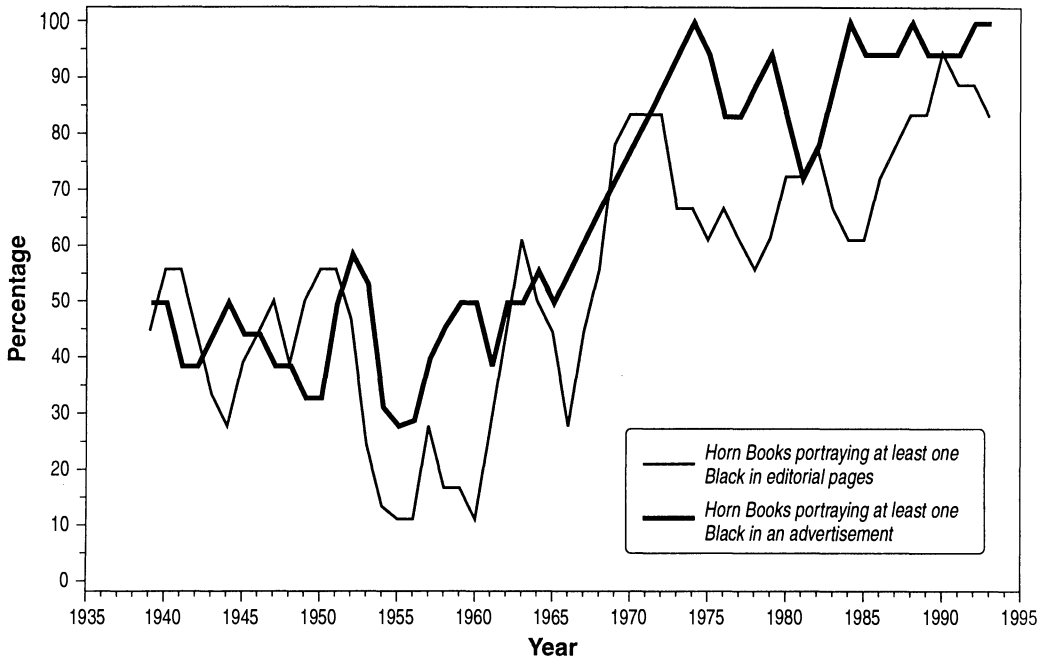


Figure 5. Percentage of Books from the *Horn Book* Series that Portray Blacks in Editorials or Advertisements, by Year: 1937 to 1993

Note: Percentages are three-year moving averages.

ebbs and flows over time. In the early years, they are more inclusive than the “high culture” books in the *Children’s Catalog*. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, they depict Black characters to a greater extent than do the other series. Finally, *Little Golden Books* also show a more dramatic decline in the percentage of books that portray at least one Black in the latest phase than do the other series (Figure 3).

Comparisons between award-winning and non-award-winning books show additional contrasts. While the overall trend indicates an increase in books that feature only Black characters, Caldecott Award books largely account for the trend (Figure 2). The reappearance of Blacks in books in the late 1960s is shaped by the appearance of books with only Black characters in the Caldecott series (up to 35 percent in peak years), but not in the *Children’s Catalog* books in which the percentage with only Black characters never rises above 9 percent, or in the *Little Golden Books*, none of which has an exclusive focus on Black characters (i.e., the sole exception is *Little Black Sambo*, a controversial book). In recent years, because two-thirds of the

Caldecott books that portray Blacks do not portray any Whites, while almost all *Little Golden Books* and *Children’s Catalog* books that portray Blacks do, these latter two series show relatively more interracial contact.

Figure 5 indicates that advertisements from publishing houses appearing in the *Horn Book* are more likely to portray Blacks than are editorials in the *Horn Book*. The patterns over time are similar, the levels of inclusion are sharply different, and there is one other exception. During the late 1950s and early 1960s, editorials portrayed Blacks in only about 15 percent of issues (from 10 percent to just over 20 percent), compared to the approximately 40 percent of issues in which advertisers portrayed Blacks. The time-series results in Table 2 show a positive relationship between portrayals of Blacks in *Horn Book* editorials and advertisements and the appearance and interracial portrayals of Blacks in the pooled books for the entire period. During the period of Black insurgency, from 1945 to 1964, the relationship between *Horn Book* and the pooled series holds for visibility and editorial choices, but is reversed for advertisements (Table 3). While

the patterns are similar within each series, they are significant only for interracial images in the *Little Golden Books*.

Thus, while publishers' marketing of books featuring Blacks remained relatively consistent (i.e., the percentage of *Horn Book* issues in which at least one book portraying Blacks is advertised remained relatively stable for the first 30 years), *Horn Book* editors wrote fewer features and reviews of books depicting Blacks during this phase when Black characters disappeared across all three book series. In rapid and dramatic fashion beginning in the mid-1960s, both publishers and editors increased the representation of Black characters, as shown by the steep slopes in Figure 5 (almost all *Horn Book* issues each year contained at least one advertisement featuring a Black).

DISCUSSION: SOCIAL CHANGE AND IMAGES OF BLACKS IN U.S. CHILDREN'S PICTURE BOOKS

Racial conflict has cultural as well as social consequences that manifest in the changing portrayals of Blacks in children's picture books. At the time of highest uncertainty in race relations, a period marked by increasing legal and social protests and conflicts, Blacks virtually disappeared from children's books, indicating indecision or unwillingness to portray racial contact in new (and at the time, radical) ways. Two features of the portrayals have remained relatively stable. First, stories and illustrations in which intimate, interracial relationships are central appear rarely in early and later phases. In books, Black and White characters may stand beside one another; much less often they interact in intimate egalitarian ways central to the story. Second, contemporary Black men and women, more so than Black children, are unlikely to play a central role in the 2,448 children's picture books we examined.

Overall, Blacks were secondary, peripheral, and subordinate characters from the late 1930s through the 1950s. Nevertheless, there are some countervailing features: Interracial contact is depicted; among children, mutual shared experiences are sometimes shown; and there are rare examples of contemporary Black characters depicted in full and relatively nonstereotypic fashion. In the late

1950s and first half of the 1960s, Blacks were largely invisible either as central characters or in peripheral roles. In the late 1960s, Black characters reappear in children's books and some positive interracial contact is depicted, especially in the popular books such as the *Little Golden Books* and books listed in the *Children's Catalog*. Caldecott Award winners show a unique pattern of a large increase in books portraying only Blacks. These books depict distant, historical images of Blacks that are far removed from the contemporary U.S. social scene. When these books do show African Americans, they often represent historical settings, folk tales, or fantasies.

The amount of interracial strife in society is significantly and inversely related to the portrayal of Blacks in children's books. When Black-White relations are stable—before and after the dramatic increase in Black insurgency—Black characters are more visible, whereas during the time of contested Black-White relations, Blacks and Black-White interactions were virtually deleted from children's books. Data on gatekeeping show that books chosen for awards are much more likely to be books featuring only Black characters than are children's books more generally. Cultural gatekeepers, who grant enormous prestige (and income) to illustrators, authors, and publishing houses through the Caldecott Award, appear to prefer African folk tales. Ironically, the selection of African folk tales, which are an important part of the African American cultural heritage, rewards books removed from contemporary U.S. society and from Whites.

The editors of the *Horn Book* also decreased their discussions of books with Black characters or authors during the phase of greatest Black activity. Finally, these choices on the part of *Horn Book* editors affected subsequent images in children's picture books. While publishing decisions, as indicated in book trends, show this decline, our analysis does not show that publishers' advertisements in the *Horn Book* ignored Blacks in this phase. The particular portrayal of Blacks in advertising layouts may change (data not shown here), but their inclusion of Blacks does not. As Seiter (1995) suggests, the competitive advertising marketplace may override racist ideologies. Even while the publication

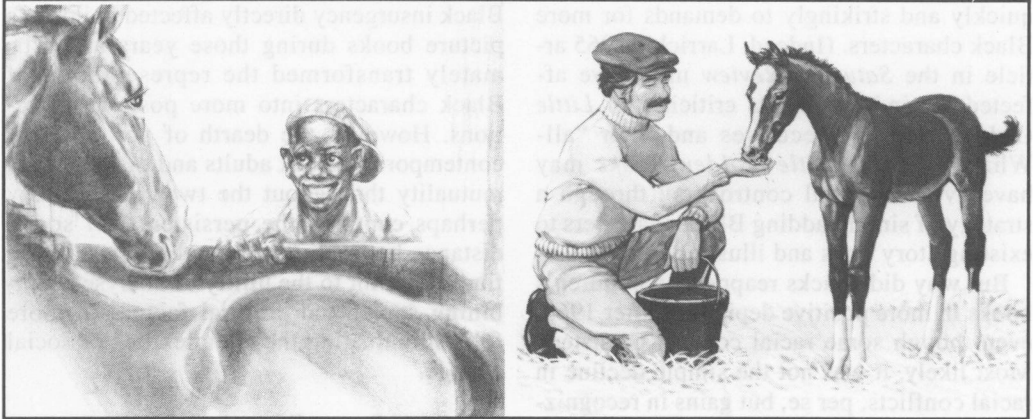


Plate 3. Illustration from *Little Fellow*, a 1945 and 1975 *Children's Catalog* Book

Sources: First illustration is from *Little Fellow* by Marguerite Henry, illustrated by Diana Thorne. Copyright © 1945 by Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York. Illustration reprinted with permission from the author and the Watkins Loomis Agency. Second illustration is from *Little Fellow* by Marguerite Henry, illustrated by Rich Rudish. Copyright © 1975 by Simon & Schuster. Illustration reprinted with permission from Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, an imprint of Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing Division.

of books with Black characters may have been decreasing, the use of advertising to capture a broad range of market segments may have been seen as a good strategy.

We see crisis as pushing cultural producers to avoid books about troublesome issues and groups. Although the reaction among (predominantly White) publishers during the period of racial turmoil can only be inferred, Thibodeau (1989) suggests an awareness that early depictions of Blacks as subordinate were unacceptable coupled with a reluctance and discomfort in depicting new racial norms to young children. We have some evidence from a famous case, *The Rooster Crows* (a 1945 Caldecott Medal book). This book of illustrated "American" rhymes became the focus of controversy when the NAACP contended that the book portrayed Blacks in an unfavorable light. When a new, revised edition was published in the 1960s, NAACP efforts were finally seen as successful (Madsen 1980). But the new edition simply removed Blacks from a book about America. In the face of controversy and with no new rhymes or jingles to replace the stereotyped ones, Black characters were eliminated and blond-haired farm children who chant "Patty-cake," "Little Miss Muffet," and "Jack and Jill" were added. The book, still in print, has

never been reissued depicting any Black characters.

In addition, a 1945 *Children's Catalog* book, *Little Fellow*, depicted highly stereotypical images. The most visible (though not central) human character, "Whitey," is a stable hand who in the original version is Black, "exactly the same color as Chocolate" (the horse). His speech is stereotyped: "An a throrbred ef I evah seed one! De White folks gwine be mighty proud o' yo' baby." Rather than making Whitey a more positive Black character in the 1975 reissue, he becomes "Dooley," White, Irish and speaking with a brogue (Plate 3).

While the ideological challenges of the civil rights movement left cultural producers without "acceptable" modes of representation in which neither stereotypes nor depictions of mutuality were likely to be seen as "tasteful," the demand for equality eventually dramatically altered racial imagery in children's books. Blacks became more visible in books and were portrayed more positively. When Blacks were reintroduced in children's books, it was in varied ways. The Caldecott Award panel focused on full representations of Black family, community, and history outside of the United States. The popular *Little Golden Books* responded

quickly and strikingly to demands for more Black characters. (Indeed, Larrick's 1965 article in the *Saturday Review* may have affected the industry in its criticism of *Little Golden Books*' executives and their "all-White world.") *Little Golden Books* may have avoided racial controversy through a strategy of simply adding Black characters to existing story lines and illustrations.

But why did Blacks reappear in children's books in more positive depictions after 1965, even though some racial conflict persisted? Most likely, it was not the simple decline in racial conflicts, per se, but gains in recognizing Blacks as artists and writers as well as a greater responsiveness among Whites to issues of racial equality. As Morris (1984) documents, by the mid 1960s, Whites (typically Northern liberals) had become increasingly involved in the civil rights movement through financial contributions and active participation. The racial conflict measure used in this study, then, may indicate a shift in social power for Blacks and this redistribution of power among Blacks and Whites drove the changes in images.

The diversity of depictions in recent images makes current, competing interpretations of the status of Black images understandable. The notable increase in distant and "safe" images of Blacks in the Caldecott Award books can be seen as a recognition and celebration of Blacks' unique cultural heritage, or it may be seen as a subtle form of "symbolic annihilation" in which the cultural representations of Blacks do not include contact with Whites or portray contemporary, "real" African American adults. The overall dearth, especially in recent years, of portrayals of significant intimate relations between Blacks and Whites or of strong, contemporary, adult images of Blacks may indicate the continuation of a symbolic status quo in which Black equality is seen as threatening (Humphrey and Schuman 1984).

In sum, we have shown complex patterns of change in the portrayal of Black characters in a diverse set of children's books that includes both prestigious and popular picture books. We link these patterns to social conflict. In the most unsettled period of U.S. race relations, contested power relations left a void in cultural imagery, as social relations were disturbed and unclear. A rapid rise in

Black insurgency directly affected children's picture books during those years and ultimately transformed the representation of Black characters into more positive depictions. However, the dearth of portrayals of contemporary Black adults and of interracial mutuality throughout the twentieth century perhaps captures the persistence of social distance between Blacks and Whites. These findings point to the utility of analyses combining social and cultural factors in more fully illuminating the complexities of social change.

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