

Apparently, Everybody Eats Rice: How Dooley's *Everybody...* series Ignores Relational Identity

Children's literature increasingly uses food to highlight cultural diversity. However, what makes food practices so rich—our diverse experiences with eating, preparing, and discussing food—is often situated in the background of such texts, while many texts foreground the celebration of homogenization in the name of diversity. Works like Norah Dooley's *Everybody...* series highlight what we all (supposedly) have in common while disregarding the very practices surrounding food that make our conversations about food nuanced and exciting.

Such texts establish an “us versus them” mentality, othering the food practices and cultures not associated with the protagonist of the series. In considering “a relational model of ethics,” Mary Jeanette Moran notes how many scholars describe how the idea of an autonomous self depends on opposing—and othering—that which is outside of that self, while “the relational self acknowledges *its debt to others as well as its responsibility to them—a much less oppositional dynamic*” (76, emphasis added). Thus, Dooley's work ignores our inherently relational identities and, in doing so, ignores a standpoint that would embrace diversity rather than further homogenize it. Using a relational framework of identity along with food studies scholarship focused on material food-culture practices, I argue that Dooley's book series, while seemingly diverse in how it depicts food, fails to characterize the relationships we share as relational because it prioritizes oppositional relationships by further othering the cultures and food practices it showcases.