BookTrust Represents

Representation of people of colour among children's book authors and illustrators

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About the author

Melanie Ramdarshan Bold is a Senior Lecturer/Associate Professor at University College London, where she teaches and researches topics related to publishing/book cultures. Her main research interest centres on the contemporary history of authorship, publishing and reading, with a focus on children's and young adult (YA) books. Melanie's book *Inclusive young adult fiction: authors of colour in the United Kingdom* was published by Palgrave Macmillan in 2019.

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Foreword

Every year, BookTrust reaches 3.4 million children across the country with books, resources and support to inspire a love of reading. We put great books into the hands of children from all backgrounds and identities in our diverse nation. We believe that every child has the right to experience the joy of reading because we know that children who read are happier, healthier, more empathetic and more creative. Reaching out to everyone with books is more than a vision for us, it's what we do. For years we have been seeking out books that will enable us to most effectively reach, inspire and entertain all children.

We know from years of experience that representational voices in children's books are important for all children from all backgrounds. Books are multifaceted, providing insight into a variety of different lives and cultures, and they have an important role to play in holding up a mirror to the world; what they reflect impacts on how young readers see themselves and the world around them. They also affect a child's motivation to read and their aspirations to become an author or illustrator in the future.

That's why we have initiated this far-reaching research project with University College London to look at representation of authors and illustrators of colour in children's books published in the UK over the 11-year period between 2007 and 2017. The research also includes interviews with authors and illustrators of colour to discover in more depth the complex barriers and enablers to becoming a children's book creator. We're interested in getting more children and families reading, and in order to make effective change, we need to build a more accurate picture of children's book creators in the UK.

It's clear from this research that there is still a way to go before we have a truly representative canon of children's literature. However, this report also highlights the positive things that are happening across the sector and we hope to see the impact of these reflected in the data from 2018 onwards. We're interested in making real change, so we're using this pioneering research as a springboard for our BookTrust Represents project to support and encourage more authors and illustrators of colour to become successful children's book creators. Watch the story unfold on our website at **booktrust.org.uk/represents**

Diana Gerald
CEO, BookTrust

"Representation demystifies writing for me and for readers. It's all about turning on the 'I Can' button which comes from the simple thought of, 'Well, if they can, then...' Readers need to see themselves in books and as authors so that they in turn take up the mantle as the next generation of authors."
Polly Ho-Yen

Contents

1. Executive summary

The British children's book sector is thriving; more children's books are sold in the UK than ever before. However, the cohort of people that creates these books does not reflect the makeup of the UK, where an array of lives, cultures, identities and stories have overlapped for many years.

Inclusive children's literature is vital. Children's books can act as mirrors, to reflect the readers' own lives, but also as windows so readers can learn about, understand and appreciate the lives of others. They can shape how young readers from minority backgrounds see themselves as well as how readers from the more dominant culture see and understand diversity.[1]

The absence of an inclusive range of characters, or creative role models, in children's literature has the potential to deter children from minority backgrounds from reading and experiencing the associated benefits.[2] In turn, this lack of engagement with reading could deter children from pursuing careers in writing and/or drawing and further embed the imbalance.

This report, commissioned by BookTrust, seeks to establish a clear picture of who writes and illustrates the books our children read. These authors, illustrators and author-illustrators are referred to throughout the report as 'creators'. Findings are presented from an analysis of all children's books published in the UK between 2007 and 2017 and interviews with 15 British creators of colour.[3] This research will inform BookTrust's work with industry partners to improve inclusivity in children's books and the children's book sector.

"Children's books can act as mirrors, to reflect the readers' own lives, but also as windows so readers can learn about, understand and appreciate the lives of others."

About the research

Methods

- The project employed a mixed-method approach, by adopting a combination of quantitative and qualitative strategies.
- The statistical data is based on the development and analysis of a corpus of relevant titles, which were identified and collected through the British Library's British National Bibliography (BNB) database.[4]
- The database did not include information such as creator demographics or the type of publisher. This additional information was identified through digital and printed paratextual, mostly epitextual, information (e.g. publisher and creator websites, creator interviews and book covers, etc.) where available.[5]
- Creators were segmented by their (self-identified) sex/gender identity, ethnicity (based on ONS terminology)[6] and nationality.[7] The data was then coded and analysed. This provided statistical information about what percentage of children's books were created by different demographic groups.

- The database analysis focused on three main areas: all of the titles published (including the various editions of a unique title); unique titles published (removing all of the different editions); and individual creators (removing the different titles).
- Interviews with 15 British creators of colour, published between 2007 and 2017, were undertaken to explore this area in more depth.

Limitations

- Interviews focused on creators of colour who have been published. Further research is needed to understand the experiences of those who have not.
- Intersections between ethnicity and social class are not interrogated fully in this report and warrant further investigation.

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1 Diversity is described by the We Need Diverse Books project as 'all diverse experiences, including (but not limited to) LGBTQIA, Native, people of color, gender diversity, people with disabilities, and ethnic, cultural, and religious minorities' (We Need Diverse Books, 2016). This report will focus on people of colour.

2 Bishop (1990, 1992, 2007, 2012); Thomas (2016).

3 The term 'of colour' – which refers to people who are not white – is used in this report rather than BAME. Although it is used as a collective term in this report it is important to note that people of colour are not a homogeneous group.

4 The metadata team at the British Library provided a database of all books tagged with the phrases 'Children's literature', 'Children's stories' and 'Board books' published between January 2007 and December 2017. The British Library is a legal deposit library, which means publishers have to deposit all of the titles they publish in the UK there. Please see Ramdarshan Bold (2018 and 2019) for a comparable study of the YA market in the UK.

5 Data was missing for 12% of creators. See Appendix A for further information.

6 ONS (2018a).

7 Nationality is a complex concept, particularly so for Britain and its history of imperialism across the globe (Karatani, 2002). Consequently, what it means to be British is often contested (BBC, 2012). For this report, nationality was allocated through self-identification and used British citizenship as the framework (Gov.uk, 2018). For context, in 2017 86% of the British population were born in the UK, and 90% were British nationals (ONS, 2018b). The sample of creators interviewed for this study is a mixture of both.

Key findings: representation of people of colour among children's book creators

Analysis of a dataset of children's books published between 2007 and 2017 revealed that people of colour are under-represented among children's book creators.

Key stats

Between 2007 and 2017, **8.62%** of children's book creators were people of colour and they created **4.98%** of unique titles.[8]

Between 2007 and 2017, **1.96%** of children's book creators were **British** people of colour and they created **1.16%** of unique titles.

Between 2007 and 2017, white children's book creators had around **twice as many books published compared to creators of colour:**[9] on average approximately 4 books in comparison to approximately 2 books.

In 2017, **5.58%** of children's book creators were people of colour and they created **4.02%** of unique titles.

In 2017, **1.98%** of children's book creators were **British** people of colour and they created **1.58%** of unique titles.

Key: 👤 Creator   📘 Title

In 2017, 5.58% of children's book creators were people of colour

- This was the **least representative year** for creators of colour since 2009 (see Figure 1.1).
- In comparison, at the last Census (2011) the proportion of people from Black, Asian, Mixed or other ethnic groups (BAME) in the UK was 13%[11] and a report by Arts Council England states that **16% of the total working age population of England belong to BAME groups**.[12]

There was a positive trend in the percentage of creators of colour published between 2007 and 2015 but a downturn between 2015 and 2017

- Overall, **8.62% of creators** between 2007 and 2017 were creators of colour.
- The percentage of children's book creators of colour showed a small increase from **3.99 in 2007 to 5.58% in 2017**. However, it peaked at 7.8% in 2015 (see Figure 1.1).[10]
- The downturn between **2015 and 2017 is set against a general decline in the number of creators published during this time period** (see Figure 2.2). However, the number of creators of colour has declined at a greater rate.

In 2017, 4.02% of unique titles published were written and/or illustrated by people of colour

- Although this is an improvement from 2007, when only **2.27% of unique titles** were by creators of colour, it was the least representative year since 2008.
- There was an overall increase in the number of unique titles published by creators of colour between 2007 and 2017 with a high of 6.4% in 2013 and a **downturn between 2015 and 2017** (see Figure 1.2).
- The downturn between 2015 and 2017 is set against a general decline in the number of children's books published during this time period (see Figure 2.2). However, the **number of titles produced by creators of colour has declined at a greater rate**.

8 The database analysis focused on three main areas: all of the titles published (including the various editions of a unique title); unique titles published (removing all of the different editions); and individual creators (removing the different titles).
9 This is all titles including multiple editions.

11 Gov.uk (2011).
12 Arts Council England (2019).
10 This is based on the unique creators each year. The overall figure (8.6%) is based on the unique creators over the course of 2007–2017.

Fewer than 2% of children's book creators between 2007 and 2017 were British people of colour

- When we look at the data by nationality, we find that **1.96% of children's book creators were British people of colour**.

- British creators of colour wrote and/or illustrated **1.16% of unique titles**.

- British men of colour wrote/illustrated **0.35% of unique titles**, and British women of colour wrote/illustrated **0.86% of unique titles**.

Unique titles by people of colour were more likely to have originally been published outside of the UK, compared to those by their white counterparts

- **Over a third** (37.5%) of the unique titles, created by people of colour between 2007 and 2017, were first published abroad before being published in the UK, in comparison to 15.45% of unique titles by white people.

- **Just over half (50.72%)** of unique titles by people of colour, published in the UK between 2007 and 2017, were first published in the UK. In comparison, 78.91% of unique titles by white people were first published in the UK.[13]

Creators of colour have fewer books published on average and are more likely to self-publish than white book creators

- White children's book creators had around twice as many books published: on average approximately **4 books in comparison to approximately 2 books**.[14]

- Creators of colour are **more likely than white creators to self-publish** children's books: over twice as many unique titles by creators of colour were self-published in comparison to titles by white creators.

- This is especially true for **British** children's book creators of colour: **one-third of their unique titles (33.33%) were self-published** or published by a hybrid publisher.[15] In comparison, 10.74% of unique titles by white British creators were self-published or published by a hybrid publisher.

Figure 1.1: Percentage of creators of colour and white creators per year

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
White creators	96%	94.7%	95.3%	94.1%	93.1%	92.9%	93.2%	93.2%	92.2%	92.4%	94.4%
Creators of colour	4%	5.3%	4.7%	5.9%	6.9%	7.1%	6.8%	6.8%	7.8%	7.6%	5.6%

Figure 1.2: Percentage of unique titles by creators of colour and white creators per year

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
White creators	97.7%	96.1%	95.8%	95.3%	95.5%	94.6%	93.6%	95.2%	94%	94.1%	96%
Creators of colour	2.3%	3.9%	4.2%	4.7%	4.5%	5.4%	6.4%	4.8%	6%	5.9%	4%

Key: Creator · Title · Creators of colour · White creators

13 The remaining unique titles were published simultaneously in the UK and another country.
14 This is all titles including multiple editions.
15 Hybrid publishers combine different features of both traditional publishing and self-publishing, often for an upfront fee.

Insights: barriers and enablers to improving representation of creators of colour

The following insights are based on interviews with 15 creators of colour and grounded in existing research into inclusive publishing.

People of colour face multiple barriers to becoming, or sustaining a career as, a children's book creator

"I feel like it's a vicious cycle. It's like, you don't have brown people in children's books, so brown people don't grow up reading children's books or enjoying children's books, so they don't make children's books, and so on and so forth."
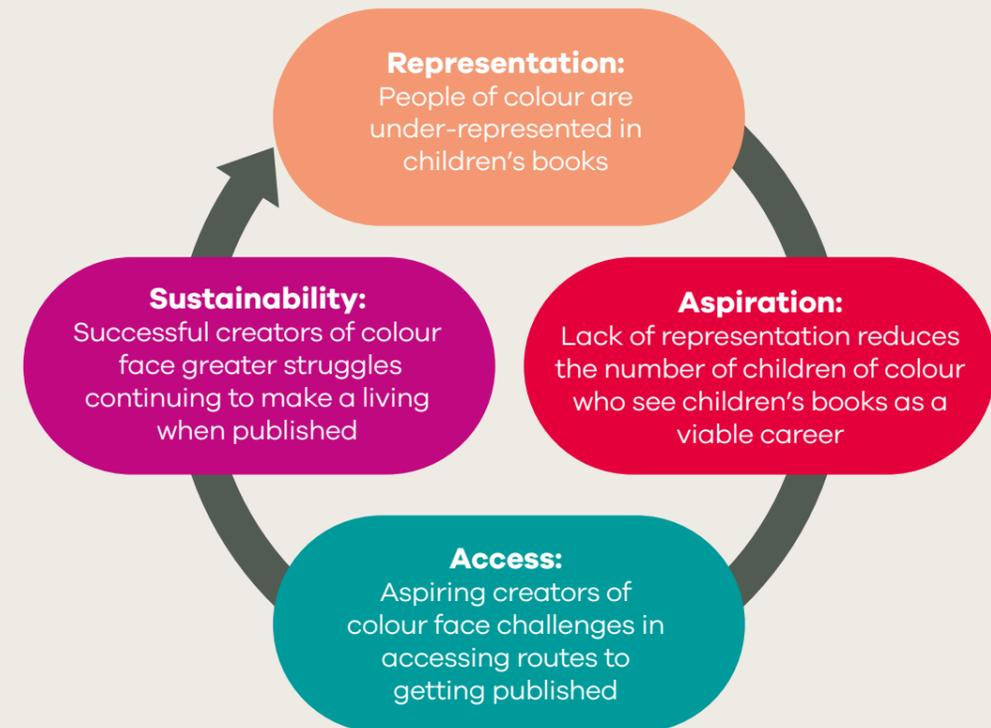
John Aggs

The causes of under-representation of people of colour among children's book creators are complex, multifaceted and embedded in broader social inequalities. However, common barriers, identified in this study, can be expressed as a negative cycle that not only prevents them from pursuing creative careers but can also hinder their careers once they have been published.

This cycle begins with children not seeing themselves in books and not experiencing creative role models, with whom they identify, at a time when young people of colour might be considering their future professions. Even when a person of colour does make the decision to pursue a career in this precarious profession, they may face barriers when looking for an agent or publisher. Lastly, when they manage to enter the children's book industry, creators of colour struggle to publish as many titles as their white counterparts and feel unsupported at various stages in the publishing process.

In brief, these are systemic problems that will continue until the systemic inequalities that give rise to them are addressed. Figure 1.3 shows how this negative cycle may contribute to ongoing under-representation of people of colour among children's book creators.

Figure 1.3: Barriers to inclusivity among children's book creators

Representation: People of colour are under-represented in children's books

Aspiration: Lack of representation reduces the number of children of colour who see children's books as a viable career

Access: Aspiring creators of colour face challenges in accessing routes to getting published

Sustainability: Successful creators of colour face greater struggles continuing to make a living when published

Factors that contribute to this cycle, identified through interviews with creators of colour, include:

- Lack of role models: both the characters in and the people who create books for children.
- Financial insecurity and class disadvantage: social inequality is reinforced by low income from creative careers. Additionally, the cultural industries can be socially exclusive, with subtle barriers to those not from middle/upper-middle class backgrounds.[16]
- Under-representation of people of colour in the children's book industry and the systemic issues this can cause.

16 Brook et al (2018).

Improving representation is a challenging and complex endeavour

"I feel like everyone is talking about diversity in the industry now, that the awareness is more centre stage, but I feel concerned that after the noise, it might become a short-lived trend. I'm concerned that some of the actions taken feel a little tokenistic and will therefore be short-lasting."

Polly Ho-Yen

Improving representation is not easy and a drive to improve inclusivity in publishing has given rise to its own challenges. Strong indications suggest that tokenism – the superficial action/s to support marginalised groups in order to give the appearance of fairness – is a continuing problem in the industry; the evidence in this report supports other recent research in this respect.[17]

Many of the British children's book creators of colour, interviewed for this research, were concerned that 'diversity' in children's publishing was just a buzzword rather than an agenda for fundamentally transforming the industry.[18] This concern is understandable because, despite the numerous industry discussions and initiatives occurring during the time period of this study (2007–2017),

people of colour remain under-represented among children's book creators.

However, positive things are happening to support creators of colour

It is important to acknowledge and learn from the enablers that have helped creators to achieve success in their careers. These include:

- **School and library visits:** visits by book creators were an important source of encouragement and inspiration from a very young age, offering positive creative role models. Libraries also provided a source of inspiration through access to books.

- **Support from other creators of colour and small organisations:** many of the creators we spoke to expressed gratitude to other creators of colour and small organisations either for paving the way before them, or for their practical support and/or guidance.

- **Alternative routes into publishing – small press and self-publishing:** creators who were unable to publish through traditional routes turned to self-publishing or setting up their own companies to publish their books.

- **Financial support and/or social class advantage:** while this is not something that can be easily changed, having the financial support to create, despite the low remuneration, and/or having the background to navigate these cultural spaces makes the profession more accessible.

- **Support from publishers and the wider children's book sector:** despite the challenges outlined in the previous section, most creators interviewed for this study had positive experiences with their publishers and the wider children's book sector.

17 Spread the Word (2015); Ramdarshan Bold (2019).
18 The concept of 'diversity' (particularly in the context of ethnicity) is problematic because it perpetuates the notion of 'otherness', which is viewed through a dominant white lens (Saha, 2018). In the publishing industry, the terms 'diverse'/'diversity' are increasingly being replaced with inclusive/inclusivity. As noted in footnote 1, the term diversity will be used in this report when talking about representation in the broadest sense (based on the We Need Diverse Books (2016) definition).

Recommendations: what can be done to improve representation of creators of colour in children's book publishing?

Working with BookTrust, we offer the following recommendations to improve inclusivity within the sector. These are based on the statistical data presented in this report, insights from 15 creators of colour and existing research.

- **Support children and families to read books from an inclusive range of creators** by connecting them with books that reflect our society. This could usefully involve: the publishing industry, retailers, reviewers, teachers, librarians, journalists, publicists and the charity sector in making more books by creators of colour accessible to families.

- **Engage the next generation of writers and illustrators** by providing a career path that is accessible for young people from all backgrounds. We believe that this can be supported effectively by providing young people with strong role models, for example through school and library visits. The industry could support this by promoting established creators of colour, while actively seeking out and developing emerging talent.

- **Engage meaningfully with creators of colour to avoid tokenism.** This could usefully involve the sector recognising the diversity of experience among creators of colour, confronting assumptions and inaction, and welcoming challenge and debate. Increasing representation of people of colour among decision makers within the industry will also contribute to this.

- **Recognise the social, cultural and creative case for inclusive publishing alongside the commercial opportunity** and invest accordingly. The industry would benefit from investment in creators of colour, to avoid losing talent or the commercial opportunities that come with inclusive publishing. This could also include engaging with creators of colour who self-publish.

- **Take collective action to break down the systemic barriers to representation of creators of colour**. We know that people of colour are under-represented in the creative and cultural sectors. In this report we argue that one of the challenges to changing this is to confront a negative cycle of barriers which are reflective of those seen within our society more generally. No single organisation can do this alone. Cross-industry monitoring, research and insight can help us to understand the problems faced by creators of colour, and what works to improve inclusivity. Commitment from, and accountability to, leading industry figures to implement recommendations, and build on successful sector initiatives, can result in tangible strategies, which can then effect meaningful change.

- **Increase support for people of colour to access, navigate and thrive in the publishing process.** In this report we assert the importance of role models for increasing the representation of creators of colour across the sector. We support the use of both mentoring and networking (physical and virtual) opportunities as valuable vehicles to facilitate this. New writers and illustrators also benefit from support when trying to navigate their way around the industry. We support the use of workshops and courses available to all creators to help them with this. However, these can sometimes be expensive or inaccessible. The sector could offer practical support to creators of colour by allocating sponsored or subsidised places, while making more resources available free online.

We recognise that this research only represents part of the picture and invite colleagues from across the sector to work with us, and with each other, to further develop these recommendations into plans to deliver authentic and sustainable improvements in the representation of people of colour among children's book creators.

2. Introduction

The children's publishing industry in the UK is flourishing, with its value increasing every year (see page 18). However, recent studies have found that, despite its financial success, the books being published do not reflect the makeup of the UK, where an array of lives, cultures, identities and stories have overlapped for many years (see Box 2.1).[19]

While the focus of these studies, and subsequent discussions, has centred on the characters within these books, there has been very little research into **who** is actually writing and illustrating books for children. This study, the first of its kind, will examine the representation and experiences of authors, illustrators and author-illustrators (referred to throughout this report as creators) of colour who were published in the UK between 2007 and 2017. Specifically, through this study we seek to address the following aims:

- To investigate the percentage of children's books that are written and illustrated by creators of colour, and the percentage of all children's book creators who are:
  – of colour
  – British and of colour.

- To determine whether this number has changed over the years, and to pinpoint any patterns and anomalies that emerge over the time period, in conjunction with discussions surrounding the lack of 'diversity' in children's books.

- To explore and understand the experiences of the creators of colour who write and illustrate children's books.

- To consider how best to support, and make visible, creators of colour.

Box 2.1: Representation of BAME characters in children's books

A study by CLPE (Centre for Literacy in Primary Education) found that only 1% of children's books published in 2017 had a BAME main protagonist; and only 4% included BAME background characters.

2.1 Value of inclusive children's publishing

Value to readers

The books we read as children have the potential to shape our minds and lives. This has perhaps best been described by author and academic Rudine Sims Bishop in her article 'Mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors':

"Books are sometimes windows, offering views of worlds that may be real or imagined, familiar or strange. These windows are also sliding glass doors, and readers have only to walk through in imagination to become part of whatever world has been created or recreated by the author. When lighting conditions are just right, however, a window can also be a mirror. Literature transforms human experience and reflects it back to us, and in that reflection we can see our own lives and experiences as part of the larger human experience. Reading, then, becomes a means of self-affirmation, and readers often seek their mirrors in books."[20]

Scholars have long noted this 'mirroring' or 'modelling' role of children's literature in the lives of children.[21] Reading is not simply a tool to build literacy, it is an important way for children to understand their place in the world. To use Bishop's analogy, children's books can act as mirrors, to reflect the readers' own lives, but also as windows so readers can learn about, understand and appreciate the lives of others. The absence of 'diverse (in the broadest sense) characters' in children's literature can influence how readers form their identity, and/or shape their perceptions of others, in relation to the world around them.[22] As Bishop warns:

"when children cannot find themselves reflected in the books they read, or when the images they see are distorted, negative, or laughable, they learn a powerful lesson about how they are devalued in the society of which they are a part."[23]

Books can also impact the views of those in the dominant group, particularly if the stories being reflected are oversimplified or overgeneralised. According to the Nigerian novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie:

"the single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story."[24]

It is, therefore, important to combat these prejudices as early as possible.

Research has found that social contact with people from different groups helps to reduce prejudice and stereotypes.[25] These interactions allow us to understand that those we perceive as others are not so different from us after all. However, we do not always have the opportunity to meet people from other countries, cultures or religions.

Books are, therefore, often the first introduction to these new and/or different worlds, so it is vital that they are representative of the world in which we live. If we consider children's books, and the people who create them, through the lens of mirrors and windows, we can see that they are much more than enjoyable stories for our children: they also have the potential to be tools for social change.

Value to the industry

A lack of representative role models in the industry is likely to negatively impact representation of people of colour among the next generation of authors and illustrators. The visibility of role models, and the confidence and validation gained from these role models, is an important part of informing the career choices made by young people. A lack of representation has the potential to deter children from reading, which could, in turn, deter them from careers in writing and drawing.[26]

In economic terms, inclusivity is also valuable: it has been estimated that supporting people of colour to progress in the workplace (no matter what career they are pursuing) could contribute billions of pounds to the UK economy.[27] In the publishing industry, publishing books by people of colour can help publishers to tap into a much wider audience. The recent success of books such as *The Good Immigrant* edited by Nikesh Shukla, *Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race* by Reni Eddo-Lodge and *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas demonstrate that there is a demand for books by and about people of colour.[28]

Although people of colour are not the sole audience for inclusive books, publishers will not realise the true commercial potential of 'BAME consumers' and their estimated £300 billion annual spending, if they do not publish books that reflect these communities.[29]

19 CLPE (2018); CCBC (2018).
20 Bishop (1990), p. ix.
21 Bishop (1990); Cart (2008); Tatum (2009); Brooks et al (2008); Dail and Leonard (2011); Thomas (2016).

22 Bishop (1990, 1992, 2007, 2012); Wilkins (2014); Thomas (2016).
23 Bishop (1990).
24 Adichie (2009).
25 Crisp and Turner (2009).

26 Bishop (1990, 1992, 2007, 2012); Thomas (2016).
27 McGregor-Smith (2017).
28 Akbar (2017).
29 Joseph (2018).

2.2 Context

Inequalities in the UK

It is important to acknowledge the broader social context in which this research is situated. People of colour (or BAME groups, as they are described in some reports) face structural inequalities that can negatively impact their opportunities.

People of colour:

• Accounted for only 3% of the UK's most powerful and influential people within the political, financial, judicial, cultural and security sectors.[30]

• Held only 6% of management jobs in the UK.[31]

• Were more likely to be unemployed and underemployed than their white counterparts.[32]

• Faced continued racial discrimination in the labour markets at levels unchanged since the 1960s.[33]

• Were more likely to live in poverty.[34]

In general, the 2016 report by the Equality and Human Rights Commission found that a number of inequalities for BAME groups existed in employment, education, crime, living standards and health and care.[35]

Children's publishing industry

The market for children's books in the UK is booming: it increased by £120 million – a rise of 44% – between 2006 and 2016.[36] The year 2016 was a particularly buoyant one: sales of children's titles rose 16% to £365 million, while exports increased by 34% to £116 million due to rising demand from countries such as India and China.[37]

This expansion shows no sign of slowing down as the children's book market has shown steady growth of 0.7% in the first part of 2018.

This study found that between 2007 and 2017:[38]

• 14,508 authors, author-illustrators and illustrators (creators) wrote and/or illustrated 46,925 unique titles.[39]

• Authors accounted for over 80% of this list: (see Figure 2.1).

• Overall, including reprints and new editions, 56,858 children's books[40] were published during this time.[41]

Figure 2.1: Percentage of the creators by type

● Authors: **82%**   ● Illustrators : **4%**
● Author-illustrators: **14%**
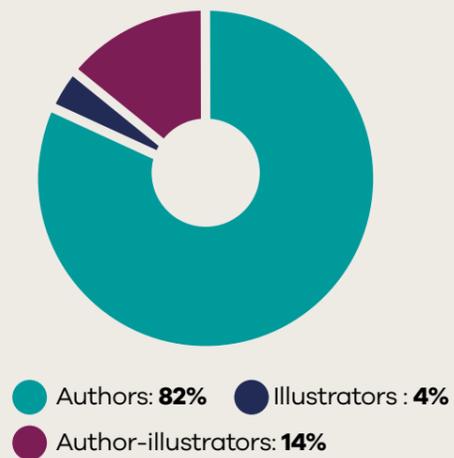
30 Colour of Power (2018).

31 & 32 Allen (2016).

33 Siddique (2019); Nuffield College's Centre for Social Investigation (2019).

34 & 35 Equality and Human Rights Commission (2016).

36 Onwuemezi (2016a).

37 Publishers Association (2017).

38 Based on data provided by the metadata team at the British Library. The database included all books tagged with the phrases 'Children's literature', 'Children's stories' and 'Board books' published between January 2007 and December 2017.

How this changed over the 2007–2017 period

There has been a steady increase in **all titles**, **unique titles** and number of **creators** since 2007 with the number (for all) peaking in 2015 and slowly declining since (see Figure 2.2).

For **all titles** it peaked at 6,245, for **unique titles** it peaked at 5,525 and for **creators** it peaked at 3,385.

Although there were fewer titles published since 2015, as noted above, the children's book market is worth more than ever. It is interesting to note that there were only 146 more children's book creators published in 2017 than in 2007 (see Figure 2.2).

Figure 2.2: Total number of titles, unique titles and creators of children's books between 2007 and 2017*

● Number of all titles   ● Number of unique titles   ● Unique creators
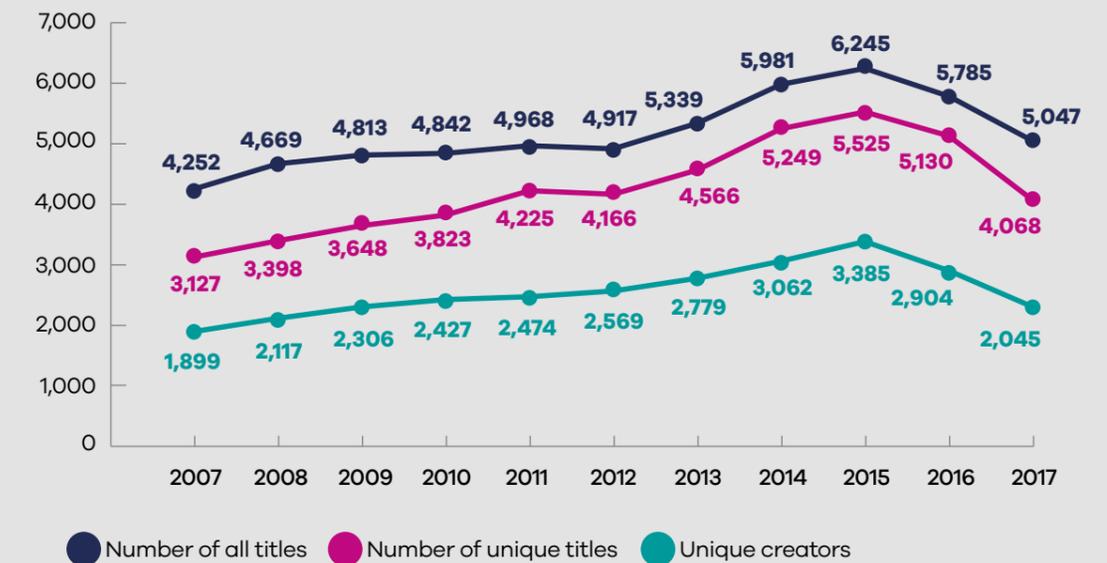
*This graph includes all of the titles, unique titles and unique creators published between 2007 and 2017, irrespective of whether demographic information was available

39 The database analysis focused on three main areas: all of the titles published (including the various editions of a unique title); unique titles published (removing all of the different editions); and individual creators (removing the different titles).

40 See footnote 38. This did not include YA, non-fiction, digital or audio books.

41 Demographic information – particularly ethnicity, nationality and gender identity – was not readily available for all of the creators. Consequently, this report is based on a sample where this information was available. Please see Appendix A for full sample information.

3. Key findings: representation of people of colour among children's book creators

This section presents findings from the analysis of a database of children's books published in the UK between 2007 and 2017 to answer the research questions set out in Section 2. The analysis focused on three main areas:

- **All published titles:** this includes the various editions of a single title.
- **Unique published titles:** titles published after removing different editions of the same title.
- **Individual creators:** each unique author, illustrator or author-illustrator who appears in the database.

Methods

- The project employed a mixed-method approach, by adopting a combination of quantitative and qualitative strategies.

- The statistical data is based on the development and analysis of a corpus of relevant titles, which were identified and collected through the British Library's British National Bibliography (BNB) database.[42]
- The database did not include information such as creator demographics or the type of publisher. This additional information was identified through digital and printed paratextual, mostly epitextual, information (e.g. publisher and creator websites, creator interviews and book covers, etc.) where available.[43]
- Creators were segmented by their (self-identified) sex/gender identity, ethnicity (based on ONS terminology)[44] and nationality.[45] The data was then coded and analysed. This provided statistical information about what percentage of children's books were created by different demographic groups.
- Interviews with 15 British creators of colour, published between 2007 and 2017, were undertaken to explore this area in more depth.

3.1 Overall picture: who is creating books for children in the UK?

Key stats

Between 2007 and 2017, **8.62%** of children's book creators were people of colour and they created **4.98%** of unique titles.[46]

Between 2007 and 2017, **1.96%** of children's book creators were **British** people of colour and they created **1.16%** of unique titles.

Between 2007 and 2017, white children's book creators had around **twice as many books published compared to creators of colour:**[47] on average approximately 4 books in comparison to approximately 2 books.

In 2017, **5.58%** of children's book creators were people of colour and they created **4.02%** of unique titles.

In 2017, **1.98%** of children's book creators were **British** people of colour and they created **1.58%** of unique titles.

Key: Creator   Title

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42 The metadata team at the British Library provided a database of all books tagged with the phrases 'Children's literature', 'Children's stories' and 'Board books' published between January 2007 and December 2017. The British Library is a legal deposit library, which means publishers have to deposit all of the titles they publish in the UK there.

43 Data was missing for 12% of creators. See Appendix A for further information.

44 ONS (2018a).

45 Nationality is a complex concept, particularly so for Britain and its history of imperialism across the globe (Karatani, 2002). Consequently, what it means to be British is often contested (BBC, 2012). For this report, nationality was allocated through self-identification and used British citizenship as the framework (Gov.uk, 2018). For context, in 2017 86% of the British population were born in the UK, and 90% were British nationals (ONS, 2018b). The sample of creators interviewed for this study is a mixture of both.

46 The database analysis focused on three main areas: all of the titles published (including the various editions of a unique title); unique titles published (removing all of the different editions); and individual creators (removing the different titles).

47 This is all titles including multiple editions.

In 2017, 5.58% of children's book creators were people of colour

- This was the **least representative** year for creators of colour since 2009 (see Figure 3.1).

- In comparison, at the last Census (2011) the proportion of people from Black, Asian, Mixed or other ethnic groups (BAME) in the UK was 13%[48] and a report from Arts Council England states that **16% of the total working age population of England belong to BAME groups**.[49]

There was a positive trend in the percentage of creators of colour published between 2007 and 2015 but a downturn between 2015 and 2017

- Overall, **8.62% of creators** between 2007 and 2017 were creators of colour.

- The percentage of children's book creators of colour showed a small increase from **3.99% in 2007 to 5.58% in 2017**. However, it peaked at 7.8% in 2015 (see Figure 3.1).[50]

- The downturn between **2015 and 2017 is set against a general decline in the number of creators** published during this time period (see Figure 2.2). However, the number of creators of colour has declined at a greater rate.

In 2017, 4.02% of unique titles published were written and/or illustrated by people of colour[51]

- Although this is an improvement from 2007, when only **2.27% of unique titles** were by creators of colour, it was the least representative year since 2008.

- There was an overall increase in the number of unique titles published by creators of colour between 2007 and 2017 with a high of 6.4% in 2013 and a downturn between 2015 and 2017 (see Figure 3.2).

- The downturn between 2015 and 2017 is set against a general decline in the number of children's books published during this time period (see Figure 2.2). However, the **number of titles produced by creators of colour has declined at a greater rate**.

Creators of colour have fewer books published on average and are more likely to self-publish than white book creators

- White children's book creators had around twice as many books published: on average approximately **4 books in comparison to approximately 2 books**.

- Creators of colour are **more likely than white creators to self-publish** children's books: over twice as many unique titles by creators of colour were self-published in comparison to titles by white creators.

- This is especially true for **British** children's book creators of colour: **one-third of their unique titles (33.33%) were self-published** or published by a hybrid publisher.[52] In comparison, 10.74% of unique titles by white British creators were self-published or published by a hybrid publisher.

48 Gov.uk (2011).

49 Arts Council England (2019).

50 This is based on the unique creators each year. The overall figure (8.6%) is based on the unique creators over the course of 2007–2017.

51 The database analysis focused on three main areas: all of the titles published (including the various editions of a unique title); unique titles published (removing all of the different editions); and individual creators (removing the different titles).

52 Hybrid publishers combine different features of both traditional publishing and self-publishing, often for an upfront fee.

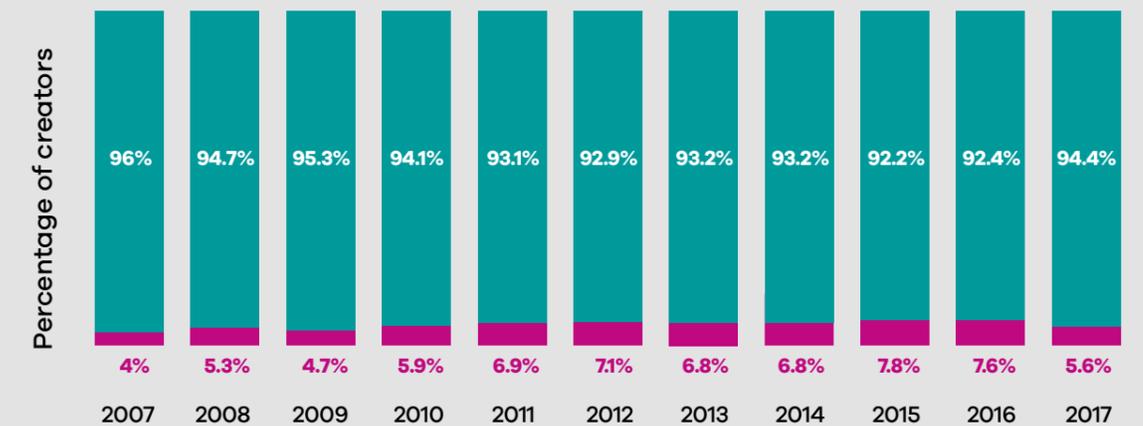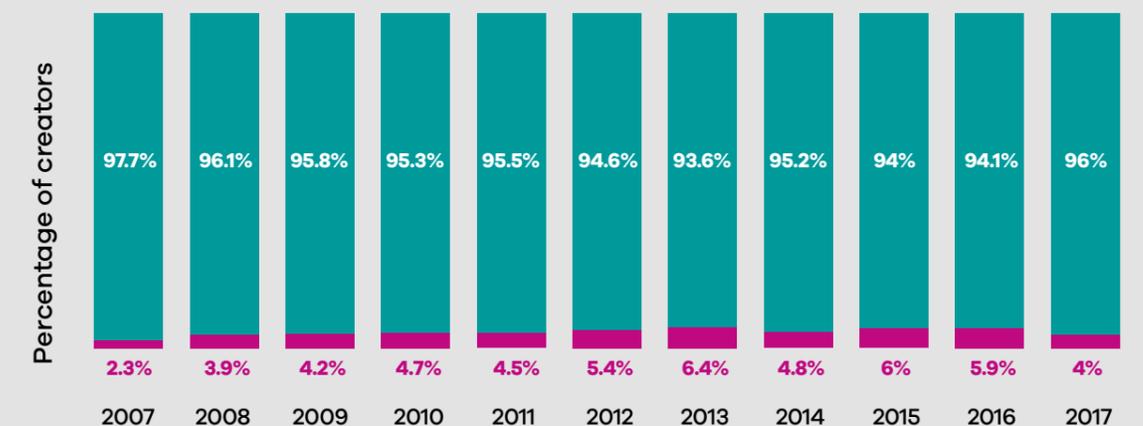**Figure 3.1:** Percentage of creators of colour and white creators per year

Year	White creators	Creators of colour
2007	96%	4%
2008	94.7%	5.3%
2009	95.3%	4.7%
2010	94.1%	5.9%
2011	93.1%	6.9%
2012	92.9%	7.1%
2013	93.2%	6.8%
2014	93.2%	6.8%
2015	92.2%	7.8%
2016	92.4%	7.6%
2017	94.4%	5.6%

Figure 3.2: Percentage of unique titles by creators of colour and white creators per year

Year	White creators	Creators of colour
2007	97.7%	2.3%
2008	96.1%	3.9%
2009	95.8%	4.2%
2010	95.3%	4.7%
2011	95.5%	4.5%
2012	94.6%	5.4%
2013	93.6%	6.4%
2014	95.2%	4.8%
2015	94%	6%
2016	94.1%	5.9%
2017	96%	4%

Key: Creator — Title — Creators of colour — White creators

3.2 Ethnicity and nationality

"I think one of the reasons for my appeal as an author/illustrator is that my work reflects that East/West cultural mix that I have been brought up with."

Mei Matsuoka

Fewer than 2% of children's book creators between 2007 and 2017 were British people of colour

- When we look at the data by nationality, we find that **1.96%** of children's book creators between 2007 and 2017 were British people of colour. In comparison, during this period: 2.22% of creators were American people of colour, and 4.42% were people of colour from other countries.

- British creators of colour wrote and/or illustrated **1.16%** of unique titles.

- British men of colour wrote/illustrated **0.35%** of unique titles, and British women of colour wrote/illustrated **0.86%** of unique titles.

Nationality of children's book creators of colour from 2007–2017

Nationality of **all creators** of colour from 2007–2017:

22.84% of all creators of colour were **British**

25.84% of all creators of colour were **American**

51.4% of all creators of colour were from **other countries**

Unique titles written by creators of colour by nationality (2007–2017):

Just under a quarter (**23.79%**) were by **British** creators of colour

Just under a quarter (**23.65%**) were by **American** creators of colour

Just over half (**52.56%**) were by creators of colour from **other countries**

American creators were **more likely** to be people of colour than British creators:
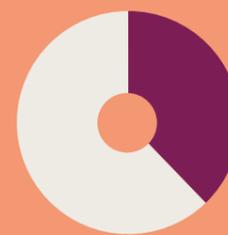
4% of **British** creators were people of colour

7.51% of **American** creators were people of colour

Key: Creator Title British American Other countries

Unique titles by people of colour were more likely to have originally been published outside of the UK, compared to those by their white counterparts

Over a third **(37.8%)** of the unique titles, created by people of colour between 2007 and 2017, were first published abroad before being published in the UK, in comparison to 15.6% of unique titles by white people.
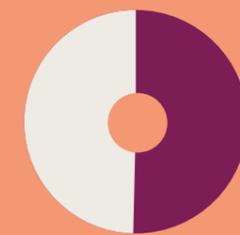
Just over half **(50.72%)** of unique titles by people of colour, published in the UK between 2007 and 2017, were first published in the UK. In comparison, 78.9% of unique titles by white people were first published in the UK.[53]

Fewer than 1% of all illustrators (not including author-illustrators) between 2007 and 2017 were British people of colour[54]

- Illustrators[55] (of all ethnicities) were mostly from other countries: 59.49% of all illustrators were from countries other than the UK.

- 86.84% of the illustrators of colour were from outside of the UK.

- 13.16% of all the illustrators of colour, 2.25% of the British illustrators and fewer than 1% (0.91%) of all the illustrators were British people of colour.

- British illustrators accounted for 63.03% of the unique titles published by illustrators during this period: white British illustrators accounted for 62.65% of the titles, British illustrators of colour accounted for 0.37%.

53 The remaining unique titles were published simultaneously in the UK and another country.
54 This is based on 548 illustrators where ethnicity and nationality information was available.
55 The person who illustrated the book rather than also writing the text (author-illustrator).

3.3 Ethnicity and gender identity

"I'm so proud now when I see students in my university and some of them are doing engineering or whatever, but they come to me and go, 'You're the first black male writer I read'."

Benjamin Zephaniah

Box 3.1: Unique titles by British creators of colour by gender

- **0.35% of all unique titles** published in the UK between 2007 and 2017 were written and/or illustrated by **British men of colour**.

- **0.86% of all unique titles** published in the UK between 2007 and 2017 were written and/or illustrated by **British women of colour**.

When looking at creators from all ethnicities, women are more likely to create children's books, but men create more books on average

- Women are more likely to be children's authors and illustrators than men: 60% of the creators (of any ethnicity) published during this period were women, and they published 56.75% of the unique titles.

- 54.23% of all creators were white women; 37.21% were white men; 5.58% were women of colour; and 2.97% were men of colour (see Figure 3.3).

- Men wrote/illustrated an average of 3.55 books (per creator) over the course of this time period, in comparison to women who wrote/illustrated 3.07 (per creator).

- Although men were less likely than women to be children's book creators, those who were published more unique titles (on average, per person).

Women of colour were more likely to be published than their male counterparts and had more books published

- 3.11% of the unique titles published between 2007 and 2017 were by women of colour. Fewer than 2% (1.84%) were by men of colour.

- Women of colour were nearly twice as likely to be children's book creators than men of colour: 65.23% of the creators of colour were women, 34.75% were men. In comparison, 59.31% of white creators were women, 40.69% were men.

- 0.35% of all unique titles were written and/or illustrated by British men of colour; 0.86% of all unique titles were written and/or illustrated by British women of colour.

Figure 3.3: Gender and ethnicity of children's book creators from 2007–2017[56]
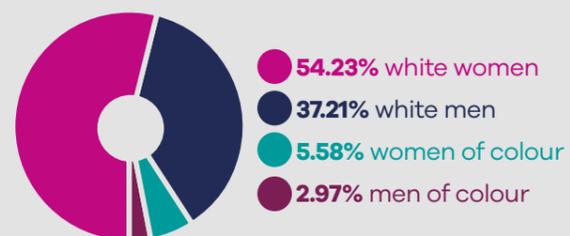
- **54.23%** white women
- **37.21%** white men
- **5.58%** women of colour
- **2.97%** men of colour

Figure 3.4: Unique titles by British creators[57]

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
White women	58.56%	53.55%	59.87%	57.62%	51.27%	59.53%	59.96%	54.83%	53.33%	56.44%	56.87%
White men	40.55%	44.67%	38.14%	40.07%	46.98%	37.93%	37.48%	43.06%	44.65%	42.00%	40.91%
Women of colour	0.73%	1.35%	1.52%	1.47%	1.36%	1.48%	1.57%	1.64%	1.61%	1.06%	1.61%
Men of colour	0.17%	0.43%	0.47%	0.84%	0.39%	1.06%	0.98%	0.48%	0.41%	0.49%	0.61%

- ● White women
- ● White men
- ● Women of colour
- ● Men of colour
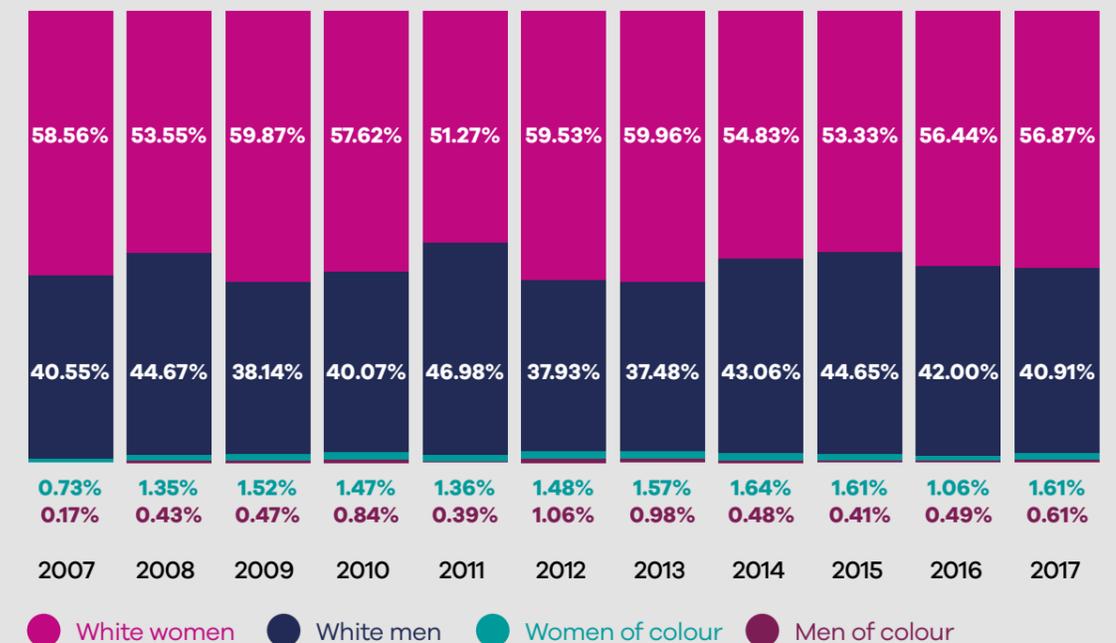
Figure 3.5: Unique titles by British creators 2007–2017

- **56.39%** white women
- **41.61%** white men
- **1.42%** women of colour
- **0.58%** men of colour
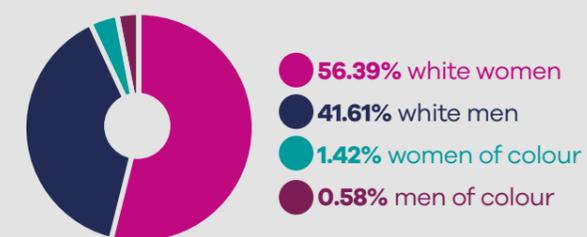
There has been a slight improvement in the percentage of titles by British creators of colour. Even though British men of colour published fewer than 1% of the unique titles by British creators in 2017, the percentage (0.61%) is nearly four times what it was in 2007 (0.17%). The percentage of titles by British women of colour more than doubled from 0.73% in 2007 to 1.61% in 2017. However, these numbers are still very small (see Figures 3.4 and 3.5).

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56 There were 12,706 creators with gender identity and ethnicity information.

57 This is based on a sample of 25,920 unique titles by British creators, where ethnicity and nationality information were available.

3.4 Who is publishing creators of colour?

"I'm in a place where I'd never expected that I could be [Hachette] but it's absolutely fantastic because they have a wider reach than I do under my own small press."

Zanib Mian

Creators of colour were more likely to self-publish than white creators:

15.36% of unique titles by creators of colour were self-published.

In comparison, 6.69% of unique titles by white creators were self-published.

White creators were over

2.5 times

more likely to publish with a university press.

Key: ● Creators of colour ● White creators

Creators of colour were less likely to publish with conglomerates[58] than white creators:

34.11% of unique titles by creators of colour in comparison to

46.78% of titles by white creators.

Creators of colour were slightly less likely than their white counterparts to publish with independent publishers:

27.52% of unique titles by creators of colour in comparison to

34.99% of titles by white creators.

4. Insights: barriers and enablers to improve representation of creators of colour

The following insights are based on interviews with 15 British creators of colour, including ten women and five men (see Appendix A for further information), and are grounded in existing research into inclusivity in the cultural and creative industries.

4.1 What barriers are commonly faced by creators of colour?

"I feel like it's a vicious cycle. It's like, you don't have brown people in children's books, so brown people don't grow up reading children's books or enjoying children's books, so they don't make children's books, and so on and so forth."
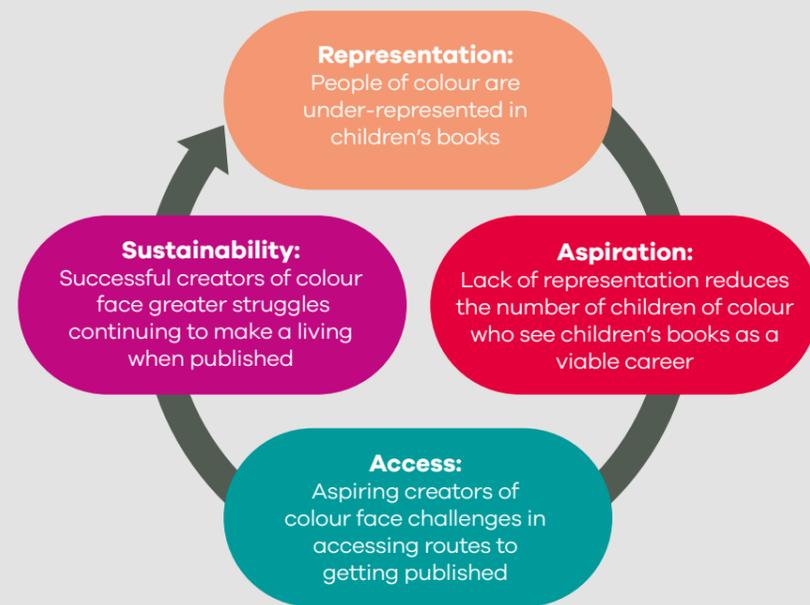
John Aggs

The causes of under-representation of people of colour among children's book creators are complex, multifaceted and embedded in broader social inequalities. However, common barriers, identified in this study, can be expressed as a negative cycle that not only can prevent them from pursuing creative careers but can also hinder their careers once they have been published.

This cycle begins with children not seeing themselves in books and not experiencing creative role models, with whom they identify, at a time when young people of colour might be considering their future professions. Even when a person of colour does make the decision to pursue a career in this precarious profession, they may face barriers when looking for an agent or publisher. Lastly, when they manage to enter the children's book industry, creators of colour struggle to publish as many titles as their white counterparts and feel unsupported at various stages in the publishing process.

In brief, these are systemic problems that will continue until the systemic inequalities that give rise to them are addressed. Figure 4.1 shows how this negative cycle may contribute to ongoing under-representation of people of colour among children's book creators.

58 Conglomerate publishing is when publishing companies are subsidiaries of a much larger, often multi-national and multi-industry, parent company.

Figure 4.1: Barriers to inclusivity among children's book creators

Representation:
People of colour are under-represented in children's books

Sustainability:
Successful creators of colour face greater struggles continuing to make a living when published

Aspiration:
Lack of representation reduces the number of children of colour who see children's books as a viable career

Access:
Aspiring creators of colour face challenges in accessing routes to getting published

All of the interviewed creators of colour faced barriers in their writing and/or illustrating careers. The main barriers, which many of the creators of colour faced, were as follows.

Lack of role models (both the characters in and the people who create books for children)

"I've always loved to write but I just didn't feel like this was a job that people like me did… I don't think I would have ever actively pursued this as a career because in that first instant, and as an initial barrier, I just didn't know any brown authors or illustrators. I'd never met any and then the couple of names I saw on the front of a book were just so alien to me. I didn't know how to relate to these people. So in that first instance, that first barrier of not even knowing that this was a viable way of living was there. I didn't really think that brown people wrote as careers." (Swapna Haddow)

All of the creators we spoke to believed that representative children's books were vital, but the majority of them did not remember any characters of colour in the books they read as children. Those who did, recognised the importance of this for their future careers. Only two of the creators remembered reading a children's book written or illustrated by a person of colour, unless it was a book their parents imported from their home countries (e.g. Mei Matsuoka and Mique Moriuchi both had access to books by Japanese authors, while Kiran Millwood Hargrave read comic books from India). In fact, Millwood Hargrave said:

"My parents went out of their way to buy me books by Indian authors, and other authors of colour."

This lack of exposure to representative characters and creative role models might discourage people of colour from becoming creators. Additionally, creative careers, particularly authorship, are often

associated with whiteness.[59] Acclaimed author and poet Benjamin Zephaniah said, to this day (despite his fame), when he tells people he is a writer they often assume he is a musician and ask, 'You write reggae songs, do you?': this adds to the unrealisable nature of the profession for people who do not fit the stereotype of a children's book creator.

As Irfan Master recounted:

"I was conditioned to believe that I had nothing to offer. The danger of a single story. I never believed. I had no confidence that anybody would want to read my stories and I had no reference points."

Even as an adult, writing or illustrating for a living can seem inconceivable to people of colour, as Swapna Haddow described:

"I just thought of writing as a hobby, as something I did on the side and then obviously as soon as you get into the industry you start to notice the brown names around and you pick up their books and realise, 'Oh, my god, this is actually a thing that we can do. This is a job people who have brown skin can actually do'."

Representation is, therefore, an important part of opening up creative careers to under-represented groups.

Polly Ho-Yen neatly encapsulates why this can be important for future creators:

"Representation demystifies writing for me and for readers. It's all about turning on the 'I Can' button which comes from the simple thought of, 'Well, if they can, then…' Readers need to see themselves in books and as authors so that they in turn take up the mantle as the next generation of authors, if they choose that's what they want. I think that if representation is not there, then that choice is harder, perhaps impossible, to discover."

Nadia Shireen shared her experience of being an unintentional role model:

"When I go into schools to read, the response from kids of colour is incredible. You can see their faces light up with possibility. I underestimated the importance until I saw it with my own eyes. There's that phrase, 'You cannot be what you cannot see'. It's important that all children – of all ethnicities – understand that people who look like me can do jobs like this. It's not just for posh white women or old white guys with beards."

However, it should be noted that several of the creators interviewed for this study were able to use this lack of representation as a source of motivation. Malorie Blackman described how:

"Having to wait so long to see myself in the books I was reading was a major part of why I became an author in the first place."

Polly Ho-Yen wanted to write about a world that reflected her reality:

"I read a lot of middle grade fiction and felt so often that the settings and the characters were very far from my own, and many others', actual experience. I wanted to write a world that the students at my school would recognise and know, and that I would too. That was and is my other motivation – to write a fictional world that has its roots in the one I know."

59 Ramdarshan Bold (2019).

Tola Okogwu was motivated to address the cultural imbalance in children's books:

"I partly write my books so that little girls and little boys like my children can see themselves represented. But I think I probably write them even more so that the little white kids can see that there are people that exist that aren't like them, because that's the only way we're going to normalise diversity, and I hate that word, but that's the only way we're going to make it normal and embedded so when these kids go and see this in books, it's not strange."

Financial insecurity and class disadvantage

Creators, particularly emerging and mid-list (i.e. creators who have enough success to continue writing/illustrating/publishing but are not bestsellers), have to compete with bestselling, celebrity and specially commissioned creators in an increasingly crowded marketplace, not to mention established authors for adults looking to reach new audiences in different markets.

Authorship is also a profession characterised by the polarity in authors' earnings: the median earnings for an author are below the Minimum Income Standard.[60] So, for every Julia Donaldson, David Walliams and JK Rowling, there are thousands of authors who cannot earn a living from their writing. Incidentally, these three writers topped the bestselling authors (in all fields and genres) in 2016, showing how lucrative the children's market is for some.[61]

However, it is difficult to make a living from writing, regardless of ethnicity. Working in the arts, whether as a publishing professional or as a creator, can be poorly paid as we have seen above, and thus often only accessible to those who can supplement their income in other ways.[62] As John Aggs remarked:

"Publishing is probably unsustainable for someone who isn't middle class, who doesn't have a partner with amazing income. I think it's a class thing, you have to be able to lean on people to do it."

Financial support, from their parents and/or partners during their careers, is a privilege that a few interviewees acknowledged but it is a privilege even more rare in minority contexts than in the white mainstream. Financial hardship can stymie creative careers, as one creator lamented:

"It has been become harder over the years as my income in line with most authors has fallen over the last five to six years. And the books become harder to write, not easier."

And Mei Matsuoka stated:

"I think that a lot has changed in publishing over the years since I first started. There seem to be less and less independent bookshops and much more of a lean toward commercial, mass-market books. It is a tighter margin for emerging authors and illustrators to get a platform, which is dominated by the most well-known authors. Consequently, I fear that there may be less willingness to support and nurture a large and varied number of authors/illustrators."

This was supported by Sam Osman, who felt that 'Getting published gets more and more difficult'.

This is an even greater problem for people of colour, especially when this intersects with social class. Swapna Haddow believed that people from working-class backgrounds, especially, suffered from under-representation:

"I feel like that's a voice that is already under-represented in the book world. When we're talking about under-represented voices, to me that is another voice. Not just a brown skin. It's a certain group of people who would never have the opportunity to find themselves in a room full of publishers."

Under-representation of people of colour in the children's book industry and the systemic issues this can cause

The publishing industry, and wider book trade, are dominated by a white, middle-class workforce, which can impact the creator-publisher relationship and the titles being published.[63] Recent research found that publishers made their acquisitions based on cultural matches to themselves:[64] this puts creators of colour at a disadvantage since over 90% of the British publishing workforce is white.[65]

Additionally, the *Writing the future* report[66] found that authors of colour were less likely to be represented by a literary agent, even once they were published. Martin Glynn asserted this, outlining his struggles at the start of his career: 'Black people couldn't get an agent.'

Zanib Mian commented similarly:

"When I got into publishing, I didn't have a clue, though, of how to approach publishers or anything, and I think when diversity and books is discussed, often one of the things that's said is that the publishing houses are full of white middle-class people. So obviously lots of white middle-class people went into publishing or they have contacts and it's easier, and I just feel that it might have been easier if I wasn't from this background to approach publishers. It's a different world."

Swapna Haddow describes the challenges of working with a predominantly white workforce during the publishing process:

"Of every single meeting I've been to, I think I've only ever met one person of colour. It's hard to write something and have a white editor who doesn't understand certain terminology or certain words then edit your work."

This white, middle-class demographic extends to the wider book trade, as Mei Matsuoka points out:

"From visiting festivals, book fairs, publishers, events and the like, I notice that the current children's market does seem to be dominated by people of white ethnic backgrounds."

Many of the interviewed creators discussed the complexities of navigating unfamiliar spaces, mainly populated by a white, middle-class workforce and white creators, as a person of colour (sometimes the sole one in the room).

This feeling is not limited to children's book creators: recent research found that young adult authors of colour had similar experiences,[67] while other research shows it is common among ethnic minorities.[68]

Irfan Master confirmed:

"I'm still often the only or one of very few brown faces in any book launch, meeting, conference, room. That is still challenging."

While Nadia Shireen commented:

"I also don't seem to meet many people who aren't middle-class Londoners. I worked with one BAME editor once."

The majority of the creators expressed a desire to see more gatekeepers of colour, particularly those at a higher level, because as Tola Okogwu asserted:

"Unless something fundamentally changes about the people who hold the power, nothing is going to change."

However, one creator said:

"I find it interesting that a number of the editors of colour I know seem to move out of the publishing arena after a few years as they don't seem to have the same advancement/promotion opportunities as their white counterparts."

60 ALCS (2018).
61 Lea (2016).
62 Brook et al (2018).

63 Flood (2017a); Cowdrey (2018); Squires (2017); Ramdarshan Bold (2019).
64 Childress and Nault (2018).
65 Flood (2017a).

66 Spread the Word (2015).
67 Ramdarshan Bold (2019).
68 Anderson (2014, 2018).

We still have a long way to go regarding authors of colour and the stories they want to tell getting through gatekeepers. There need to be more people of colour employed by publishers in all departments, particularly editorial. Things have slightly improved in that a number of publishers are aware that they need to do better, but quite frankly I heard the same rhetoric ten to fifteen years ago, and then most diversity initiatives faded and died. I wait to see if real, lasting change will come about this time."

Zanib Mian specifies the uncertainties creators might feel when it comes to the publishing process and how their work would be received:

"I think much like myself, authors of colour hesitate to [try to get published] because (a) they don't know how to even find a literary agent, how do you go about that? And then (b) they just assume that their stories aren't wanted by a wider audience."

None of the creators said they had faced explicit racism, and most of the interviewees were largely happy with their publishing experiences, although several expressed how they had faced micro-aggressions, micro-invalidations and/or misunderstandings. Benjamin Zephaniah commented:

"I had publishers saying, 'We don't publish black and Rastafarian poetry. We don't know what to do with it'."

Another creator told a story about when an editor assumed they knew another black creator because 'he's black, like you'. These types of incidents can deter creators of colour from sharing their experiences.

Although most of the interviewees felt they had creative freedom, they acknowledged that publishers still encouraged creators of colour to write about, or illustrate, their ethnic, cultural or religious background.

Moreover, they agreed that many white creators emphasised experiences such as immigration or racism when they wrote/illustrated books about people of colour. This can result in creators (and characters) of colour being pigeonholed, and in creators of colour having to perform their otherness while promoting their books.

Improving representation is challenging and complex

Improving representation is not easy and a drive to improve 'diversity' in publishing has given rise to its own challenges. The *Writing the future* report[69] found that creators of colour have long felt marginalised, pigeonholed and tokenised in the British publishing industry; several of the creators interviewed for this report expressed feeling similarly during the course of their careers.[70]

The following issues were raised by creators as part of this study.

Creators of colour may experience tokenism

Tokenism is the superficial action/s to support marginalised groups in order to give the appearance of fairness, particularly when a dominant group is 'under pressure to share privilege'.[71] Irfan Master said:

"I think as a POC writer you're instantly fetishised the minute you get a book deal. It often feels like only one writer of colour can occupy any one space at any one time. As if it's too much for there to be three or four of us all with our books and projects out there at the same time."

One creator told a story about how their name had been used to reject another creator of colour:

"I have been used in the past by editors in the following manner; they [the editors] have said [to another author of colour], 'We have a book by [author's name], so we don't need another black author'. The black author who informed me of this wouldn't say which editor told them that. I find that outrageous. Would an editor tell a white writer that they won't take their book because they already publish another white writer? I don't think so. I try to steer well clear of editors/publishers who would use me or my work as a token to tick a box."

Additionally, Swapna Haddow emphasised how she felt that tokenism could affect the confidence of creators of colour:

"This is the problem with highlighting an issue like the lack of BAME representation in the publishing industry, because then as a BAME author you start to second guess why you're there. Even with awards I wonder, 'Am I just here because I'm brown? Did they just need a brown female on this list?'"

One creator gave an example of when their name was used in a tokenistic way:

"I wrote a story that got so edited that if you look at it now it doesn't even sound like I wrote it. And at this point I'm starting to feel like, because they were so prescriptive about the synopsis of the story and eventually the editing of the story, I wonder if they just wanted to put a brown name on the cover."

Creators of colour may be pigeonholed into narrow narratives or genres

Martin Glynn relayed his experiences of being asked, by literary agents and other book industry professionals, if he could write like some of the leading Black British authors (in style, content and genre). Glynn continued:

"So even when you did have an aspiration to represent diversity, it was always pigeonholed with non-threatening, non-questioning, non-challenging narratives, and yet white writers who had that freedom wrote political novels, wrote horror novels, etc. You try and write black horror fiction."

Another creator agreed, observing:

"I find it interesting that when white authors write stories featuring BAME characters, they tend to be about tackling/battling racism. That is not the entirety of the BAME experience."

This assumption – that creators of colour can only write about/illustrate issues of 'race', racism or books that reflect their ethnicity, while white creators can write/illustrate anything – is detrimental to combating under-representation. It also generates the question: can creators and characters of colour ever just be creators or characters?

Creators of colour often struggle to simply be creators, without talking about their ethnicity (or issues relating to their ethnicity) within or outside of their books. Irfan Master outlined that:

"The expectation is that you're writing a book that will be a bit more 'exotic'... and that you will be writing a book representing 'all' your people with no distinctions of whether you're from a particular ethnic group or religion. Throw in a heavy dose of political correctness, middle-class politeness, inexperience of working with POC, non-existent marketing budgets, publishing trends and the 'one POC writer at a time, please' school of thought, then you often have a total miscommunication between POC writer and publisher."

Another creator explained how creators of colour were often pigeonholed into the 'contemporary realism' genre, writing about issues of 'race' and racism:[72]

"Publishing gatekeepers are looking for particular types of stories from authors of colour – i.e. urban grit and stories about racism. I know of instances where BAME authors who have presented protagonists of colour in other settings (fantasy, sci-fi, love stories, etc.) have been told that their stories are 'unbelievable' or that they are not presenting the 'true black experience'.

69 & 70 Spread the Word (2015).
71 Laws (1975).

72 CLPE's *Reflecting realities* report found that 56% of the books with characters of colour (published in 2017) fell into the contemporary realism genre, and 10% contained 'social justice' issues (CLPE, 2018).

This works to the detriment of (a) encouraging authors of colour to write what enthuses them and (b) getting a range of stories to our children/young adults which feature protagonists of colour covering any number of different genres. Therefore, the lack of representation, both in the stories and in who is telling them, becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy."

This creator continued:

"How can one person speak for or represent an entire race, culture, ethnicity? If I want to address particular issues I do so in my books."

Creators of colour may not be seen as having universal appeal

The creators of colour wanted to have universal appeal, since they were writing and/or illustrating for children from different backgrounds and ethnicities. One creator said:

"There were plenty [of barriers] especially when I first started writing – from editors wanting one type of story from me, to some booksellers not stocking my books as they believed a black child on the cover would only sell to black children/families. I have stressed throughout my career that I don't discriminate! I'm writing for all children."

Benjamin Zephaniah agreed with this:

"Yes, I'm black, and I write about black issues, especially back then [when he first started], but I don't just write for black people, you know."

This all feeds into the negative cycle of under-representation because it indicates that creators of colour have fewer creative opportunities, which have less appeal to a wider audience. To help combat this, Joseph Coelho argues:

"More needs to be done to encourage writers and illustrators from all backgrounds to engage with the industry on all levels, not just on those opportunities signalled as being opportunities 'for them'."

'Diversity' may be seen as a buzzword rather than sustained and meaningful change

'Diversity' has become a buzzword in the British publishing industry in recent years, generating numerous initiatives, panel discussions and opinion pieces addressing the lack of representation in publishing. As Polly Ho-Yen expressed:

"I feel like everyone is talking about diversity in the industry now, that the awareness is more centre stage, but I feel concerned that after the noise, it might become a short-lived trend. I'm concerned that some of the actions taken feel a little tokenistic and will therefore be short-lasting."

As discussions about 'diversity' amplify, some creators of colour felt that publishers were dealing with the problems in a cursory way, and were sceptical of the industry's engagement with 'diversity'. As the statistics from this research show, this is understandable: people of colour remain under-represented among children's book creators despite increased discussions around 'diversity'. For example, Polly Ho-Yen asked:

"I do also wonder about whether in starting to address this change, efforts will feel awkward and clunky, perhaps tokenistic, in the transition, because so much is yet to be done – and then I wonder if I have actually seen a long-term commitment from the industry and if that is what's missing."

One creator said: 'I wait to see if all these initiatives are a spur for real, lasting change.' Furthermore, previous research highlighted the failure of 'diversity' initiatives across the cultural industries.[73]

As a result of the increasing trend in 'diversity' in the publishing industry, publishers have tried to increase the number of people of colour on their lists. However, several of the creators we spoke to felt that this was done in a superficial, and sometimes offensive, way. As outlined above this includes:

- being pressured to write about their ethnic or cultural heritage
- being asked to emulate the writing styles or content of prolific creators of colour
- being encouraged to discuss issues of (and be a spokesperson for) 'diversity' or their heritage above the content of the books.

This made some of the creators of colour insecure about their position in the publishing industry.

Consequently, creators of colour would like to see the publishing industry rethink its strategies surrounding inclusivity because, as Kiran Millwood Hargrave articulated:

"The industry needs to realise OV [own voices] is not a trend; it's a vital pivotal moment in publishing."

Mei Matsuoka highlighted that 'Inclusivity must come naturally and not in a forced or fetishised way': something that many of the creators of colour agreed with. One way to do this, according to the creators, is to ensure that the voices of people of colour are not just present when developing procedures to address under-representation, but are leading the conversations.

Creators of colour may experience the burden of representation

When marginalised creators do succeed, it makes them vulnerable to the burden of responsibility/representation, where they feel a responsibility to represent their own culture (within and outside of the printed page):[74]

"I don't think my ethnicity initially influenced my decisions to write, but later on when writing my first book, I felt a responsibility to represent my community, family, culture in some way. It wasn't pressure, more a feeling like you're the first one to climb the mountain, and possibly first to get shot at, but if you survive, you can turn around and tell others to come on over as the coast is clear. As publishing is still so stagnant, I sometimes still feel the same." (Irfan Master)

This can also be demoralising for creators of colour. As one creator commented:

"I do also get a bit weary of predominantly being asked to speak on diversity/inclusion issues. After almost three decades in the business, I believe I am qualified to speak on other publishing topics as well!"

As long as these structural barriers exist, and there is a lack of representative characters and creators of colour, children of colour are more likely to grow up lacking positive exposure and may develop a sense that creative professions are unattainable. People of colour will, therefore, remain under-represented in the next generation of creators, and even those who break the cycle may feel unsupported or uncomfortable in their publishing careers, so the negative cycle will continue.

73 Saha (2018); Ramdarshan Bold (2019).

74 This is something that many authors, in different fields, have expressed (Ramdarshan Bold, 2019).

4.2 Enablers: what has helped to break down barriers?

This section looks at how the creators of colour we spoke to had been able to achieve their success. In some cases, their first step had been challenging their perceptions about the types of people who become book creators. Experiencing school and library visits by creators had supported this.

Their next step was then to overcome financial structural barriers. This they had done through financial and social support, while challenging old structures and establishing and engaging new ones. Creators also acknowledge support from publishers and the wider book sector.

School and library visits

School and library visits were seen as an important source of encouragement for our creators of colour, both from a very young age and then as they became older. Such visits inspired them as children and gave them the impetus and inspiration to keep working as adults.

> "I did not see being a writer as a thing for me to do… The amazing poet Jean Binta Breeze came to my school and read a poem, that was my first contact with a writer of colour. I think that visit planted in me the realisation that poetry is something I could do." (Joseph Coelho)

The impact of these visits on readers, and future creators, was apparent.

Creators of colour further relayed a sense of responsibility to be a role model when they visited schools as an adult.

> "When you do events and half the assembly hall or half the class is of an ethnic minority background, you might be the first brown person they've seen do this job. It feels important to say to them, 'Look, this is an industry you can go into. You shouldn't put barriers up to what you might want to do with your life'." (Swapna Haddow)

For young people from minority groups being able to identify a role model of colour can help them imagine themselves as authors or illustrators. These role models of colour can enhance children's perspectives of creative careers and boost their confidence in pursuing such careers.

Similarly, libraries and library visits were identified as an important way to engage young people interested in reading, and potentially as they become older in a career as a creator. The creators we spoke to from working-class backgrounds had relied on local libraries to get access to books.[75] This is also important when we consider the role that social support has played in these creators' careers. It is against this backdrop that we should consider the changing landscape of library provision, such as library closures,[76] decreased[77] and changing style in the acquisition of books[78] and the disproportionate impact on young people of cuts to budgets.[79]

Support from other creators of colour and small organisations

Many of the creators we spoke to expressed gratitude to other creators of colour, either for paving the way before them, or for their practical support and/or guidance:

> "I haven't struggled, because people like Nadia Shireen and Smriti Prasadam-Halls and Bali Rai already opened the gates for me. They did the struggle – that annoying thing where they had their work rejected time

after time because it was too BAME and it was considered too niche – and they bashed down those doors and those glass ceilings. They've made it easier for people like me to come in and have good experiences like I've had with Faber." (Swapna Haddow)

Additionally, some of the creators believed that smaller organisations outside of the corporate umbrella, often run by marginalised people, played an important role in supporting creators of colour in a deep, productive and sustainable way:

> "There are young independent publishers such as Lantana Publishing who have 'Achieving a more inclusive children's book landscape for the next generation of young readers' at the heart of their ethos. It is having more platforms such as this and strong voices in support of them that will help to improve the current imbalance." (Mei Matsuoka)

Tola Okogwu also expressed excitement at the work that small companies, run by marginalised people, are doing:

> "Knights Of is so exciting. We need more like that. I'm sick of begging for scraps off of someone else's table. That time is over, because they [traditional mainstream publishers] will always be in control of what you do and what you can't do, and that's not the end game. That's not the end goal. How can we support some of these self-publishers that are coming out or promote people like Knights Of, like The Good Literary Agency, who are about increasing the space, and their mantra is about more diverse voices."

Irfan Master agreed about people of colour leading the way and taking control of publishing creators of colour in what he felt was a non-tokenistic way:

> "We're now seeing burgeoning publishers, journals, magazines unapologetically publishing only POC. All I can say is that I don't think this was by choice, but we've been backed into a corner in so many ways that there was only one way to take control back."

Larger publishing houses have clearly begun to see the importance of supporting smaller publishers at the forefront of enacting change in the industry, as well as funding their own organisational initiatives.[80] For example, Penguin Random House pledged £15,000 to the Knights Of bookshop crowdfunding campaign. This will enable the independent publisher to open a permanent, inclusive bookshop in London as well as a travelling bookshop across the UK.[81] Similarly, ten publishers have pledged £80,000 in cash and in kind to support the two-year Pathways course for people of colour who are aspiring and emerging illustrators, a partnership project between Pop Up Projects and House of Illustration. Pathways is also backed by substantial in-kind support from twelve affiliate universities who offer illustration degrees.[82]

Box 4.1 provides examples of inclusivity initiatives cited by creators taking part in this study.

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75 See also Ramdarshan Bold (2019).
76 Onwuemezi (2016b).
77 Dunn (2017).
78 Rawson (2011).
79 Flood (2017b).

80 For example Hachette UK's 'Changing the Story' is a programme of policies and initiatives through which it aims to become 'employer of choice for all people, regardless of age, faith, disability, race, gender, sexuality or socio-economic background'. One of these initiatives is 'The Future Bookshelf', which 'aims to demystify publishing and guide you through the process of writing, editing, submitting and publishing, so you know what to expect and how to succeed'. For further information see www.hachette.co.uk/landing-page/hachette/changing-the-story/
81 Eyre (2018).
82 Please see https://pop-up.org.uk/project/pathways/ for more information.

Alternative routes into publishing: small press and self-publishing

This report found that creators of colour were more likely to self-publish than their white counterparts. This was borne out by some of the creators we interviewed. Tola Okogwu and Zanib Mian had both self-published their work because they had been unable to find traditional publishers. Instead of publishing their work through a self-publisher or self-publishing platform, they both set up their own companies.

Zanib Mian also published her award-winning book, *The Muslims*, through her company Sweet Apple Publishing, and Hachette subsequently picked up the series:

"I self-published my first book in 2009. I actually took the story to the only publisher that I could find online that published books with minority ethnic characters... But they came back, and they said that it doesn't fit with their lists, so that was a bit disappointing, and I just thought I'm not going to be able to find anyone so I just went and self-published it, followed by seven others, before publishing *The Muslims,* without a moment's thought about submitting it to a publisher. It's been a difficult journey, definitely, in publishing diverse books and actually getting them noticed, getting them stocked at the booksellers. With Hachette I've only gotten to the point now where I'm working with my editor, so we'll see but I'm sure it's going to be much more of an easier journey for me because I just have to do the writing. I don't have to do all the other stuff."

There are now a number of small and independent publishing companies devoted to publishing books by creators of colour, and other organisations that help support such creators (see Box 4.1).

Box 4.1: Who is doing it right?

Our creators of colour gave us the following examples of what they felt were promising initiatives to support inclusivity:

- **Knights Of:** a British independent publisher of inclusive children's books, established in 2017 with the objective to publish #BooksMadeBetter.
- **Letterbox Library:** a children's bookseller, established in 1983, committed to selling inclusive children's books.
- **Megaphone:** a writer development scheme, established in 2016, which supports authors of colour to write their debut novel for children or teenagers.
- **Spread the Word:** a writer development agency aimed at London-based writers, with a focus on authors of colour.
- **The Good Literary Agency and Journal:** an agency that represents marginalised authors, and a literary journal showcasing new work from authors of colour.

Financial support and/or social class advantage

While this is not something that can be easily changed, having the financial support to create, despite the low remuneration, and/or having the background to navigate these cultural spaces can clearly be an advantage to any creators (as discussed on page 32). Some of the creators of colour we spoke to were from middle-class backgrounds and had been supported through their writing/illustrating career by their families.

Nadia Shireen told us, for example: 'I do feel my career has only been made possible by my economic/class advantage.' While Polly Ho-Yen only felt able to undertake an unpaid internship at a literary agency, when she began her career, 'because I was living with and supported by my parents and so this door was open to me'.

This touches on an important relationship between ethnicity and social class which is beyond the remit of this report. We feel that this is an area worthy of more detailed investigation.

Support from publishers and the wider children's book sector

Despite the concerns expressed in the previous section, most creators also had positive experiences with their publishers and the wider children's book sector. Mei Matsuoka described:

"a very close-knit industry, and over the years I have got to know many people – from librarians to school teachers to bookshops and champions/supporters of children's books such as BookTrust – all connected, very friendly, passionate and supportive."

Furthermore, Nadia Shireen described how, despite initial concerns, she grew in confidence in the publishing environment:

"It's a very small world and everyone seems to know each other, which can be very overwhelming as a newbie. But generally, everyone has been very nice to me. I'm much more confident now. I think I've got a realistic view of the industry and my place within it. At the start, when I didn't really know how anything worked, it felt quite insecure. And I think when you're vulnerable you don't always make great decisions or know when to stand up for yourself."

This section has shown us how the creators of colour we spoke to were creating their own support networks, getting support from other marginalised groups and/or smaller organisations such as independent publishers, and experimenting with non-traditional ways of publishing. They are also inspiring the next generation of creators through school and library visits. These lessons offer potential avenues to encourage the next generation of young creators of colour.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

"I think it's tricky because whichever way you do it [talk about the lack of 'diversity'], if it comes from a white voice it's patronising. If it comes from a brown voice it sounds like we're shouting so loud. It's uncomfortable to hear either way."

Swapna Haddow

Improving the (lack of) 'diversity' in children's books is one of the most critical issues in the publishing industry today and is, therefore, currently at the core of industry discussions.[83] Our research suggests this attention is understandable as people of colour continue to be under-represented among children's book creators.

Under-representation is even more of an issue for British creators of children's books, with fewer than 2% of children's book creators between 2007 and 2017 being British people of colour. This means that creative careers in the children's book publishing industry do not reflect the reality of contemporary British culture and society.

Insights based on interviews with 15 British creators of colour and grounded in existing research into inclusive publishing suggest a complex set of factors are linked to this, and sustained efforts from within and beyond the publishing industry are required if things are to improve.

Four main contributing issues are highlighted within this report, which focuses on the perspective of the authors and illustrators themselves:

- People of colour not seeing themselves represented in books as children.
- People of colour not feeling that writing and/or illustrating is a viable profession.
- Challenges to accessing routes to becoming published.
- The difficulty of sustaining a career once published.

5.1 Recommendations: what can be done to improve representation of people of colour among children's book creators?

The research found a sustained pattern of under-representation of people of colour among children's book creators between 2007 and 2017. Changing this requires a cultural shift in the industry and beyond.

Working with BookTrust, we offer the following ideas to improve inclusivity. These are based on the data presented in this report, insights from 15 creators of colour and existing research.

As part of BookTrust's ongoing commitment to support inclusivity in children's books, this report will serve as a springboard for future research and action and a baseline against which to measure changes over time. It will help to guide conversations, initiatives and investment into increasing the representation of creators of colour.

However, it is important to acknowledge that to improve representation in children's books we need significant commitment from a range of stakeholders over a sustained period of time.

1. Support children and families to read books from a more representative range of book creators

Children need books that reflect the diverse society in which we live. The publishing industry has a vital role to play in making more books available and visible to parents, teachers and children. However, we need the support and collaboration of retailers, reviewers, teachers, librarians and the charity sector in bringing new voices to their audience.

2. Engage the next generation of writers and illustrators

Young people of colour need to see writing and illustrating as viable career choices. They need to see people like them succeeding in these careers and to understand what it takes to achieve this. While it is important to support and invest in established creators of colour, the industry should also seek out and nurture emerging talent and provide a career path that is accessible to young people from all backgrounds. We believe that this can be supported effectively by providing young people with strong role models, for example through school and library visits.

3. Engage meaningfully with creators of colour to avoid tokenism

Despite numerous conferences, panel discussions and initiatives focused on 'diversity', this study and other research suggests creators of colour still feel 'tokenised' or 'fetishised'. To overcome these issues we suggest addressing the following:

- Recognise creators of colour as a diverse group with different experiences and varied stories to tell; creators of colour can write about any topic and work within any genre. Sometimes these stories are about 'race' and sometimes they are not.

- Ensure inclusivity is more than a tick-box exercise. The success of one creator of colour should not negatively impact or exclude another.

- Challenge superficial attempts to appear inclusive for the purposes of publicity.

- Listen, with genuine intent of learning, to critical voices from within and outside the industry.

- Ensure that an appropriate number of decision makers within the industry are people of colour.

4. Recognise the social, cultural and creative case for inclusive publishing, alongside the commercial opportunity, and invest accordingly

While there is clearly a social, cultural and creative[84] imperative for inclusive books, there is also a commercial case. This requires investment and longer-term thinking by the publishing industry to ensure it does not miss out on talent or the commercial opportunity (as outlined in Section 2) that comes with inclusive publishing. The book sector needs to reflect and respond to the world as it currently is. This includes responding to very significant changes in the industry, such as the rise of self-publishing and online platforms for writers.

"We still have a long way to go regarding authors of colour and the stories they want to tell getting through gatekeepers… Things have slightly improved in that a number of publishers are aware that they need to do better, but quite frankly I heard the same rhetoric 10–15 years ago, and then most diversity initiatives faded and died. I wait to see if real, lasting change will come about this time.

However, if publishers don't get their act together this time round, they will miss out as there are far more opportunities for authors to self-publish and get their books out there than there were, say, five to ten years ago. Diversity and inclusion, apart from anything else, make good economic sense. In the same way that cosmetic companies are now including foundations, etc. for women of colour. It increases their market share."

Anonymous author

5. Take collective action to break down the systemic barriers to representation of creators of colour

Under-representation is the result of a complex system of barriers, and improvement requires collective action across the book industry and beyond. This should include constructive critical dialogue and shared learning informed by systematic review and evaluation, and a commitment from leading industry figures to implement the resulting recommendations.

We need to work together to ensure that careers in writing and illustrating are accessible and that the industry is welcoming and supportive to everyone. This includes supporting people of colour to become book creators and to have sustainable careers.

Increasing representation across the creative and cultural industries

It is important to note that people of colour are under-represented across the creative and cultural industries. Statistics published by the government in 2017 found that the creative industries were dominated by white men.[85] There have been various sector initiatives to increase representation, some of which are led by people of colour.

- In the creative advertising subsector, **We Are Stripes** (wearestripes.org.uk) create and increase opportunities for people of colour (at all stages of their careers).

- In the museums and heritage sector, **Museum Detox**, a networking and support group for people of colour, was established in light of reports of discrimination and bullying.[86]

- Recognising that this is a creative industry problem, **The Other Box** offer workshops, events and creative consultancy to increase representation and tackle issues such as unconscious bias.

- In the publishing industry, as highlighted in this report, there are many organisations that are dedicated to supporting and promoting creators of colour, such as **The Good Literary Agency and Journal**, **Gal-dem** online and print magazine written by women and non-binary people of colour, and the inclusive Little, Brown imprint **Dialogue Books**, run by Sharmaine Lovegrove.

84 For information about the creative case for diversity see artscouncil.org.uk/how-we-make-impact/diversity

85 Gov.uk (2017).
86 Wajid (2018).

6. Increase support for people of colour to access, navigate and thrive in the publishing process

As an environment historically dominated by white, middle-class people, publishing may feel unfamiliar and difficult to navigate for those from different backgrounds, particularly if they are tokenised or pigeonholed. Consequently, there needs to be collective action to support aspiring, emerging and established creators of colour. The following practical steps are proposed.

Mentoring, training and networks

- A sustainable and supportive culture of mentoring should be established. We want to see an increase in the visibility of creators of colour, and mentoring is crucial to realising this ambition.

- Many of the interviewees had received informal mentoring from other creators and were either mentors or hoped to become mentors to emerging and aspiring creators. Support should be given to existing schemes, and new schemes should be established where creators (of all ethnicities) can provide career guidance to marginalised and less established creators.

- Some creators of colour have set up their own informal networks. These networks have provided much needed support and guidance to their newer members. An online space for creators of colour could be set up to ensure this network reaches a wider range of people.

- New writers and illustrators need support and training to navigate the unfamiliar world of publishing and the book industry, and to be effective partners in promoting their books. A number of workshops and training courses are available to creators, but these can be too expensive for new writers and thus potentially inaccessible. Sponsored places or bursaries could be offered to creators of colour.

- Support should be given to some of the grassroots initiatives (see Box 4.1 on page 40 for examples).

We recognise that this research only represents part of the picture and invite colleagues from across the sector to work with us, and with each other, to further develop these recommendations into plans to deliver authentic and sustainable improvements in the representation of people of colour among children's book creators.

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Appendix A: Methodology

Approach

This project employed a mixed-method approach, by adopting a combination of quantitative and qualitative strategies. This was done in an effort to offer a more well-rounded report that benefited from the quantification, as well as the descriptive analyses, of the collected data.

This investigation addressed several corresponding questions, rather than focusing on one question, so different methods were used to address different issues. The empirical results of this study have been augmented by a comprehensive critical analysis of secondary sources relating to the issue of representation in the cultural industries, including any available statistical material and qualitative analysis.

Key findings

The Key findings section is based on the development and analysis of a corpus of relevant titles, which were identified and collected through the British Library's British National Bibliography (BNB) database.

Database

- The metadata team at the British Library provided a database of all books tagged with the phrases 'Children's literature', 'Children's stories' and 'Board books' published between January 2007 and December 2017.

- This database contained 68,873 records: this was reduced to 56,858 after the names of editors and academic authors writing about children's literature were removed.

- This research focuses on print/volume titles only: so other formats (e.g. online resources and audio books) were removed, but these titles were, typically, available in print format too.

- The metadata did not include information such as creator sex/gender identity, ethnicity and nationality, or the type of publisher (i.e. conglomerate, independent or self-published).

- This additional information was identified through digital and printed paratextual, mostly epitextual, information (e.g. publisher and creator websites, creator interviews in print and online media, creator information on book covers, etc.).

- Creators were segmented by their (self-identified) sex/gender identity, ethnicity (based on ONS terminology)[87] and nationality. The data was then coded and analysed. This provided statistical information about what percentage of publishing output, in this sector, was created by different demographics.

Missing data

Demographic information, particularly about ethnicity, is missing for 1,776 creators (12% of the creators) published between 2007 and 2017. Missing data is a ubiquitous problem for large quantitative datasets, especially for longitudinal studies such as this one.[88] Extensive searches were undertaken to identify this information; however, it was not readily available.

The missing creators list was analysed to see if any patterns emerge as to why this data is missing and how it is distributed. One main pattern did emerge: many of these creators wrote and/or illustrated under pseudonyms or as collaborative projects.

It was decided that the best analysis strategy to yield the least biased estimates was to conduct a complete case analysis (where the creators with missing data are removed from the dataset) so that the data across the database is comparable, it is simple and it removes bias. Although this means that the statistical power is reduced somewhat, since not all of the original data will be used, the report is based on approximately 90% of the creators published from 2007–2017, so strong conclusions can be drawn.

There were 12,732 creators in the sample (when talking about ethnicity): the titles by creators where ethnicity could not be identified were removed from the sample.

Interviewees: British creators of colour

There were 246 British creators of colour published between 2007 and 2017. To augment the statistical evidence, 15 of these British creators of colour (6%) were interviewed. The recommendations of this report are based on the experiences of these creators and the results of other academic and industry research.

The sample of interviewees was acquired through a mixture of methods:

- Random (where all creators were allocated a number and the interviewees were picked by their corresponding numbers).

- Snowball (some interviewees were recruited through BookTrust).

- Convenience (since contact details were not available for all of the random sample).

However, the interviewees do represent creators from different (ethnic and social) backgrounds, stages in their careers, ages and experience with publishers. Ten women and five men, from a variety of backgrounds, were interviewed.

These creators were:
- John Aggs (illustrator)
- Malorie Blackman (author)
- Joseph Coelho (author)
- Martin Glynn (author)
- Swapna Haddow (author)
- Kiran Millwood Hargrave (author)
- Polly Ho-Yen (author)
- Irfan Master (author)
- Mei Matsuoka (author-illustrator)
- Zanib Mian (author)
- Mique Moriuchi (illustrator)
- Tola Okogwu (author)
- Sam Osman (author)
- Nadia Shireen (author-illustrator)
- Benjamin Zephaniah (author)

Finally, this report uses the term 'creators of colour' instead of BAME. The term BAME (Black, Asian and minority ethnic) is used frequently as a collective term to group the ethnic minority population in the UK and in discussions and reports about (ethnic) diversity. However, it is a highly contested and ambiguous term, which sometimes includes people from a white minority ethnic background.[89]

87 ONS (2018a).
88 Hedeker and Gibbons (2006).
89 Aspinall (2002); Ford (2015); Okolosie et al (2015); Sandhu (2018); Ramdarshan Bold (2019).

Appendix B: Tables

- The statistical data provided below is based on the development and analysis of a corpus of relevant titles, which were identified and collected through the British Library's British National Bibliography (BNB) database. This included all books tagged with the phrases 'Children's literature', 'Children's stories' and 'Board books' published between January 2007 and December 2017.

- The database did not include information such as author demographics or the type of publisher. This additional information was identified through digital and printed paratextual, mostly epitextual, information (e.g. publisher and creator websites, creator interviews and book covers, etc.) where available. Data was missing for 12% of creators (see Appendix A for further information).

- Creators were segmented by their (self-identified) sex/gender identity, ethnicity (based on ONS terminology)[90] and nationality.[91] The data was then coded and analysed. This provided statistical information about what percentage of children's books were created by different demographic groups.

- The database analysis focused on three main areas: all of the titles published (including the various editions of a unique title); unique titles published (removing all of the different editions); and individual creators (removing the different titles).

Table 1: Creators per year[92]

Year	White creators		Creators of colour		Total creators published per year
	Count	%	Count	%	Count
2007	1,659	96%	69	4%	1,728
2008	1,825	94.7%	103	5.3%	1,928
2009	1,966	95.3%	97	4.7%	2,063
2010	2,005	94.1%	126	5.9%	2,131
2011	2,070	93.1%	154	6.9%	2,224
2012	2,150	92.9%	165	7.1%	2,315
2013	2,370	93.2%	174	6.8%	2,544
2014	2,629	93.2%	193	6.8%	2,822
2015	2,899	92.2%	246	7.8%	3,145
2016	2,552	92.4%	210	7.6%	2,762
2017	1,860	94.4%	110	5.6%	1,970

Table 2: Total creators (2007–2017)[93]

Year	White creators		Creators of colour		Total creators published
	Count	%	Count	%	Count
2007–2017	11,634	91.4%	1,098	8.6%	12,732

Table 3: Nationality of creators[94]

Nationality	White creators		Creators of colour		Total creators (2007–2017)
	Count	%	Count	%	Count
Australia	449	96.8%	15	3.2%	464
Canada	314	95.4%	15	4.6%	329
Ireland	191	99%	2	1%	193
New Zealand	113	99.1%	1	0.9%	114
Other	1,085	67.5%	523	32.5%	1,608
UK	5,900	96%	246	4%	6,146
USA	3,437	92%	279	8%	3,716
Grand total	11,489		1,081		12,570

90 ONS (2018a).

91 Nationality is a complex concept, particularly so for Britain and its history of imperialism across the globe (Karatani, 2002). Consequently, what it means to be British is often contested (BBC, 2012). For this report, nationality was allocated through self-identification and used British citizenship as the framework (Gov.uk, 2018). For context, in 2017 86% of the British population were born in the UK, and 90% were British nationals (ONS, 2018b). The sample of creators interviewed for this study is a mixture of both.

92 This is based on a sample of 12,732 creators, published between 2007 and 2017, with ethnicity information available.

93 This is based on a sample of 12,732 creators, where the ethnicity information was available.

94 This is based on a sample of 12,570 creators, where the nationality and ethnicity information was available.

Table 4: All titles and unique titles by year[95]

Year	All titles					Unique titles				
	White creators		Creators of colour		All creators	White creators		Creators of colour		All creators
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	Count	%	Count	%	Count
2007	3,865	97.65%	93	2.35%	**3,958**	2,793	97.7%	65	2.3%	2,858
2008	4,184	96.76%	140	3.24%	**4,324**	2,972	96.1%	119	3.9%	3,091
2009	4,246	96.5%	154	3.50%	**4,400**	3,152	95.8%	138	4.2%	3,290
2010	4,202	95.87%	181	4.13%	**4,383**	3,238	95.3%	160	4.7%	3,398
2011	4,410	95.83%	192	4.17%	**4,602**	3,702	95.5%	176	4.5%	3,878
2012	4,254	94.98%	225	5.02%	**4,479**	3,542	94.6%	203	5.4%	3,745
2013	4,654	94.06%	294	5.94%	**4,948**	3,929	93.6%	268	6.4%	4,197
2014	5,322	94.75%	295	5.25%	**5,617**	4,631	95.2%	276	4.8%	5,907
2015	5,511	94.27%	335	5.73%	**5,846**	4,828	94%	309	6%	5,137
2016	5,176	94.31%	312	5.69%	**5,488**	4,560	94.1%	285	5.9%	4,845
2017	4,670	96.07%	191	3.93%	**4,861**	3,768	96%	158	4%	3,926
Grand total	50,494	95.44%	2,412	4.56%	52,906	41,115	95%	2,157	5%	43,272

Table 5: Country of first publication[96]

Country of publication	Number and % of unique titles by white creators		Number and % of unique titles by creators of colour	
	Count	%	Count	%
UK and another country	2,258	5.49%	248	11.5%
UK	32,445	78.91%	1,094	50.72%
USA	4,936	12%	590	27.35%
Blank: no information added	56	0.14%	6	0.28%
Other	1,420	3.45%	219	10.15%
Grand total	**41,115**		**2,157**	

Table 6: Unique titles by publisher type[97]

Type of publisher	White creators		Creators of colour	
	Count	%	Count	%
Conglomerate	19,845	49.65%	942	44.64%
Independent	14,662	36.68%	759	35.97%
Hybrid	496	1.24%	26	1.23%
NGO/charity/museum	407	1.02%	31	1.47%
Self-published	2,673	6.69%	324	15.36%
University press	1,886	4.72%	28	1.33%
Grand total	**39,969**		**2,110**	

Table 7: Unique titles by British Creators by publisher type[98]

Type of publisher	White creators		Creators of colour	
	Count	%	Count	%
Conglomerate	11,475	46.78%	176	34.11%
Independent	8,583	34.99%	142	27.52%
Hybrid	380	1.55%	9	1.74%
NGO/charity/museum	209	0.85%	13	2.52%
Self-published	2,255	9.19%	163	31.59%
University press	1,630	6.64%	13	2.52%
Grand total	**24,532**		**516**	

BookTrust

Represents