The Complexity of Cultural Authenticity in Children's Literature:
A Critical Review

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Cultural authenticity in children's literature is one of those contentious issues that seems to resurface continuously, always eliciting strong emotions and a wide range of perspectives. Authors, illustrators, editors, publishers, educators, theoreticians, and researchers all have different points of view about authenticity that they feel strongly about based on their sociocultural experiences and philosophical perspectives. In our initial review of discussions and research on this issue, the complexity of the issues being debated was apparent, but we also found that the debates were often reduced to simplistic insider/outsider distinctions, specifically whether Whites should write books about people of color. We decided to conduct a more thorough critical review of the essays and research published on cultural authenticity in order to identify the issues and range of perspectives. Our goals for this review were to discover patterns in current work and to suggest possible directions for future research about cultural authenticity in children's literature.

The first dilemma we encountered was defining cultural authenticity. We found that most educators and children's authors are reluctant to define cultural authenticity in specific ways but are more likely to discuss it using intuitive terms. Many seem to agree with Bishop (2003) that cultural authenticity cannot be defined but "you know it when you see it" as an insider reading a book about your own culture. Similarly, Howard (1991) argued that readers know a book is "true" because they feel it, deep down, saying, "Yes, that's how it is." In defining cultural authenticity, Howard argued that educators have to pay attention to how a book affects the reader. The reader's sense of truth in how a specific cultural experience has been represented within a book, particularly when the reader is an insider to the culture portrayed in that book, is probably the most common understanding of cultural authenticity.

Issues of the universal and specific also influence definitions of cultural authenticity. For example, Howard (1991) maintained that an authentic book is one in which a universality of experience permeates a story that is set within the particularity of characters and setting. The universal and specific come together to create a book in which "readers from the culture will know that it is true, will identify, and be affirmed, and readers from another culture will feel that it is true, will identify, and learn something of value about both similarities and differences among us" (p. 92). Given that each reading of a book is a unique transaction which results in different interpretations (Rosenblatt, 1938) and given the range of experiences within any cultural group, this definition of cultural authenticity immediately hints at why there are so many debates about the authenticity of a particular hook.

Indeed, the complexity and multiplicity within and across cultures provides an important backdrop for any discussion of cultural authenticity in children's literature. Geertz (1973) defined culture as "the shared patterns that set the tone, character, and quality of people's lives" (p. 216). These patterns include race, ethnicity, gender, social class, language, religion, age, sexual orientation, nationality, geographical regions, and so forth. Most social scientists define culture as primarily consisting of the symbolic, ideational, and intangible aspects of society- the values, symbols, interpretations, and perspectives that distinguish one group of people from another (Banks, 2001).

Despite the shared patterns and experiences within cultural groups, cultures are always dynamic, complex, and changing and must be viewed as wholes, rather than as composed of discrete parts (Banks, 2001). Educators have proposed several possibilities for determining cultural authenticity for a specific group even though there are always differences within that group. For example, Mo and Shen (2003) argued that cultural authenticity can be defined as whether or not a book reflects those values, facts, and attitudes that members of a culture as a whole consider worthy of acceptance or belief. Similarly, Bishop (2003) proposed that cultural authenticity be defined as the extent to which a book reflects the worldview of a specific cultural group and the authenticating details of language and everyday life for members of that cultural group. She notes that while there will be no one image of life within a specific cultural context, there are themes, textual features, and underlying ideologies for each cultural group that can be used to determine cultural authenticity.

METHODOLOGY FOR REVIEWING THE PROFESSIONAL LITERATURE

Given these definitions of culture and cultural authenticity, we engaged in a search for articles and book chapters on cultural authenticity published in the last 10 years (1993-2003). We used various search engines as well as the bibliographies of articles and chapters identified in our initial searches. Because cultural authenticity has been a focus of debate, we found that the authors and educators extensively referenced and responded to others' writing about these issues, so the bibliographies of these pieces served as major sources for identifying related works. From a large number of articles and chapters, we identified the major voices-those works and/or voices that were referenced multiple times. The pieces selected for our analysis included published manuscripts that had been extensively referenced as well as several recent chapters that represented the current research and views of educators who had been referenced previously within multiple articles on cultural authenticity. The selected works were ones in which the major focus was on cultural authenticity in children's literature, not pieces which included only a brief discussion of these issues within a different central focus.

We read across the selected works to derive the themes and patterns in the questions asked and issues raised about cultural authenticity. Through our reading, extensive discussion, and writing together, we identified eight major questions related to the central issues cutting across the pieces and also identified the range of varied perspectives related to each of these questions.

At the meeting of the National Reading Conference in December 2003, a number of these educators presented then research on cultural authenticity in an alternative format session that we organized and chaired. At the end of this session, six small groups of literacy educators each identified, listed, and presented their proposals for future research on cultural authenticity in children's literature. These small group lists were then examined for patterns in the types of directions being proposed.

ISSUES IDENTIFIED IN CURRENT DEBATES
ABOUT CULTURAL AUTHENTICITY

Eight key questions about cultural authenticity were identified across the 20 articles and chapters included in this review as reflecting the key debates within the field.

Can Outsiders Write Authentically About Another Culture?

The outsider/insider distinction is probably the most frequently, and endlessly, debated issue within cultural authenticity. This question is often asked and answered from oppositional positions with both sides vehemently arguing their perspective. Some children's authors see this question as a form of censorship and an attempt to restrict an author's freedom to write (Lasky, 1996). From this perspective, cultural authenticity is viewed as a personal attack on an author's ability as a writer.

Other authors and educators argue that the question reflects larger issues of power structures and a history of negative misrepresentations of people of color in children's literature (Harris, 1996; Woodson, 1998; Bishop, 2003). They believe that this question ignores the historical context of racist stereotypes and misrepresentations of African Americans by White authors in children's books and the desire of African Americans for African American children to see themselves more positively portrayed within literature.

The majority of authors and educators argue that this question is simplistic and sets up a dichotomy that overlooks the broader sociopolitical issues, and they discuss ways to problematize and complicate the outsider/insider question. One issue is that this question is typically asked by Whites to authors of color (Woodson, 1998). Another is that publishers often limit authors of color by asking them to write only books about their own specific ethnic group. These authors argue that they are viewed as representative of their racial identities and are not allowed to assume multiple perspectives, while White authors are seen as the norm (Rochman, 1993; Harris, 1996). A further issue is the cultural complexity of those who create children's books. Speaking from a biracial perspective, Guevara (2003) argued against definitions that establish rigid boundaries based on appearances and experiences and argues that valuing the complexity in what is "true" makes literature and life rich and varied.

Does an Author Have a Social Responsibility and, if so, How Does That Responsibility Relate to Authorial Freedom?

There is strong disagreement among educators and authors about the relationships between authenticity, authorial freedom, and an author's social responsibility. Harris (1996) pointed out that many children's authors see authenticity as standing in opposition to authorial freedom the freedom of authors to use their creative imaginations and literary skills to tell a powerful story. Many children's authors, Such as Lasky (1996), believe that this freedom is at

the heart of great literature and is endangered by the call for cultural authenticity. Several educators view the debate about cultural authenticity as actually being a debate about social responsibility. Taxel (1997) believes that authors have both a social and artistic responsibility to be thoughtful and cautious when they write about characters, plots, and themes related to specific cultural groups, whether they are insiders or outsiders to that culture.

Another related issue is whether authors have a social responsibility to provide multicultural characters that are role models for children. Harris (1996) argued that these stories and characters should provide role models who either inspire readers or correct stereotypes. Rochman (1993) noted, however, that stories can be too reverential and need to provide a complex picture of individuals showing both their faults and their courage.

Several educators and authors argue that there is a relationship between authorial freedom and authorial arrogance. They believe that the real issue is the contrast between authorial freedom and authorial arrogance, or the belief that authors should be able to write freely without subjecting their work to critical scrutiny (Harris, 1996; Taxel, 1997). Bishop (2003) connected authorial arrogance with White privilege, noting that Whites have been socialized into a racialized society that gives them particular privileges and status that are not available to people of color and that are not acknowledged but simply taken for granted as the way life is for everyone. Without critical scrutiny, White authors are often unable to transcend their positions of privilege when writing books about people from marginalized cultures and so continue subtle forms of racism, even when the more blatant racism and misrepresentations of the past have been eliminated from their writing. This cultural arrogance is based in the assumption by many members of mainstream society that what they value is universally valued by other cultures.

Another aspect of authorial arrogance is identified as the assumption by Whites that they can represent everyone themselves. Seto (1995) saw this arrogance as silencing those who demand the right to represent themselves. Woodson (1998) argued that the issue is not preventing White authors from writing certain stories but the rights of people of color to tell their own stories and that focusing on the authorial freedom of White writers keeps Whites in a position of power instead of focusing on the real issues. This position is based on a belief that the real issue is the desire of members of a particular culture to tell their own stories as a way to pass on their culture and that this desire is not the same as restricting the freedom of authors to choose their own topics (Bishop, 2003).

How Do Criteria for Cultural Authenticity Relate to Literary Excellence in Evaluating a Book?

An issue that appears in most of the articles and chapters we reviewed is some variation on the question of what criteria should be used to evaluate children's books, specifically the use of cultural authenticity as a criterion when a book reflects the experiences of a specific cultural group. While everyone seems to agree that children's books should always be evaluated according to standards of literary excellence, most believe that cultural authenticity should also he an essential criterion for evaluating a hook. Others see problems with authenticity as a criterion fir evaluation and believe that literary excellence should stand alone as the primary criterion for evaluating a hook. Aronson (1995) was concerned that authenticity involves only

judging a book by the ancestry of the author and so does not reflect the complexity of culture with conflicting values and points of view. He discussed the cultural crossing that occurs continuously in music and argues that multiculturalism is the "mess of stories" that we all receive and write. He believed in demanding high standards of artistry rather than trying to assess the author's cultural qualifications. Lasky (1996) agreed that authenticity often leads to prejudging a book based on authorship, instead of allowing a book to stand or fall based on its own literary merits and ability to generate "aesthetic heat" through the artist's craft.

Many of the authors and educators, however, take the stance that literary excellence and cultural authenticity are not in opposition and are both essential. For example, Cai (1995) noted that a book is always evaluated for both content and writing style and that cultural authenticity focuses on content while literary criteria focus on writing. He argued that there is no dichotomy between a good and an authentic story. The majority of authors and educators argue that the debate is not whether cultural authenticity should be a criterion for evaluating a book, but what kind of criteria and understandings should be used, particularly when a cultural outsider creates the book in question.

What Kinds of Experiences Matter for Authors in Writing Culturally Authentic Books?

The question of what constitutes the kinds of experiences needed to write with truth as an outsider of a specific culture is often raised. Cai (1995) directly addressed this issue through his discussion of the relationship between imagination and experience. He notes that imagination is needed for a book to have literary excellence but that too much imagination without experience leads to inaccuracies and bias, defeating the purpose of multicultural literature to liberate readers from stereotypes. Other authors and educators seem to agree that specific children's authors have successfully crossed cultural gaps to write outside their own experiences and do not argue that only insiders can write about a particular culture; however, most believe that writing as an outsider is very difficult and requires extreme diligence by authors to gain the experiences necessary to write authentically within another culture.

There is disagreement among educators and authors, however, on what counts as an experience necessary to cross a cultural gap as an outsider and how direct those experiences must be. Seto (1995) took the strong position that it is morally wrong for Whites to write about other cultures unless they have direct, personal experiences with the culture that lead to understanding this culture within their hearts. Using the metaphor of sitting around a dinner table, Woodson (1998) argued that an author must experience another's world through personal experiences and/or significant personal relationships in order to write with truth about the other's world. She makes it clear that she is not arguing that authors can write only semi-autobiographical novels but that the experiences must be deep and significant. Nikola-Lisa (1998) argued against this viewpoint, noting the increasing diversity of who sits around our tables and the multiracial nature of communities, families, and individuals. He believed that there are other kinds of experiences beyond personal relationships that count, including negative intercultural experiences and an awareness of one's own prejudices.

Most authors who successfully write outside their own culture have had significant in-depth experiences within that culture over many years and have engaged in careful and

thorough research (Cai, 1995). Moreillon (1999) provided insights into the strategies she used as an author writing a children's book outside her own culture, including consulting a range of information sources, asking for responses to her text from an insider who also had expertise in the study of that culture, and hiring an insider illustrator for the text. She also shared the way s in which readers from a range of cultural backgrounds have responded to her book, reflecting the criterion that authenticity relates to how a book affects a reader.

Guevara (2003) believed that all authors create from their own experiences, intuition, and research, so there can never be a simplistic scale for evaluating authenticity based on appearance or experience. As an illustrator, she reads a story from the perspective of whether or not the story moves her, whether or not she experiences the world of the story, instead of its "authenticity." If she is able to experience the world of the story, she knows she will be able to draw from her own experiences, relationships, and multiple identities to illustrate the book. What she is unable to envision through experience, she researches. If she does not feel a sense of connection to the story, she chooses not to illustrate that text.

One proposal in the professional literature on cultural authenticity is that authors should be explicit about the difficulties inherent in writing outside their own culture and that they should indicate in writing how they have worked to gain the "real" experiences needed to write a particular book (Bishop, 2003). Evaluating authenticity could thus involve reviewing an author's note or some other indication of the process by which a book was created. The types of experiences necessary to write a particular book also relate to the author's intentions for that book. Bishop (2003) noted that multicultural children's books are both specific and universal in that they reflect difference by portraying a culturally-specific experience as well as commonality through universal themes. She pointed out that some authors write generic books that only are based in universal themes and experiences. The intentions of these authors are not to portray a specific cultural experience, so the ethnicities of the characters may be interchangeable and apparent only by skin color, not in the character's actions, dialogue, relationships, or ways of thinking. An author who intends to write a generic book does not need the same depth of experience as an author who intends to write a culturally-specific book. Bishop (2003) argued that these generic books can be evaluated on literary criteria, but not for authenticity since a specific cultural experience has not been portrayed.

In response, Yenika-Agbaw (1998) argued that these universal or generic books are problematic because they are based on the assumption that a unitary and homogeneous human nature exists. This focus on universal themes, separate from a specific cultural experience, maintains the superiority of the dominant culture and marginalizes and excludes oppressed cultures. Her discussion of this issue connects to the views of other educators on cultural arrogance and White privilege, where the dominant worldview is accepted as the "normal" one.

Many of the educators draw from the framework created by Sims (1982) for examining the distinguishing characteristics of African American books. She identified a category of culturally conscious books that place a child of color within the context of their own families and neighborhoods, tell the story from that child's perspective, and indicate through text and illustrations that this is a story about a child of color. Her framework is used to argue that authors can write with cultural consciousness by accurately portraying the history, cultural

traditions, behaviors, and language of a specific cultural group as well as drawing on human universals (Noll, 1995).

What Are an Author's Intentions for Writing a Particular Book?

An author's motivation for writing a particular book must also be examined when considering the issue of cultural authenticity. Bishop (2003) proposed that one question authors need to ask themselves is why they want to write a particular book. Not only does making an author's intentions and ideology explicit influence the criteria for evaluating a book, but this process also engages an author in the critical self-examination necessary for choosing whether or not to write outside one's culture and for clarifying what kind of story that author really seeks to write. She pointed out that an author of color often writes within his or her own culture with the intention of enhancing the self-concept of children of color and in order to challenge existing stereotypes and dominant assumptions about culture, as well as to pass on the central values and stories of that culture to children. Authors writing outside their own cultures often focus on intentions of building awareness of cultural differences and improving intercultural relationships. These differing intentions result in different stories for different audiences and different evaluations of authenticity.

Authors who write outside their own culture for monetary gain risk an even more problematic critique of intention. Seto (1995) believed that writers who do not have direct, personal experiences within the culture they are writing about are literally stealing from other cultures. Similarly, Smolkin and Suina (1997) labeled these intentions as cultural exploitation, taking property and possessions from the culture for the financial benefit of the author.

What Are the Criteria Beyond Accuracy for Evaluating the Cultural Authenticity of the Content and Images of a Book?

The criteria that are typically considered first in evaluating the content of a book are the accuracy of the details and the lack of stereotyping and misrepresentation included within a book. The major debates related to this question are based in the belief that authors cannot ignore cultural facts and that both the visible facts of external reality and the invisible facts of internal reality must be accurately represented (Cai, 1995).

Several educators discuss criteria for recognizing culturally offensive images. For example, Noll (1995) raised the issue of providing accurate perspectives without perpetuating negative images in historical literature. She pointed out the need to portray accurately the prevailing views of a particular historical time period while also presenting alternative views.

A further debate concerns whether locating inaccuracies is enough to determine authenticity. Smolkin and Suina (1997) used the term cultural sensitivity to distinguish whether or not a book is sensitive to the concerns of the culture that is portrayed. Cai (1995) refered to this cultural sensitivity as an ethnic perspective, the worldview of a specific cultural group that has been shaped by an ideological difference with the majority view. Authors who write outside their own culture often do not assume this ethnic perspective and instead may unconsciously impose their own perspective onto the depicted culture with an attitude of cultural arrogance.

Mo and Shen (2003) extended this discussion of authenticity beyond accuracy or the avoidance of stereotyping to the cultural values and practices that are accepted as norms within a particular social group. They argue that accuracy focuses on cultural facts while authenticity focuses on cultural values. Evaluations of accuracy can therefore indicate whether or not the facts in the story believably exist in a culture but not whether those facts actually represent the values held by most of the people in that group. From their perspective, a story can be accurate but not authentic by portraying cultural practices that exist but are not part of the central code of a culture. This central code, they argue, relates to the range of values acceptable within a social group while also recognizing the conflicts and changes in beliefs within a culture. However, Mo and Shen also argue that cultural authenticity does not provide the right to introduce values that are in violation of basic human rights. They further complicate authenticity by discussing issues involved in value conflicts between the culture from which a story is taken and the culture for which the book is intended, and they point to the need to consider both cultures in determining authenticity.

These same issues of cultural facts and values can be viewed within international contexts. Yenika-Agbaw (1998) used a postcolonial theoretical perspective in a consideration of authenticity in particular international contexts, specifically West Africa. She argues that postcolonialism is essential to deconstructing colonial ideologies of power that privilege Western cultural practices, challenge the history of colonized groups, and give voice to those that have been marginalized by colonization. She extends issues of domination and unequal power distribution to nations, rather than only to specific cultural groups within a nation.

Illustrations and images in children's literature provide the basis for additional criteria for cultural authenticity. Mo and Shen (2003) indicated that authenticity is based on whether the art form serves its purpose in relation to the story, but they also argue that an authentic art form does not have to be rigidly interpreted as the typical traditional style. They value the creative process that leads to art that is part of the story to create an authentic whole. However, the role of art differs across cultures, and mainstream traditions of graphic experimentation with art elements to enhance meaning can change or confuse meanings for members of a culture when that experimentation contradicts specific cultural traditions (Smolkin & Suina, 1997).

The use of particular words and phrases from a specific culture within an English-language book is another factor to consider when determining cultural authenticity (Barrera & Quiroa, 2003). The issue of language centers not so much on accurate translations as on how the words are used, particularly whether the words are added for cultural flavor and result in stereotypes. Instead, language elements have to be used strategically and skillfully with cultural sensitivity to create powerful bilingual images of characters, settings, and themes. Not only must phrases and words enhance the literary merits of the book, but they should also make the story comprehensible and engaging to both monolingual and bilingual readers without slighting the languages or literary experiences of either. Barrera and Quiroa argue that the tendency to stay with formulaic and sale uses of Spanish and to translate literally these words in order to cater to the needs of monolingual readers often results in culturally inauthentic texts for bilingual readers and poor literary quality for all readers.

What Is an "Insider" Perspective on Cultural Authenticity?

Several educators argue that no single insider perspective can be used to evaluate cultural authenticity. Smolkin and Suina (1997) documented how variations within a particular culture lead to completely different evaluations of the authenticity of a book by readers from different groups of insiders within a culture. Yenika-Agbaw (1998) reviewed several books that reflect how insiders can inadvertently perpetuate stereotypes of their own culture. In addition to showing how insiders vary in their views of their own culture, she also examines how outsiders create different types of stereotypes and images based on their own intentions and ethnic perspectives.

Recognizing the complexity of both insider and outsider perspectives adds another layer to the issues that have been previously raised, including cultural facts and values and what is considered "truth" about a particular cultural experience. Bishop (2003) argued that because variance always exists within a specific culture, no one set of definitive criteria can ever be created to evaluate books about that culture. However, she also pointed out that through a serious scholarly study of the body of books published by insiders, scholars can create a set of criteria that show the range of themes and ideologies at the *core* of a particular culture.

So Why Does Cultural Authenticity Matter?

These discussions about cultural authenticity in children's literature could be viewed as simply ivory tower debates that do not really matter in the lives of children, parents, and teachers. Cai (1998), however, pointed out that these definitions help to determine the actions teachers take in classrooms and the ways in which children approach the reading of a book. Many educators argue that cultural authenticity matters because all children have the right to see themselves within a book, to find within a book the truth of their own experiences instead of stereotypes and misrepresentations (Harris, 1996; Taxel, 1997). This argument can be extended to assert the right of authors of color to tell the stories used within a particular cultural group to pass on cultural identity to children (Woodson, 1995; Bishop, 2003). Over and over, most of the authors and educators in the articles we reviewed contend that literature is one of the significant ways that children learn about themselves and others; therefore, those images in literature should not be distorted ones.

Dudley-Marling (1997) pointed out that culturally authentic books are more engaging for children from the culture portrayed as well as a source of intercultural understandings. In addition, these books provide children with insights into power and to social and political issues while also serving to challenge the monocultural perspective of dominant society that characterizes most schooling. While he argued convincingly for the necessity of making a wide range of culturally authentic books available for children, he also pointed out the dangers of teachers assuming that they should match their perceptions of children's cultural identities with specific hooks. The teacher's role instead is to make available authentic texts reflecting diverse cultural and ethnic images and to create a space where students can represent themselves and find themselves represented within hooks.

One concern is that evaluations of the cultural authenticity of a book not be used to censor books but to engage children in critical readings of these books where they question the meanings embedded in texts from dominant cultural perspectives (Smolkin & Suina, 1997; Yenika-Agbaw, 1998). Cai (1998) pointed out that since the goal of multicultural education is to work for equity and social justice, children need to be able to tackle issues of cultural difference, equity, and assumptions about race, class, and gender as they read literature. Thus, the criteria for evaluating cultural authenticity and for raising complex issues are not just issues that those creating or choosing books for children need to consider but criteria that children themselves need to understand and employ as critical readers.

The dominant cultural code can be reinforced and sustained throughout the entire process of writing and reading a book when there is no attention to discourses of power and dominance. Fang, Fu, and Lamme (1999) documented the misuse of books about specific cultural groups within classrooms where students are taught to look at culture through categories such as food and holidays, categories that actually reinforce stereotypes and mainstream domination. They argue that teachers and children need to learn how to take negotiated and oppositional positions in their interpretations of literature and to analyze the cultural authenticity of a book and the perspective presented to the reader.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

At the 2003 National Reading Conference, six small groups of literacy educators met with several researchers whose work was included in our review to talk about these researchers' work and to discuss the most significant and promising directions for future research on cultural authenticity in children's literature. In analyzing the lists presented by each small group and in considering our own ideas based upon our critical review of the literature, we offer the following suggestions for future research.

The most important issue we identified is the need to investigate the concept of cultural authenticity within classrooms-to examine the ways in which teachers and children think about and respond to these issues as they engage with both culturally authentic and inauthentic children's literature. Future research should include an examination of the social practices of effective teachers with both authentic and inauthentic literature. In particular, we need to identify and describe the strategies of effective teachers who use controversial books with children to explore different versions of cultural stories and themes from a critical perspective. We believe this research on effective teaching is needed in order to offer teachers and teacher educators alternative images and perspectives in avoiding what may be termed "pedagogical arrest" or self-censorship in the use of controversial books within classrooms.

In addition to research on effective teaching, more research should investigate children's responses to culturally authentic and inauthentic literature. A related research direction we suggest involves an exploration of strategies for teaching students to evaluate multicultural books for authenticity. We also need more research that addresses the responses of multiple members of a culture to children's books representing that culture. In addition, we suggest further study of the strategies employed by children's authors, especially the strategies used by

outsiders who are considered by insiders to be successful in their depictions of a particular culture.

Even though some research has been conducted on preservice teachers' understandings of cultural authenticity (Wolf, Ballentine, & Hill, 1999), we believe that more research in this area is needed, particularly research to examine the responses of preservice teachers to cultural theory and to experiences with multicultural issues and literature. Such research should identify the knowledge and engagements that influence shifts or changes in how preservice teachers think about culturally authentic literature and its use with children. In addition, such research should include an examination of the ways in which preservice teachers utilize books that challenge social, political, and cultural norms.

Taken as a whole, these discussions of cultural authenticity provide much more complex understandings than simply judging whether or not the author is an insider or outsider to the culture portrayed in a book. We believe they invite the field into new conversations and possibilities for research about cultural authenticity instead of continuing to repeat the old conversations.

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