



Seven Forms of Bias

Curricular bias in materials and structure include:

Invisibility: Under-representation of certain groups, which can imply that these groups are of less value, importance and significance.

Stereotyping: Assigning only traditional or rigid roles or attributes to a group, thus limiting the abilities and potential of that group; denying students knowledge of the diversity and complexity of, and variations among, any group of individuals.

Imbalance/Selectivity: Presenting only one interpretation of an issue, situation, or group; distorting reality and ignoring complex and differing viewpoints through selective presentation of materials.

Unreality: Presenting an unrealistic portrayal of this country's history and contemporary life experience.

Fragmentation/Isolation: Separating issues relating to people of color and women (or other protected groups) from the main body of text.

Linguistic Bias: Excluding the roles and importance of females by constant use of the generic "he" and sex-biased words. Linguistic bias includes issues of ethnicity, culture and language proficiency as well. (Bethke, 1985)

Cosmetic Bias: Creating an illusion that particular texts or materials have been infused with equity and diversity when in fact minimal efforts to conduct research and address diversity throughout the entire text have been made. Shortcuts to transformations of texts include adding a few pictures and adding "special focus sections" that discuss, yet segregate information about under-represented groups with exceptional or stereotypic stories. (Sadker/Lerner, 1997)