In our study of the climate for diversity at Teachers College, a component of our initial inquiry included taking a partial inventory of the campus ecology as reflected through the visual images represented within the institution. According to Banning (1992, 1993) and Banning and Bartels (1997), the physical environment of a campus may explicitly, and sometimes implicitly, communicate aspects of the campus culture. For example, campus signs or images may express functional messages such as room locations and directions, but they may also convey non-verbal or encoded cultural messages related to diversity. More specifically, messages of inclusion, belonging, power, value, and discrimination based on race, ethnicity, gender, religion, dis/ability, sexual orientation, and language may be communicated through elements of the campus visual/physical environment. Engaging in a (partial) visual inventory at TC serves as a first step toward understanding how the visual makeup of the College may contribute to or minimize individuals’ experiences with racism, discrimination, and alienation. The methods for our study are in Appendix A.

Findings

The visual inventory consists of a collection of 583 photos from all floors and also the exteriors of the buildings that comprise the Teachers College Campus. Of the 583 photos coded, 49 photos were eliminated based on repetitive details that could be assessed in other photos, leaving 534 photos for data analysis.

- Of those 534 photos, 52.8% depict images of gender. Of those photos that depict images of gender, 66% depict both male and female images, 18.4% depict only male, and 14.9% depict only female.
- Of the 534 photos 48.1% depict images of race. Of those photos that depict race, 16.7% show White, Black and Asian images, 29.6% depict White and Black images but not Asian images, 4.7% depict White and Asian images and not Black images, 0% depict Black and Asian images but not White images, 35.8% depict only White images, 7.4% depict only Black images, and 1.4% depict only Asian images. No pictures specifically depict Native American images.
- 2.6% of all photos depict images of religion. 78.6% of those depict images of Christianity, 14.3% depict images of Islam, and 7.1% depict Buddhism. 6.2% of the photos depict images of dis/ability. 0% of the photos depict images of sexual orientation.
- 72.3% of the photos depict images of language. Of those photos that depict images of language, 4.4% depict images of languages other than English including, but not limited to, Chinese, Korean, and Spanish.

References


APPENDIX A

Methods

(A) Our data consists of 583 photographs taken by the research team. We compiled photographs of some of the internal and external artifacts (not people) of each campus building.

(B) We started with Banning and Bartels’ (1997) categories for conducting a “visual inventory” to identify the type of artifact(s) depicted within the photographs: (1) art (e.g., paintings, posters, statues); (2) signs (e.g., flyers, official and unofficial signs); (3) graffiti; and (4) architecture/accessibility (e.g., physical structure of buildings, wheelchair ramps). The multicultural parameters we identified included gender, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, and dis/ability.

(C) We used these categories to code a subset of pictures to determine if they would meet the needs of the current project. After several rounds of coding we established inter-rater agreement by using a “check-list” format for coding in which we code the presence (or absence) and frequency (or infrequency) of various racial-cultural images throughout the College.

(D) Our final coding system included the following categories: gender (Female, Male, Gender-queer); race (Asian, Black, Native American, White); religion (Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Other/unknown); dis/ability (Braille, Ramp Access, Wheelchair Access Sign, Other); sexual orientation (Straight, Lesbian/Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, Other); and language (English, Non-English). For gender, gender-queer was included as a sub-category in recognition of the transgendered members of the College. Although we recognize the potential difficulty of identifying (trans)gender individuals in photos, we included this sub-category of gender to assist in capturing the presence or absence of physical artifacts that reflect this group. Samples of images and how they were coded can be found in the Appendix B.

Limitations

1. Visual artifacts in the College are always changing, particularly on bulletin boards. The photos were collected by three doctoral students over a period of months. We collected these images, not in an attempt to “capture” all of what any one individual might pass by on a day-to-day basis, but instead to provide a quick glance and a rough count.

2. Latino/Hispanic is not included as a coded category; although some Latinos consider this identity to be a race, we limited our racial categories to those used by the U.S census; as we did not use an other ethnic category, we also did not code for Latino, although obviously Black and White Latino/Hispanics are included in images which are coded by phenotype.

3. Although photographers kept track of which hallways and buildings had been photographed, and then coordinated and cross-checked their inventory, it was not our intention to do a fully systematic inventory.

4. Although the coding scheme was developed in conversation among the coders and tested out with a sub-sample of the photos, we made no attempt to have multiple raters and analyze inter-rater reliability.
APPENDIX B

Zankel Hall, 1st Floor; Art; Male; White

Zankel Hall, 1st Floor; Art; Male, Female; White
Thompson Hall, 3rd Floor; Sign; Female; White; English

Thorndike Hall, 5th Floor; Sign; Male, Female; White, Black; English

Horace Mann Hall, 3rd Floor; Art, Sign; Male, Female; Black; English
Zankel Hall, 1st Floor; Art; Male, Female; White

Thompson Hall, 3rd Floor; Sign; Female; Asian; English
Grace Dodge Hall, 2nd Floor; Art; Male, Female; *White, Black, Asian, Native American*; English

Horace Mann Hall, 4th Floor; Sign; Male; White; *Christianity*; English

Zankel Hall, Exterior; Architecture, Sign; *Ramp, Wheelchair Access Sign*; English