The Underrepresentation of Black and Hispanic People in Business School Teaching Cases

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Introduction

In the context of business school pedagogy, a business school teaching case (or case study) is the narrative depiction of a real business problem that serves as the basis for student analysis and classroom discussion. Their defining feature is a business problem, expressed through the narrative lens of a specific protagonist, that asks students to choose a course of action (Anderson, Schiano, and Schiano 2014). Within this basic format, case studies can vary greatly in length, discipline, and the nature of their supplementary material (data tables, charts, etc.).

Proponents of business case studies assert that their first-person narrative structure is more practical and relevant than non-narrative texts (Hammond 1980), and that cases allow for higherorder learning goals compared to those allowed by standard textbooks (Mesny 2013). Cases are also viewed as valuable tools for teaching students how to deal with the ambiguity that likely surrounds real problems in the business world (Banning 2003; Rippin et al. 2002). For this reason, case studies make up a significant portion of the curricular materials at many top business schools (Bridgman, Cummings, and McLaughlin 2016). In fact, as detractors point out, the case method's popularity over time has far outpaced research into its effectiveness (Liang and Lin 2008; Smith 1987). Concerns that case studies privilege senior management's views (Chetkovich and Kirp 2001; Contardo and Wensly 2004; Dorn 1999), promote hard skills over soft skills (Dean and Fornaciari 2002), and are teacher-centered, rather than student-centered (Currie and Tempest 2008), have done little to slow their use as a pedagogical device. Harvard Business School, the institution that originated the case teaching method (Dewing 1931; Donham 1922), informs incoming students that they will read 500 case studies over the course of a twoyear Master of Business Administration (MBA) program (Harvard Business School 2020). Cases from major publishers such as Harvard Business Publishing, Ivey Publishing, and Darden Case Publishing are used widely by instructors across institutions and make up a significant portion of the reading assigned in both undergraduate and graduate business school courses (Anteby 2013; McLaughlin and Prothero 2014).

Because of case studies' prominence in business schools, cases are positioned to influence students' perceptions of the real business landscape (Jackson 2003; Karns 2005). If certain demographic groups are underrepresented in these cases, students may normalize the idea that these groups are not and do not need to be represented in the business community. Students carry

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such unconscious biases into their managerial careers (Banaji, Bhaskar, and Brownstein 2015), contributing to an environment where People of Color hold few corporate leadership roles (DeHaas, Akutagawa, and Spriggs 2019) and face substantial hiring discrimination in the white-collar sector (Bertrand and Mullainathan 2004; Ford et al. 2004; Jowell and Prescott-Clarke 1970; Rubinstein and Brenner 2014). It is therefore incumbent upon business schools to examine and remedy racial and ethnic inequities in their curricula, an area where most fall short (Aguilar, Bracey, and Allen 2012). The goal of this work is to take a first step towards doing so, by quantifying the representation of People of Color and Hispanic people in business school case studies and investigating common themes in the cases in which they do appear.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. In the next section, we review the existing literature related to the representation of People of Color and Hispanic people in educational materials; by placing this into the larger context of racial and ethnic discrimination in the United States, we describe the motivation for our research and our novel contributions. We then lay out our methodology for this study before moving onto our results and discussion, including our recommendations for short-term steps towards increased equity. Our summary and conclusions finalize the paper.

Review of Literature

Representation of Minority Racial and Ethnic Groups in Teaching Materials

In the United States, investigations into the representation of minority racial and ethnic groups in school curricula date back as far as the 1960's, with initial surveys finding inequitable portrayals of minority ethnic groups in elementary and secondary textbooks (Gast 1967; Marcus 1961). For example, both Marcus (1961) and Carpenter and Rank (1968) found that the majority of American history textbooks portrayed Black people as either slaves or newly made freedmen, though it had been nearly a century since emancipation. These portrayals entirely ignored the societal contributions of Black people post-Reconstruction as well as their place in contemporary society, feeding into stereotypes of Black people as childlike or lacking agency. The demands of groups such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Black Panthers, and the Anti-Defamation League led to improvements throughout the 1960's and 1970's, as textbook publishers included more, and more contemporary, depictions of Black and Jewish people (FitzGerald 1979; McCarthy 1990; Zimmerman 2004). However, stereotyping and underrepresentation continued well beyond the Civil Rights Era, negatively impacting not only the minority racial groups (Charles 1989; Fordham and Ogbu 1986; Garcia 1999), but failing to prepare White students to live in a multicultural world (Wolf 1992).

More recently, authors have turned their attention to the representation of historically marginalized groups in textbooks at the university level. Across a number of disciplines, there is a disproportionately low number of women (Hardin, Dodd, and Lauffer 2006; Stevenson and Zlotnik 2018; Tietz,2007), People of Color (Foxman and Easterling 1999), and people with disabilities (Powers and Haller 2017) represented in teaching materials used in higher education. This lack of visibility contributes to the reproduction of gender, racial, and other social hierarchies within the higher education classroom; even in the confines of the most liberal institutions, groups other than White males experience marginalization (Ghosh 2008; Grier and Poole 2020; Margolis 2001; Minefee et.al 2018; Moshiri and Cardon 2019; Pawley 2017).

Racial and Ethnic Inequity in the Business World

Teaching materials are just one piece of a larger issue with institutional racism in management education. Business schools in the United States struggle to attract and retain students, faculty, and staff from underrepresented groups (Moshiri and Cardon 2019; Grier and Poole 2020), which Minefee et al. (2018) attribute to "discriminatory evaluation, knowledge- and -resource-hoarding, and the preservation of dominant group identities." In academia more generally, Bell, Berry, Leopold, and Nkomo (2021) relate specific experiences of Black women scholars in the context of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, and call for action from White people in the dismantling of White supremacy. Sue, Lin, Torino, Capodilupo, and Rivera (2009) find that microaggressions in the university classroom, and their subsequent poor handling by White professors, cause students of color to feel invalidated, insulted, and denigrated.

Generally, business schools hope that what they teach their students will be remembered and used in their careers post-graduation. Unfortunately, this can include not just the skills and knowledge they have gained, but any unconscious biases as well. While plenty of authors have written about the business case for racial equity (Blackwell et al. 2017; Richard, 2000; Slater, Weigand, and Zwirlein 2008; Turner 2016;), the United States business community remains a hostile environment for People of Color and Hispanic people (Dickens and Chavez 2018; Holloway-Friesen 2018; Sisco 2020; Smith et al. 2019). Black and Hispanic people are underrepresented in management, business, and financial operations occupations; and American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander people lack even enough representation to appear in recent reports from the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics (Bureau of Labor Statistics [USBLS] 2010). The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission received 32,003 complaints of discrimination based on race, color, or national origin in 2020 (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission 2021). Black business owners consistently underperform as compared to their White counterparts (Bates 1989; Fairlie, Robb, and Robinson 2020; Köllinger and Minniti 2006), in spite of the fact that Black Americans are more likely to attempt to start a business. This is caused by barriers such as weak internal markets and lack of access to credit, a finding that Blanchflower (2004) also observes for women and Hispanic people.

Plenty of well-known American and multinational companies have tried to improve this climate by launching high-profile diversity initiatives (Stoller 2021; Wentling and Palma-Rivas 2000), but many are centered around diversity training or mentoring programs that substitute a general acknowledgement of cultural differences for meaningful change in policies on recruitment and advancement (Dobbin and Kalev 2019; Dobbin and Kelly 2007; Maiorescu and Wrigley 2016; Roberson 2019). Though training specifically focused on unconscious bias has been in vogue in the last decade, White people confronted with their own racial biases often react defensively. Research is therefore inconclusive about whether training that focuses foremost on "admitting" to bias can be effective (Emerson 2017; Noon 2018). Ultimately, the corporate diversity initiatives popular for the last twenty years have done little to reduce the dominance of White people in their organizations (Briscoe and Gupta 2016; Dennissen, Benschop, and van den Brink 2019; Ray 2019).

Motivation

Given the many barriers faced by People of Color and Hispanic people in the business

community, progress toward equity will require many solutions. Representation in business school teaching cases is one such solution, which we find promising in its practicality. There is evidence that biases may be unlearned through subtle exposure to counter-stereotypical examples of group members, and that this approach is likely to encounter little resistance from the dominant group (Devine, Forscher, Austin, and Cox 2012; Madva 2017; Tropp and Godsil 2015). Students may be especially susceptible to being influenced by to representation as presented in case studies, as compared to textbooks or fictional narratives, because of the cases' purported "realism." In general, business school instructors find value in case studies beyond the specific concepts being trained, because the use of specific details, such as a named protagonist and recreated dialogue, also socializes students into the norms of the business world (Ehrensal 2016; Stewart 1991). Taking a more critical view, Liang and Wang (2004) argue that case studies are presented to students as a depiction of reality, even when they take too narrow an approach to the people and organizations portrayed.

Previous studies that have looked at diversity in business school case studies have largely focused on the underrepresentation of women. Symons and Iberra (2014) found that fewer than 10% of the best-selling and award-winning cases from The Case Centre had female protagonists, while Sharen and McGowan (2019) found that when there were female protagonists, they were given cliched female traits, like being risk-averse and less decisive than their male counterparts. Soule, Drabkin, and Mackenzie (2019) investigate both gender and ethnic stereotypes found in case studies but focus largely on specific examples of stereotyping and how case authors can avoid them.

While there exists speculation that People of Color are underrepresented in business school case studies (Ethier 2017, our work is unique in that it empirically tests this hypothesis. Our contributions to the literature are as follows: 1) We develop a method for quantifying the number of case protagonists from each of the five United States Census-recognized racial groups and the Hispanic ethnic group; 2) We apply this system to the 2018 best-selling cases from a major case distributor; 3) We show that, as compared to the racial and ethnic composition of the United States population, Black and Hispanic people are underrepresented in business school teaching cases, while non-Hispanic White and Asian people are overrepresented; and 4) We conclude with suggestions for how authors, instructors, publishers, and distributors of case studies can take steps towards more equitable representation.

Methodology

We tested the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: The percentage of protagonists in case studies who are People of Color is less than the percentage of People of Color in the general population.

Hypothesis 2: The percentage of protagonists in case studies who are Hispanic people is less than the percentage of Hispanic people in the general population.

Hypothesis 3: The percentage of non-Hispanic White protagonists in case studies is greater than the percentage of non-Hispanic White people in the general population.

Sampling Frame

Mimicking the sampling methodology used by Symons and Iberra (2014), we used the 2018 best-selling cases in each business discipline from *The Case Centre*, a large distributor of cases from a variety of publishers, as our sample set. Best-sellers make sense as a sample set because they are, by definition, the cases that have the largest impact on business students. This gave us a broad cross-section of both business disciplines and case publishers, and by using best-selling cases, we focus our study on those most likely to be read by students. The ten disciplines represented were: Case Method and Specialist Management Disciplines; Economics, Politics, and Business Environment; Entrepreneurship; Ethics and Social Responsibility; Finance, Accounting, and Control; Human Resource Management/Organizational Behavior; Knowledge, Information, and Communication Systems Management; Marketing; Production and Operations Management; and Strategy and General Management. This gave us an initial set of 145 cases. We then checked the case for at least one protagonist, which we defined as the character challenged with solving the business problem in the case. Typically, business students are asked to assume this person's perspective as they complete their case analysis.

After removing those without at least one protagonist, 106 cases from 32 different case publishers remained, with the majority being from Harvard Business Publishing (41 cases), INSEAD (9 cases), Ivey Publishing (7 cases), and Stanford Business School (6 cases). A full list of publishers included in this sample set is given in Table 1. Of these 106 cases, 98 had a single protagonist, and 8 had two protagonists. We therefore had a total of 114 protagonists in our sample.

Table 1 Frequency of case publishers in sample of cases

Publisher	Number of Cases in Sample Set
Harvard Business Publishing	41
INSEAD	9
Ivey Publishing	7
Stanford Business School	6
Babson College	5
Darden Business Publishing	4
IMD Business School	4
London Business School	3
Columbia CaseWorks, Columbia Business School	2
ESMT European School of Management and Technology	2
Singapore Management University	2
IBS Center for Management Research	2
Other publishers with a single case in our sample	19

Because we are concerning ourselves with American business students and considering representation in relation to the United States population, we further divided our sample set by the country or countries in which it takes place; we report results for cases based both in and out of the United States. We classified a case as taking place in the United States if its setting was at least partially in the United States, regardless of if the case spanned multiple countries. For example, a case concerning a United States-based company seeking to expand its profile in Japan

was considered to be United States-based, because the focus was largely on the dilemma faced by United States-based executives, and would therefore contribute to students' perceptions of the United States business environment.

Methods of Racial Categorization

In defining "underrepresentation," we compared the percentage of case protagonists of a given race/ethnicity in our sample with the percentage of the general population that identifies with that specific race/ethnicity. This is consistent with how "underrepresented minority" is typically defined in graduate business education (Graduate Management Admissions Council [GMAC] 2018), and we consider representation in proportions equal to those of the general population to be the "ideal" case for which we should strive, even if that would mean People of Color and Hispanic people were overrepresented in case studies as compared to their representation in managerial positions. For example, Black people represent an estimated 12.8% of the population, but only 8% of students at AACSB-accredited MBA programs (Thomas 2020) 8.4% of the workers in management, professional, and related occupations (USBLS 2010). This is itself a problem that should be of concern to the business community, but is beyond the scope of this paper, and as such, we use the population percentage as our benchmark.

We divided protagonists into six categories of race and ethnicity based on the practices of the United States Census Bureau. We used the five racial categories from the United States Census: White; Black or African American; American Indian and Alaska Native; Asian; and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (United States Office of Management and Budget 1997), and additionally categorized protagonists as Hispanic or not Hispanic. Classifying people into both a racial group and by Hispanic or non-Hispanic presented a challenge, as people of Hispanic ethnicity may identify as any race. However, the vast majority of Hispanic people in the United States identify as White (United States Census Bureau 2010), and the percentage that identify as non-White Hispanic is too small to have an impact on our conclusions regarding representation.

A comparison of the percentage of people in each racial category in the 2010 census, those same percentages with Hispanic listed as a separate category, and the 2019 projections are given in Table 2. Note that the 2019 data are less precise, and therefore 2.2% of people are double-counted in both a non-White racial group and the Hispanic group. For precision, we use the 2010 United States Census data with Hispanic as a separate category for the remainder of this paper, and we have confirmed that our results are not sensitive to this choice.

Categorizing the protagonists by race is more challenging than the gender categorizations done by other authors, both because of the shifting definition of race itself (Helms, Jernigan, and Mascher 2005) and the lack of clear textual references to race analogous to gender-specific pronouns. Therefore, our categorization of "race" could more precisely be described as "students' most likely perception of the race of the protagonist" (cite: page #). For consistency with other research that has categorized race based on either last name (Fryer and Levitt 2004) or first name (Bertrand and Mullainathan 2004; Jowell and Prescott-Clarke 1970), we included analyses of first and last names in our methods.

Another dilemma in categorizing case study protagonists by race is the difference between textual and visual cues. The case studies we examined exist as text, though some have

supplemental videos or pictures. Some students may read the case material and develop an image of the protagonist in their head based on textual cues alone. Others may do additional research to deepen their case understanding, and even the most minimal internet search will show pictures of the more famous case protagonists. Accounting for the differences in both student behavior and case formats required us to consider both textual and visual evidence of race and ethnicity present in how the narratives are stated, the supplementary materials, and readily-available external information.

Table 2
Racial makeup of people in the United States

	2010 United States Census Data		2019 Census Bureau Estimate	
Category	Hispanic as a Separate Category	Hispanic Included in Racial Categories	Hispanic Included in Racial Categories Except White	
Asian	5.2%	5.4%	5.9%	
Black	12.6%	13.2%	13.4%	
Hispanic	16.9%		18.5%	
White, non-Hispanic	63.4%	72.6%	60.1%	
American Indian and Alaska Native	1.3%	1.7%	1.30%	
Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander	0.3%	0.4%	0.2%	
Other	0.3%	6.8%	2.8%	
Total	100.0%	100.1% ^a	102.2% ^b	

^aTotals more than 100% due to rounding.

We therefore applied three methods of racial categorization to each case protagonist:

- 1) Last name categorization: We looked up the last name (family name) of each protagonist in the 2010 United States Census database provided by the federal government (U.S. Census Bureau 2011), currently the most recent data available. We then divided the percentage of census respondents of that name that belonged to a given racial and ethnic category by the overall percentage of census respondents in that racial and ethnic category to calculate a prevalence factor. We then categorized the protagonist as being a member of the racial or ethnic group with the highest prevalence factor. For example, 94.9% of census respondents with the last name "Hernandez" are Hispanic, compared to 18.3% of all census respondents. This would give a prevalence factor of 5.2, higher than that of any other racial or ethnic group, and a strong indicator that someone with this last name is Hispanic. If a name was not found in the database, we listed it as "uncategorizable" by this method.
- 2) First name categorization: We looked up the first name (given name) of each protagonist in the database, Data Descriptor: Demographic aspects of first names (Tzioumis 2018). Using the same calculation used for last names, we calculated prevalence factors for first names and categorized the protagonist as a member of the racial group with the highest prevalence factor. If a name was not found in the database, we listed it as "uncategorizable" by this method. The use of first names as a signifier of race and ethnicity is consistent with guidelines published by Educational Testing Service (ETS),

^bTotals more than 100% due to people double-counted as both Hispanic and a non-White racial category.

- administrator of the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) and the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) for higher education. ETS considers it a best practice to carefully choose names used in the texts of questions to avoid negative feelings in test takers of any ethnic or racial group (ETS, 2016).
- 3) Subjective categorization: To account for other factors, such as the physical appearance of well-known protagonists, each of the two researchers independently categorized protagonists by race based on information both in the case and external to it. The first researcher is a second-generation American of Ashkenazi Jewish descent, and the second is an American of Black and Southeast Asian descent. The subjective categorization process included watching videos or any other supplementary material provided by the case publishers, as well as internet searches for the protagonist's image. We then compared any evidence of the protagonist's appearance to physical features characteristic of the various racial and ethnic groups, such as skin color, hair color, and eye shape. The researchers also considered textual clues such as surname prefixes. For example, the last name "MacCrain," while not found in the last name database, read to both researchers as White (specifically, Scottish or Irish) based on the "Mac" prefix. Though categorization of physical features and names is subject to difficulties that arise from the natural phenotypic variation within groups (Relethford 2009) the biases of the observer (Feliciano 2016), and the adoption of surnames via marriage, the Cohen's Kappa for interrater reliability was calculated as 0.971, indicating near-perfect agreement between raters (Cohen 1960; Landis and Koch 1977). If the two researchers were not in agreement, we listed it as "uncategorizable" by this method.

One example of a protagonist challenging to first/last name categorization but benefiting from subjective categorization is that of Elon Musk, protagonist of multiple cases in our sample. While neither his first name or his last name is common (Elon is not found in the first name database and Musk is found in the last name database as representing .00009% of the population), he is regularly featured in visual media in the United States and presents as a White man. We therefore assumed that students in American business schools would have a mental image of him as such.

After completing these analytical steps, if two of the three methods categorized a protagonist into the same racial group, we used that categorization in summarizing the results. We were able to categorize 105 out of 114 protagonists in this manner. We considered the remaining nine protagonists "uncategorizable." The latter was typically a result of names so uncommon in the United States that they were not found in either first name or last name databases.

Further Analysis Methods

We characterized each case protagonist as "real" or "fake" based on the information provided by the case authors in the teaching notes accompanying each case. For cases without teaching notes, or for which the protagonist's authenticity was unclear from the teaching note, we characterized cases based on their internet footprints. If an internet search for the protagonist based on their name and organization returned no results (except references to the case in which they were featured), we classified them as fake. In some cases, the entire company was fake; in others, the company was real but we could not find any profile of the case protagonist. In the latter situation, it's possible that the protagonist was based on a real person or was a composite of two or more people, so "anonymized" might be a more precise description than "fake." For our purposes, we

did not distinguish between anonymized or fake protagonists. In either instance, students reading the case would be limited to the case text for information about the protagonist. None of the cases labeled "fake" by this method had supplemental videos or other materials that would dispute this categorization.

Once the case protagonists were categorized, we counted the number of protagonists in our sample that fit each racial/ethnic category and calculated the percentage of all protagonists in our sample. Because our hypothesis specifies a specific direction in which the percentage of case studies will differ from the population percentage, we use a one-tailed test of proportion to determine the mathematical significance of our results (Ryan 1960). If the p-value for the test was less than 0.05, we concluded that the sample set provides evidence of either over- or underrepresentation.

Results and Discussion

A summary of our results is given in Table 3 as the percentage of cases with protagonists from each racial group alongside that group's representation in the United States population. For case narratives taking place both in and out of the United States, we see that Black people make up 12.6% of the population, but only 0.9% of case protagonists, while the percentages for Hispanic people are 16.9% and 3.5%, respectively. The statistical significance of the one-tailed test for underrepresentation of Black and Hispanic people are both p < .001, indicating it is highly unlikely that the true representation in case studies matches that of the general population, given what we've found in our sample. We found zero case protagonists in the American Indian and Alaska Native or Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander racial groups. We cannot calculate

Table 3
Racial makeup of primary protagonists in best-selling business teaching cases as compared to racial makeup of the United States population, 2010

	2010 US					
	Census					
	Data with					
	Hispanic		Percentage of	99% Confidence		
	as a	Total Number	Case	Interval for		
	Separate	of Case	Protagonists	Percentage of Case	z-	
Category	Category	Protagonists	in Sample	Protagonists	statistic	p-value
Asian	5.2%	12	10.5%	N/A ^a	N/Aª	N/A ^a
Black	12.6%	1	0.9%	$[0\%, 2.9\%]^{b}$	3.77	<.001
Hispanic	16.9%	4	3.5%	$[0\%, 7.5\%]^{b}$	3.70	<.001
White, non-						
Hispanic	63.4%	88	77.2%	[68.04%,86.35%]	3.00	.001
American Indian						
and Alaska Native	1.3%	-	0%	N/A ^a	N/A ^a	N/A ^a
Native Hawaiian						
and other Pacific						
Islander	0.3%	-	0%	N/A ^a	N/A ^a	N/A ^a
Other	0.3%	-	0%	N/A ^a	N/A ^a	N/A ^a
Uncategorizable	N/A	9	7.9%			
Total	100.0%	114	100.0%			

^aPopulation percentage is too low to calculate a valid z-statistic

52

^bInterval is truncated at a lower bound of zero

a statistically valid p-value or demonstrate statistical significance because of their very small percentages in the total population, but we still consider it salient that people from these groups appear in zero cases. This is consistent with the literature from adjacent disciplines suggesting that these groups are underrepresented in teaching materials (Carter 2002; Pewewardy 1998; Takeda 2016).

As shown in Table 4, if we only consider cases that take place in the United States, Black people are 1.7% of case protagonists, while Hispanic people are 3.3%. These again result in p-values of less than .001. The same is true for any combination of cases set inside/outside of the United States and real/fake protagonist groupings. In all cases Black and Hispanic protagonists are underrepresented in our sample to a degree that supports Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2 with respect to these groups.

Table 4
Racial makeup of primary protagonists in best-selling business teaching cases broken down by setting and authenticity of protagonist

	Cases Set in the United States			Cases Not Set in the United States		
	Fake	Real	All	Fake	Real	All
Category	Protagonists	Protagonists	Protagonists	Protagonists	Protagonists	Protagonists
Asian	0%	12.2%	8.3%	5.0%	17.6%	13.0%
Black	5.3%	0%	1.7%	0%	0%	0%
Hispanic	5.3%	2.4%	3.3%	5.0%	2.9%	3.7%
White, non-						
Hispanic	84.2%	82.9%	83.3%	85.0%	61.8%	70.4%
American Indian						
and Alaska						
Native	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Native Hawaiian						
and other Pacific						
Islander	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Uncategorizable	5.3%	2.4%	3.3%	5.0%	17.6%	13.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Asian and Pacific Islanders are overrepresented among case protagonists, with 10.5% of case protagonists coming from this group that makes up only 5.9% of the United States population. The small percentage of the United States population prevents us from calculating a reliable p-value, but it is clear that our hypothesis that all non-White racial groups would be underrepresented is not supported by the data. However, given that Asian students are overrepresented among business school students (GMAC 2018), and Asian people are overrepresented in managerial/professional occupations in the United States (USBLS 2010) and in business school faculty (Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business [AACSB] 2020), it is unsurprising that they are overrepresented in business school case studies. This is also likely the racial group least vulnerable to exclusion from the modern business world, due perhaps to the rise in Asian economic power (Chen 2016) or the common stereotyping of East Asians as a "model minority" (Chou and Feagin 2015; Gardner 1992) in the United States.

Non-Hispanic White protagonists are substantially overrepresented, making up 77.2% of case

protagonists in our sample, but only 63.4% of the United States population. A statistical test of proportions returns a p-value of .001, indicating a degree of statistical significance that supports hypothesis 3: White representation in case studies is larger than that of the general population. The percentage of non-Hispanic White protagonists is even larger, 83.3%, for cases set inside the United States. Further, if we consider the protagonists that are uncategorizable, it is likely that students reading these cases will picture them as White (Ferguson 1994), given that White people comprise both the majority and the dominant group in the United States. If we combine "White" and "uncategorizable," the total is 85.1% of all protagonists and 89.5% of protagonists in the United States.

The degree of disproportionate representation is even greater if we look only at the cases in which the protagonist is not a real person. Table 5 shows the breakdown of racial groups for the 39 "fake" protagonists. White people are a larger percentage of this subset than of the entire sample, and every other racial or ethnic category, including Asians, is underrepresented. Hispanic people are better represented in this subset, with 5.1% of the fake protagonists having Hispanic names, but even this is less than half of the 16.9% of the general population that identifies as Hispanic. This is illuminating, given that a case author creating a fake protagonist (or anonymizing a real one) has the option of choosing any name they want. Increasing representation of non-White groups in cases that do not profile a real person would be as simple as choosing names that are more common in other racial groups.

Table 5
Racial makeup of primary protagonists in best-selling business teaching cases broken down by authenticity of protagonist

Category	Number of Fake Protagonists	Percentage of Fake Protagonists
Asian	1	2.6%
Black	1	2.6%
Hispanic	2	5.1%
White, non-Hispanic	33	84.6%
American Indian and Alaska Native	-	0%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	-	0%
Other	-	0%
Uncategorizable	2	5.1%
Total	39	100.0%

In summary, our analysis show that Black people are underrepresented (hypothesis 1), but data for Asian, Native American and Alaska Native, and Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander is too scarce to draw clear and valid conclusions. We also have significant evidence that Hispanic people are underrepresented (hypothesis 2) and that White non-Hispanic people are overrepresented (hypothesis 3) in business school teaching cases.

The implication is that case studies are one way that business schools are failing to illustrate a multicultural business environment for their students. Very few Black and Hispanic people are depicted as case study protagonists, and some groups may not be depicted at all. Because case

studies are presented to students as accurate portrayals of the business world, the underrepresentation or absence of numerous racial groups as case protagonists implies members of those groups are out of place in the business world, and more specifically, in managerial roles. This, in turn, puts unnecessary stress on students from the underrepresented racial groups. This type of covert discrimination, or "microaggression," has been shown to cause low self-esteem and feelings of alienation for these students (Franklin 2016; Nadal et al. 2014; Sue et al. 2009). Research from STEM curricula shows that underrepresented groups experience "curriculum trauma" (Hancock and Pass 2020) that leads to apathy, academic fatigue, and internalized inferiority, and develop passive resistance mechanisms, including evasiveness and manipulation (Aikenhead and Jegede 1999).

The effects on White and Asian students are likely to be more benign, such as feelings of superiority and more active engagement with the reading material. However, a lack of diversity among case study protagonists may reinforce unconscious biases that will later lead to adverse actions against coworkers or potential employees from underrepresented groups. Ultimately, the effect on students of both underrepresented and overrepresented racial groups will be a reinforcement of the status quo in which People of Color are at a disadvantage in the business world.

Recommendations for Case Study Authors

Our results suggest that it is necessary for authors to be very intentional in either locating or creating non-White case protagonists. We recommend case authors do the following to improve the representation of Black, American Indian and Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander, and Hispanic people (hereafter referred to as underrepresented groups) in case materials:

- 1) Consciously seek out people from the underrepresented groups to profile in case studies, rather than defaulting to protagonists already in their professional networks. According to the AACSB (2020), White non-Hispanic and Asian or Pacific Islander people make up 81% of business school faculty in the United States, more than 11 times the combined 7% total for Black, Hispanic/Latino, and American Indian/Alaska Native faculty (another 11.9% are categorized as "unknown"). Given that White people tend to have the fewest People of Color in their professional networks (Ibarra 1995; McGuire 2000), choosing protagonists from among those with whom they have existing relationships will continue to be an exclusionary practice. One approach would be to intentionally network with Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) focused on racial or ethnic diversity. Many large companies have ERGs aimed at improving the experience of underrepresented groups (DiversityInc. 2018), and case authors could volunteer their time and expertise in the service of the ERG in order to diversify their own professional network. In addition to locating protagonists from the underrepresented groups, authors must listen to their input and accept their feedback without defensiveness to ensure they are properly representing their stories and voices.
- 2) Explicitly discuss race and ethnicity in teaching notes for cases where they are salient. Though controversies currently rage about how race and ethnicity should be discussed in the classroom (Flaherty 2021), authors cannot adopt a "color-blind" ideology without harming students (Annamma, Jackson, and Morrison 2017; Lewis 2001; Williams and Land 2009). Race and ethnicity have an impact on virtually any case that features an

- interpersonal partnership, conflict, or negotiation between people from two different groups (Hernandez et al. 2019; Toosi et al. 2019). The teaching notes should therefore include an examination of power differentials and other challenges based on group identity in the recommended teaching plan.
- 3) Choose protagonists from underrepresented groups who are in ordinary managerial positions in organizations that do not have a racial or ethnic component to their business. Avoid stereotyping these protagonists as either wunderkinds or failures, as either portrayal has the effect of distancing these protagonists from the student readers.
- 4) When choosing a name for a fake or anonymized protagonist, choose a first name and last name most common among people of an underrepresented group. Symons and Ibarra (2014) note several case authors who changed the gender of the protagonist from male to female, as an attempt to provide more representation of women, and a similar approach could be taken to increase the representation of People of Color and Hispanic people.

Other Recommendations

It is also incumbent upon business school instructors to choose cases where People of Color and Hispanic people are represented as an integral part of the business community. While instructors are typically choosing cases to illustrate a specific idea related to their course goals, the Case Centre boasts of 61,700 cases in their library; the sheer number of cases available give instructors flexibility in their choices in any discipline. Having chosen cases with protagonists from underrepresented groups, instructors need to engage with the racial or ethnic subtext during case discussions, ideally guided by teaching notes that provide them with suggestions for doing so. While discussing race in the classroom may be challenging, a number of authors (Sue et al. 2009; Smith et al. 2019; Smith 2020) provide guidance to instructors willing to learn best practices.

Finally, the case publishers and case distributors should work to highlight cases that center around protagonists from underrepresented groups. This could include prominent positioning on the website, inclusion in communications to registered instructors, and creation of topic "tags" that make it easy to search for such cases. Further, case publishers should consider diversity when giving special recognition to cases or their authors, such as the awards given annually by The Case Centre. Others in a position to influence publishers should encourage and recognize diversity in case writing, as the dean of Harvard Business School has done in pledging to double the percentage of female protagonists in Harvard case studies (Patel 2014).

Conclusion

In the preceding sections, we have found that Black and Hispanic people are underrepresented in business school teaching cases, while White non-Hispanic people are overrepresented. We have also shown that Asian people are overrepresented in cases featuring real protagonists, and underrepresented in those with fake or anonymized protagonists. These results mirror analyses of textbooks in business and related disciplines, and, given the prominence of case studies and their claim to represent reality, case studies may be that much more significant in shaping business students' perception of the world. The negative effects of these perceptions can affect both the achievement and mental health of students from underrepresented groups, and instill feelings of superiority in students from the dominant groups.

Because we expect business school students to ultimately become members of the business community, inequitable representation in teaching cases can ultimately influence beliefs among business professionals of all racial groups. The belief that People of Color and Hispanic people do not belong in the business world can materialize in a myriad of decisions, from hiring and promotion to job assignments and compensation. Therefore, continued exclusion of People of Color and Hispanic people from teaching materials therefore reinforces a status quo in which these groups are excluded from lucrative career paths, face discrimination from employers, and lack access to the financial and social capital that enables successful entrepreneurs.

It is therefore incumbent upon everyone who writes, publishes, or uses cases in their classroom to rectify this disparity. Case authors should seek out and write about protagonists from the underrepresented groups. Those who use cases should choose those with protagonists from underrepresented groups. Publishers should encourage diverse case protagonists by highlighting such cases in their outreach to instructors and their awards.

As more and more organizations recognize the true importance of diversity and inclusion, it is critical that we prepare business students to lead in a multicultural environment. Appropriately representing all groups as protagonists in business school teaching cases is one opportunity for business school educators to develop our students to their fullest potential and contribute to a more racially just society.

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