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Culturally Relevant Literature in Secondary Schools: A Study in Usage and Limitations

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Research Question

Do national curriculums for English Language Arts (ELA) reflect the demographics for the United States (U.S.)?

Terms

• Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP): "using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them" (Gay, 2000, pp. 29).

• Curriculum: An umbrella term that can cover classroom rules to the content being taught. In this project, curriculum refers to the textbooks that ELA Classrooms use.

• Multicultural Literature: In the context of this study, "multicultural" will be in terms of the writers' ethnicities.

Methods

A content analysis is being conducted on several ELA curriculum textbooks. These books are a compilation of various works from a multitude of authors. The process of how the textbooks were selected are based on which ones are commonly used in ELA classrooms on a national level. Then the frequency of the authors' ethnicities will be coded on an Excel sheet. The ethnicities will be based on how National KIDS COUNT categorizes. Frequency of ethnicity of authors will then be compared to frequency of ethnicity in national demographics.

Significance

A current gap in CRP research is that many researchers claim that schools cannot effectively apply CRP in their classroom due to a lack of multicultural literature in their curriculums that reflects the ethnic diversity of the students in the U.S. Most researchers fail to provide any adequate amount of evidence to prove this.

The reason why the application for CRP is important in the classrooms is because it strives to close the Achievement Gap in education. The achievement gap refers to the current gap between the majority and minority ethnic groups in educations, where the students from the majority are more likely to succeed academically than students from the minority.

CRP suggest that by changing the content in the classrooms to be more culturally relevant towards the widely diverse group of students in the U.S, we can further encourage them to engage.
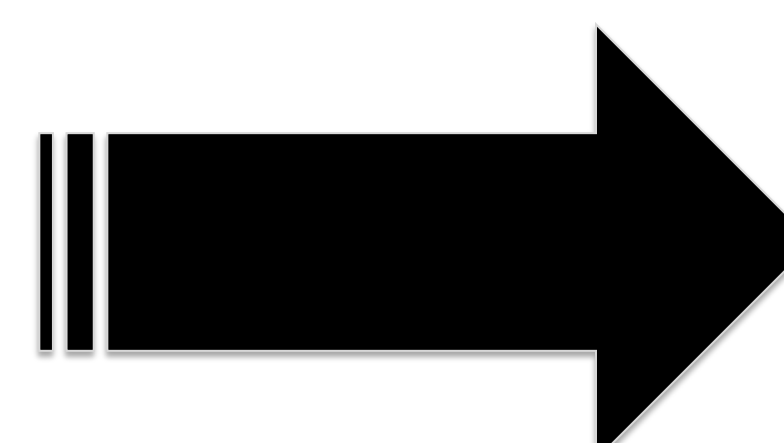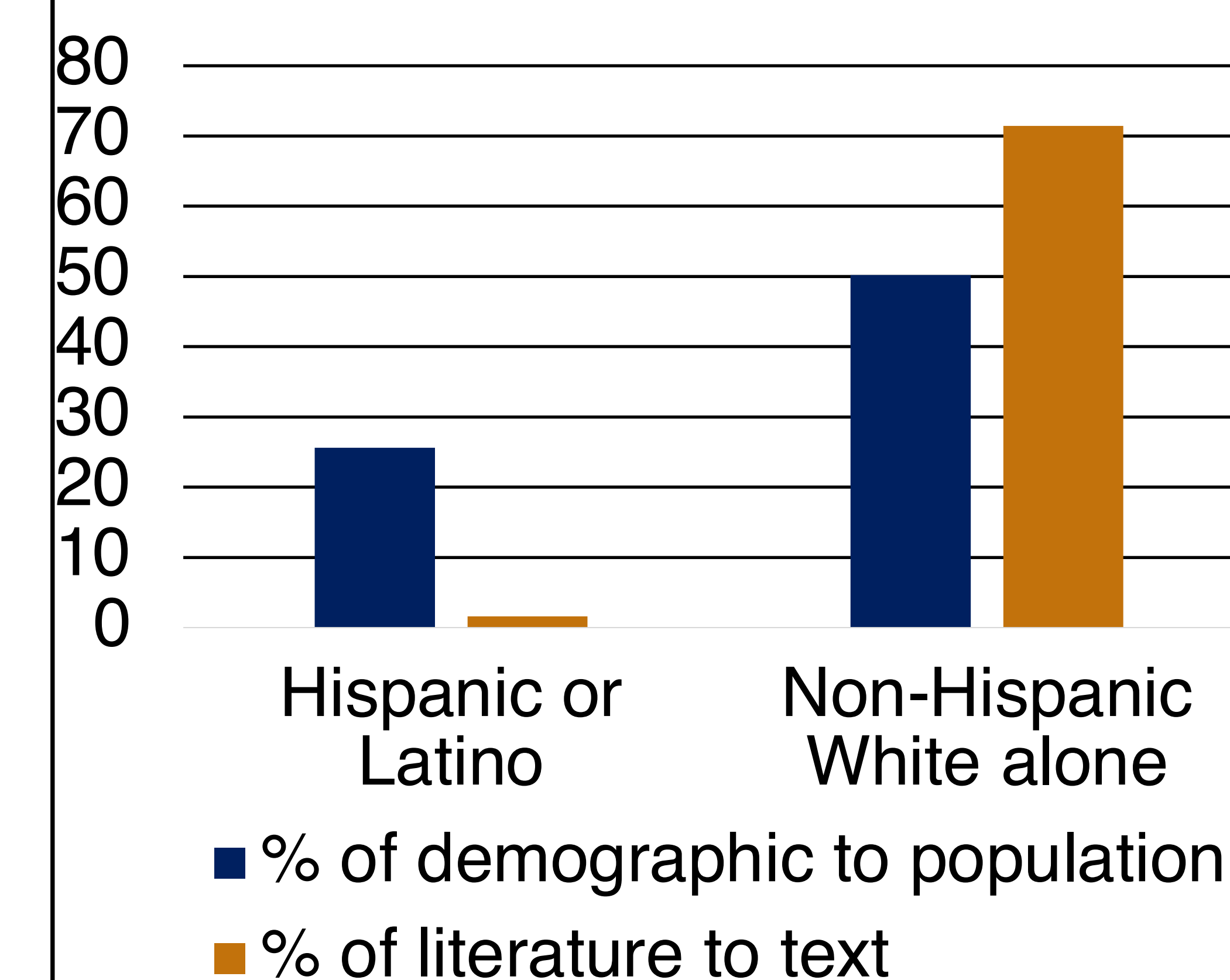
Ernest Hemingway
Ethnicity: White

Shifting the texts to…

Toni Morrison
Ethnicity: African American

Current Findings

Disproportionate Representation in Literature in Springboard 11 Curriculum

	Hispanic or Latino	Non-Hispanic White alone
% of demographic to population	26	50
% of literature to text	2	71

- All terms used in this project is based off of KID COUNTS name for each ethnic group.
- If the Springboard Grade 11 ELA curriculum reflected the national demographics based on ethnicity, then Hispanic or Latino authors would be represented approximately 25.6% of the time. Instead, Hispanic or Latino authors are represented approximately 1.6% of the time.
- In the Springboard Grade 11 Curriculum reflected the national demographics based on ethnicity, then Non-Hispanic White alone authors would be represented approximately 50.22% of the time. Instead, Non-Hispanic White alone are represented approximately 71.43% of the time.

References