

Elementary Librarians' Perceptions of the Curation of Diverse Library Collections

Heather L. Payne
B.S., Iowa State University, 2007
M.A., Baker University, 2011

Submitted to the Graduate Department and Faculty of the School of Education of
Baker University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

Denis Yoder

Denis Yoder, Ed.D.
Major Advisor

Brian Henry

Brian Henry, Ed.D.

Kelly Wessel

Kelly Wessel, Ph.D.

Date Defended: May 2, 2023

Copyright 2023 by Heather L. Payne

Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the perceptions of elementary school librarians in northeastern Kansas on racially and ethnically diverse library collection curation. Perceptual data was collected by the researcher during interviews with eight librarians. Transcripts of the interviews were compiled into an Excel spreadsheet, the content was analyzed by the researcher, and coded to explain findings. The results of the study can be used by district and building-level leaders to understand the role diverse collection curation plays in a librarian's responsibilities and how supports can be provided for collection development. The six key findings from this study revealed that librarians view diversity as more than race and ethnicity. Librarians perceive that diversity plays an important role in collection curation as they work to meet the needs of the learners and the community they serve. Librarians do more to promote diversity than purchasing books for the library they serve; they promote books and resources, collaborate with other librarians, deselect books and resources, and constantly analyze their collection. Librarians perceive that access to diverse stories helps students build the skills of empathy and inclusion at a young age. As states and communities experience a rise in scrutiny around the resources present in public schools, librarians are in the spotlight for providing access to diverse resources. As a result of the increased scrutiny from stakeholders, librarians have become increasingly cautious in book selection and more apt to self-censor to avoid challenges. The significance of this study is to add to the literature on elementary librarians' diverse collection curation. The results of this research have led to several recommendations, including that school districts should fine-tune their policies and procedures for community members seeking

to challenge books in library collections to ensure a safeguard against individual bias and to protect librarians. Additionally, it is recommended that library funding should be consistent among schools within similar school districts. Finally, the researcher recommends that schools continue to reevaluate and refine structures for librarians to collaborate frequently with others in the school district and surrounding school districts.

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my dad. I know he is watching down on me and has been wondering when I will be completing this journey. He will be so proud to see me walk across that stage.

Acknowledgements

It is difficult to know where to begin because it truly takes a village to complete a dissertation. I would like to begin by thanking my husband, Andrew, for all of his support throughout this process. I remember telling you I was beginning my doctoral journey and you've been my number one cheerleader ever since. I appreciate the extra loads of laundry you've done, the bonus drop offs and pick-ups from daycare, and the countless sacrifices you've made throughout this process.

To Henry, my sweet boy, I am so proud that I have gotten to show you the meaning of being a life-long learner. I know that I have missed out on playing trains, building Legos, and watching shows, but I know that following my dreams teaches you about setting goals and working hard to achieve them. You have a bright future and I will be cheering you on, just as you have been cheering me on!

I couldn't have accomplished this program without the support of family. Thank you to my mom who has helped to keep me on track and has been cheering me on. Thank you to all the Paynes and Dawsons for the encouraging messages, understanding when I couldn't talk or play, and being there to celebrate when this is done!

Thank you to Dr. Yoder for all the encouragement and keeping me on the tracks when things got hard. I appreciate you telling me to "keep chopping wood", and taking it step by step. Your feedback has helped to make me a more reflective practitioner. To Dr. Waterman, thank you for your expertise in data analysis and always asking the clarifying questions to get at the heart of what I'm trying to say. Thank you to Dr. Henry for providing input and providing suggestions at the end of the process. To Dr. Wessel,

your passion for diversity, equity, and inclusion work is inspiring and helped lead me to combine my passion for children's literature and diversity work into this research.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge my classmates in Cohort 16; I have learned more about leading and learning from each of you. I am honored to be surrounded by such a smart and talented bunch. I know our paths will cross in the future.

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|-----|
| Abstract..... | ii |
| Dedication..... | iv |
| Acknowledgements..... | v |
| Table of Contents..... | vii |
| List of Tables | xi |
| Chapter 1: Introduction..... | 1 |
| Background..... | 3 |
| Statement of the Problem..... | 5 |
| Purpose of the Study | 6 |
| Significance of the Study | 7 |
| Delimitations..... | 8 |
| Assumptions..... | 8 |
| Research Questions..... | 8 |
| Definition of Terms..... | 9 |
| Organization of the Study | 11 |
| Chapter 2: Review of the Literature..... | 12 |
| Changing Population of the United States | 12 |
| History of Diversity in the World of Children’s Literature | 14 |
| Characters in Text and Diverse Representation in Literature | 21 |
| Benefits of Exposure to Diverse Literature | 23 |
| Library Collection Curation | 24 |
| Philosophy and policies | 24 |

| | |
|---------------------------------------|----|
| Diverse collection development..... | 27 |
| Auditing collections | 28 |
| Lack of diverse resources | 31 |
| Book Challenges and Policies..... | 33 |
| Summary | 34 |
| Chapter 3: Methods..... | 36 |
| Research Design..... | 36 |
| Setting | 37 |
| Sampling Procedures | 37 |
| Instruments..... | 38 |
| Data Collection Procedures..... | 40 |
| Data Analysis and Synthesis..... | 42 |
| Reliability and Trustworthiness | 43 |
| Researcher’s Role | 45 |
| Limitations | 46 |
| Summary | 47 |
| Chapter 4: Results..... | 48 |
| Characteristics of Participants..... | 49 |
| Key Findings..... | 49 |
| Finding 1 | 50 |
| Finding 2 | 51 |
| Finding 3 | 52 |
| Finding 4 | 57 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Finding 5 | 59 |
| Finding 6 | 62 |
| Summary | 63 |
| Chapter 5: Interpretation and Recommendations | 64 |
| Study Summary..... | 64 |
| Overview of the problem | 64 |
| Purpose statement | 65 |
| Review of the methodology | 65 |
| Major findings..... | 66 |
| Findings Related to the Literature..... | 68 |
| Conclusions..... | 71 |
| Implications for action | 72 |
| Recommendations for future research | 74 |
| Concluding remarks | 75 |
| References..... | 77 |
| Appendices..... | 89 |
| Appendix A. Study Invitation Email | 90 |
| Appendix B. Study Selection Email | 92 |
| Appendix C. Electronic Participant Consent Form..... | 94 |
| Appendix D. Study Non-Selection Email..... | 97 |
| Appendix E. Research Question and Interview Question Alignment..... | 99 |
| Appendix F. Scripted Interview Questions..... | 102 |
| Appendix G. Baker University IRB Approval..... | 105 |

Appendix H. School District Research Request Form.....107

Appendix I. School District Research Approval.....114

List of Tables

| | |
|--|-----|
| Table 1. Percentages of Racial/Ethnic Enrollment in Public Schools as Reported in the Fall 2000, 2010, and 2018 and Projections for 2029..... | 4 |
| Table 2. Percentages of Enrollment by Race in Kansas | 13 |
| Table 3. Children’s Books By and About Black, Indigenous, and People of Color Received by the CCBC 2018-2021 | 20 |
| Table E. Research Question and Interview Question Alignment | 100 |

Chapter 1

Introduction

Students go to school to learn to read, write, and master arithmetic, but they also learn about roles in the world, how they fit into the global society, and what their futures will hold. Children's literature is an essential element in elementary schools and, naturally, plays a considerable role in the lives of young students by providing a first opportunity to view life outside their limited world experiences (Johnson, Koss, & Martinez, 2017). It is imperative that while reading and being read to, children see themselves represented in books, but equally important is to see and learn about those different from themselves (Sims-Bishop, 1990; Martinez et al., 2016; O'Donnell, 2019).

In 1990, Rudine Sims-Bishop identified three ways for society to look at books for children and create a cultural context to explore aspects of identity and belonging: as windows, mirrors, or sliding glass doors. When a book is a window, it offers views of the world that may be familiar or strange, actual or fictitious. Mirrors allow readers to see themselves in stories. Finally, sliding glass doors refer to books where the reader walks through and is called to act because of reading the book; the reader's life is impacted as a result. According to Sims-Bishop (1990),

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. (p. ix)

For students to have opportunities to experience the rich and diverse windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors in literature, researchers have spent decades analyzing

and ensuring the racial and ethnic diversity in the authorship and publishing of children's books. In 1965, Nancy Larrick published findings on a lack of racially and ethnically diverse representation in *The Saturday Review* entitled "The All-White World of Children's Books." Her research results provided evidence that nearly 6 million non-White children were learning to read and understand the world around them through books that either omit them or barely mention them (Larrick, 1965). In 1983, Rudine Sims revisited Larrick's research and found an increase in the number of books with Black main characters, but noted there was room for improvement, stating, "We are no longer where we once were, but we are not yet where we ought to be" (p. 653). Then, in 1985, the Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC), at the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Education began researching the racial and ethnic diversity of the creators and content of newly published children's literature, with similar conclusions to earlier findings reflecting that the amount of literature that is written by or about non-White children is lacking (CCBC, 2021).

The American Library Association (ALA) has a deep commitment to the development of diverse library programs and outlines this in Article I of the Library Bill of Rights:

Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation. (ALA, 2019b, p. 1)

According to the ALA, librarians have an obligation to create diverse collections that contain resources by and about diverse people and cultures. These resources should

reflect an array of ideas, experiences, and perspectives (ALA, 2019b). Naidoo (2014) stated that libraries and librarians are becoming increasingly more important as our country continues to diversify, and “Children learn to understand the role their cultures and the cultures of other people in creating an overall global culture respectful of differences” (p. 2). This is often learned early through the social messages implicitly and explicitly expressed in literature. According to Naidoo (2014), “Books and other print and digital media convey to children how the world perceives people who are like them as well as people who are different” (p. 3).

In this first chapter, the researcher presents a brief overview of the literature, background, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, and significance of the study. Next, the researcher moves on to identify the limitations and assumptions for this study. The researcher concludes by presenting the research questions, definition of terms, and organization of the study.

Background

The demographics of the United States and the Midwest are becoming more racially and ethnically diverse. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2013, 2020), from Fall 2000 to Fall 2018, the percentage of White students enrolled in public prekindergarten through 12th grade programs across the United States decreased from 61% to 47%, (as referenced in Table 1). In contrast, Hispanic enrollment increased from 16% to 27%, and Black enrollment decreased slightly from 17% to 15%. Projections for the next decade continue to show a decrease in the number of White students, with more students projected to identify as Asian or two or more races, while Black and Hispanic races only increase slightly (NCES, 2020a).

Table 1

Percentages of Racial/Ethnic Enrollment in Public Schools as Reported in the Fall 2000, 2010, and 2018 and Projections for 2029

| | White | Black | Hispanic | A/IP ^a | AI/AN ^b | Two+ ^c |
|-------------------|-------|-------|----------|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| 2000 ^d | 61 | 17 | 16 | 4 | 1 | |
| 2010 ^d | 52 | 16 | 22 | 5 | 1 | 2 |
| 2018 ^e | 47 | 15 | 27 | 6 | 1 | 4 |
| 2029 ^e | 44 | 15 | 28 | 7 | 1 | 6 |

Note. Data may not sum to 100 because of rounding to the nearest whole number. ^aA/IP = Asian/Pacific Islander, ^bAI/AN = American Indian/Alaska Native, ^cTwo+ = Two or more races. ^dNCES (2013, p. 1). ^eNCES (2020, p. 1).

As children grow, learn to read, and view the world around them, they need to have opportunities to see themselves in literature and experience books as windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors (American Association of School Librarians [AASL], 2018; Martinez et al., 2016; Naidoo, 2014; Warinske, 2016). Librarians are responsible for curating collections of books that will provide these opportunities for students. However, curating these diverse collections is difficult due to the lack of high quality, authentic character portrayals (Ishizuka, 2018). According to Ishizuka (2018), “diversity is the most important issue in the field of teen and children’s literature right now” (p. 1). In April of 2018, the School Library Journal (SLJ) commissioned a survey to gather information from librarians about diverse collections, with 1,156 school and public librarians completing the survey. Results from the survey revealed a desire to curate more diverse collections, but a lack of resources available to do so (SLJ, 2018).

As librarians focus more on curating diverse collections, the goal should be to increase representation and relevance. Children need to see diversity not as a problem, but rather as a strength of the served communities and the country (Ishizuka, 2018). Literature reflecting diversity gives children this lens.

Statement of the Problem

In the United States, communities and public-school demographics are changing; the country is becoming more diverse (NCES, 2019). Children of all races learn about their place in the world and how they experience diversity through literature. As described in Sims-Bishop's research article (1990), books can

help us to understand each other better by helping to change our attitudes towards difference. When there are enough books available that can act as both mirrors and windows for all our children, they will see that we can celebrate both our differences and our similarities, because together they are what makes us all human. (xi)

The focal point for children's books in a student's life is the school library. Selecting literature for library collections is typically done on an individual library basis. School librarians are usually involved in the recommendation or purchasing process of children's titles for their institution. They often have the final say in all book purchases, but they cannot always find diverse books needed to represent their student populations (Ishizuka, 2018).

When educators provide exposure to diversity in literature, a better reading experience is provided for all students (AASL, 2018; Levin, 2007; Mancuso-Mohsen, 2019). Mancuso-Mohsen (2019) stated that because of diverse literature there are

chances to dispel beliefs of differences in cultures. Books are an avenue for students to garner empathy, tolerance, and understanding. These qualities are essential and provide a lens for viewing communities and nations far beyond the walls of schools (Futrell, Gomez, & Bedden, 2003; Ishizuka, 2018).

Although some research supports the positive effects of diverse literature in elementary school libraries, it is not understood what barriers exist and what opportunities exist that impact elementary school librarians when purchasing resources to create more diverse collections. Absent from the literature is a robust knowledge base about perceptions of librarians and their role in the curation of diverse collections in elementary libraries. School librarians are looking to be a part of the discussion and are passionate for change to create better reading experiences for students. Understanding librarians' perceptions about the barriers could help improve the student experience (Mancuso-Mohsen, 2019).

Purpose of the Study

The researcher sought to gain a deeper understanding of the intricacies of the elementary school library, specifically how the librarian views and curates diverse collections. This study took place in suburban school districts in northeastern Kansas and was intended to inform library collection curation. The first purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the phenomenological experiences of elementary librarians regarding the role diverse literature plays in preparing students for being a part of a diverse society and librarians' role in providing that literature. The second purpose of this study was to understand how librarians perceive diversity in their collection curation and the actual diversity of their individual collection. The third purpose of this study was

to gain insight into library collection diversity audits. The fourth purpose of this study was to identify the support librarians receive from the school district in creating diverse library collections. The fifth purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of strategies and procedures a librarian uses to curate diverse collections. The sixth purpose of this study was to identify perceived barriers librarians have when creating diverse collections. The seventh purpose of this study was to identify perceptions about the diversity in current library collections. The eighth purpose of this study was to identify opportunities librarians provide for students to be exposed to diverse literature within the library.

Significance of the Study

This study contributes to the existing research on the role literature plays in creating opportunities for students to experience diversity through books. This research examines how librarians use knowledge of the communities they serve to curate their library collections. This study allowed elementary school librarians in Kansas to reflect on and examine their philosophy on collection curation, the population of students they serve, and the need for diverse literature collections. Additionally, the results from this study may have implications for school administrators and district leaders as they evaluate elementary library programs and the role literature plays in preparing students for the future. These findings may be used to guide administrators in the hiring of elementary school librarians, allocation of funds for library purchasing, the planning of professional learning for librarians, examining and updating district policies around resource selection, and requirements for diversity audits and analysis of collections.

Delimitations

"Delimitations are self-imposed boundaries set by the researcher on the purpose and scope of the study" (Lunenburg and Irby, 2008, p. 134). The following delimitations were identified as narrowing the focus of this study. The current study was limited to eight selected librarians employed in suburban Kansas school districts. A second delimitation of this study was that participants were limited to those who could participate in an in-person or Zoom interview during the months of November and December 2022 and January 2023. A third delimitation of this study was that diversity was examined through the lens of race and ethnicity.

Assumptions

Lunenburg and Irby (2008) defined assumptions as the "postulates, premises, and positions that are accepted as operational for purposes of the research" (p. 135). The researcher of this study made the following assumptions: The responses provided by School Librarians A-H were accurate and honest and participants showed no fear of judgement from building or district staff. The researcher acknowledged that the librarians participating in the interviews may have varying levels of prior knowledge around curating diverse library collections.

Research Questions

Based on the purpose for this qualitative study, nine research questions focus on the participants' in-depth description of perspectives and context (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008).

RQ1. What are librarians' perceptions regarding the role diverse literature plays in preparing children to be a part of a diverse society?

RQ2. What are librarians' perceptions regarding their role in providing diverse literature that prepares students to be a part of a diverse society?

RQ3. What are librarians' perceptions of the role diversity plays in curating a library collection?

RQ4. What are librarians' perceptions of performing diversity audits on their collections?

RQ5. What are librarians' perceptions of the district support they receive in curating diverse library collections?

RQ6. What are librarians' perceptions regarding strategies and procedures needed to curate diverse library collections?

RQ7. What are librarians' perceptions regarding barriers to creating diverse library collections?

RQ8. What are librarians' perceptions of the diversity of their library collection?

RQ9. How do librarians provide opportunities for students to be exposed to diverse literature in their libraries?

Definition of Terms

Collection. Glushko (2013) defined collection as a term used to describe selected resources that have been gathered for some specific purpose. For the purpose of this study, the term collection is related to a collection of library resources.

Cultural Literacy. Naidoo (2014) stated that cultural literacy is an appreciation of individual culture, but also the cultures of other people.

Culturally Relevant Teaching. Erbas (2019) defined cultural relevant teaching as the practices that are used to bridge a child's home environment and culture with that

of the school, to show similarities and differences between cultural and community experiences.

Culture. Naidoo (2014) stated that culture is made up of the shared characteristics that define how a person lives, thinks, and creates meaning; these characteristics include customs, traditions, rituals, food, dress, and language.

Diversity. According to We Need Diverse Books (WNDB, 2023), diversity includes recognizing all diverse experiences. It includes, but is not limited to “LGBTQIA, Native, people of color, gender diversity, people with disabilities, and ethnic, cultural, and religious minorities” (p. 1). For the purpose of this study, the focus was on differences based on race and ethnicity.

Diverse Collections. The ALA (2019b) stated that a diverse collection refers to literature with protagonists and experiences that feature a wide array of people and cultures to authentically reflect a variety of ideas, information, stories, and experiences.

Equity Audit. Mancuso-Mohsen (2019) described an equity audit as the process in which a librarian audits the books in their collection checking for diverse authors and characters.

Librarian. A teacher of the library sciences in the state of Kansas must hold a current professional teaching license and have completed at least 18 hours of Librarian Endorsement Courses or have completed a 36-hour MS in Library Media Science program from an accredited university (Kansas State Department of Education [KSDE], n.d.). During this research, the term librarian was used and included library media specialists.

School Library Media Programs. In the state of Kansas, the school library program “ensures all members of the learning community have access to resources that meet a variety of needs and interests while collaborating with building, district, and professional association colleagues on issues of importance to the field” (KSDE, n.d.-a, p. 1). For this study, anyone who has completed the school library media program and gained certification will be referred to as a librarian.

Weeding. According to Doll & Petrick-Barron (2002), weeding is the process of reevaluating and removing books from a library collection.

Organization of the Study

The research in this study is presented in five chapters. Chapter 1 introduced the overview, problem and purpose supporting the study, including the background, research questions, delimitations, assumptions, and definitions of terms to create a shared understanding. Chapter 2 provides an in-depth review of the literature on diversity in children’s literature and the importance of librarians providing opportunities for students to explore diverse literature. Chapter 3 explains the methodology of this study and presents the research design, including population and sample, instrumentation, data collection procedures, measurement, data collection, and analysis. Chapter 4 presents the results of the data outlined in Chapter 3. Finally, Chapter 5 summarizes the study, connects the findings to the literature, and includes implications for action, recommendations for further research.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

As racial and ethnic disparities are becoming more common in the United States, research into the racial and ethnic diversity of children's literature and library collection curation is becoming more important than ever (Naidoo, 2014; National Council of Teachers of English, NCTE, 2015). Literature is a powerful tool that helps to construct images and build foundational concepts in the minds of children (Maughan, 2020; Tolson, 1998). It is important to all children that they see themselves represented in literature and see a true picture of other races. This section examines the changing population of the United States over the past five decades, delves into the history of diversity in the children's book world, dissects the theory of windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors, explains benefits of exposure to diverse literature, explores practices for library curation in elementary schools, and discusses current book challenges and policies.

Changing Population of the United States

The United States is one of the most diverse nations in the world (Diamond & Posey-Maddox, 2020; Futrell et al., 2003; Kids Count Data Center, 2021; NCES, 2020; O'Hare, 2011). Demographers predict that by 2050, the nation's population will be comprised of more than 50% racial minorities (Lacy, 2016; Richardson & Craig, 2011). Futrell et al. (2003) stated that "the old cliché of America as a 'melting pot' is no longer appropriate. We are now more accurately described as a wonderful mix of cultures and races, old and new immigrants, exceptionalities, and talents" (p. 381). According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2002) and Kids Count Data Center

(2021), over the past 40 years in the United States there has been a shift in the races of the child population, ages 0-17. The percentage of White children has decreased nearly 25%, starting at 74% in 1980 to 50% in 2020. Meanwhile, the percentage of Hispanic/Latino children has made the greatest increase, moving from 9% of the population in 1980 to 26% in 2020 (Kids Count Data Center, 2021; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2002)

The demographic change in our country can also be seen in the population of school-aged children. In 2020, the enrollment in our nation's school systems had reached approximately 53 million children with 35% being from racial or ethnic minority groups and if the current trends continue, racial and ethnic minority groups are expected to approach 51% by 2050 (Futrell et al., 2003). This trend is not only visible across the United States, but in Kansas as well. The percentage of student enrollment in school by race in Kansas over the past decade is shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Percentages of Enrollment by Race in Kansas

| | 2008 ^a | 2013 ^b | 2021 ^c |
|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| African American | 7.9 | 7.2 | 6.6 |
| Hispanic | 11.9 | 17.8 | 19.7 |
| White | 73.2 | 66.7 | 63.6 |
| Other ^d | 7.1 | 8.4 | 3.7 |
| Multi-Ethnic | | | 5.8 |

Note. ^aKSDE (2023a). ^bKSDE (2023b). ^cKSDE (2023c). ^dOther = contains all other racial subgroups, data was not disaggregated into smaller subgroups in these reports

Suburban America is also seeing demographic changes. The suburbs are often imagined as affluent White spaces, but these communities, and their schools, have experienced major demographic shifts in recent decades, including substantial changes in their racial, ethnic, and social class compositions (Diamond & Posey-Maddox, 2020; Frey, 2011; Lacy, 2016). As the population is becoming more diverse, family-friendly suburbs are more alluring to racial and ethnic minorities (Frey, 2011).

According to Lacy's 2016 research, the populations of American suburbs are becoming more diverse in ethnicity, race, and socioeconomic status. Because of these demographic changes, school districts, teachers, and librarians must examine their practices to ensure adequate opportunities are available to provide rich cultural literacy (Futrell et al., 2003), instead of simply teaching in the same ways of the past and using the same resources. Futrell et al. (2003) stated,

If all children [students at every level] are to be effectively taught, educators must be prepared to address the substantial diversity in experience children bring with them to school—the wide range of languages, cultures, exceptionalities, learning styles, talents, and intelligences that in turn requires an equally wide and varied repertoire of teaching strategies. (p. 381)

History of Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the World of Children's Literature

Advocating for diverse multicultural resources for children has been thought to begin after the Supreme Court outlawed segregation in schools on May 17, 1954, with the decision of the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, but the examination of literary resources for African Americans began much earlier (Horning, 2015). In the mid-nineteenth century, there was concern from the African American community around

problematic representations in children's literature (Jensen, 2018; Thomas, 2016). Prior to the 1960s, there were many influential library leaders in large cities with diverse populations, such as Pura Belpré, Charlemae Hill Rolling, and Augusta Baker (Horning, 2015; Tolson, 1998). These pioneers in American libraries laid the foundation that parents, clergy, and educators set for accurate portrayals of diverse populations and provided opportunities for representation across library collections.

A spotlight was turned on children's literature in 1919 when a librarian for Boy Scouts of America, Franklin K. Mathiews, founded Children's Book Week (CBW). The foundation of CBW was intended to focus on childhood literacy, and the importance and need for high quality children's books (Children's Book Council, n.d.). The establishment CBW marked a shift in the American publishing industry and caused a major publishing company, Macmillan, to create the first department devoted solely to the publishing of children's books (Horning, 2015). Another key event in the evolution of children's literature occurred when the New York Public Library hired Puerto Rico native, Pura Belpré in 1921 to be their first Latina librarian. She focused on bilingual storytelling and services for Spanish-speaking children in New York City (Horning, 2015). Similarly, in Chicago in 1927, the Chicago Public Library hired Charlemae Hill Rollins as a children's librarian, where she spent decades identifying and working to change negative, stereotypical portrayals of African Americans in children's literature (Tolson, 1998; Horning, 2015). In 1941, Rollins attempted to publish the book, *We Build Together: A Reader's Guide to Negro Life and Literature for Elementary and High School Use*. To publish her book, she found it necessary to include a list of books that

appropriately depicted African Americans for children; she was only able to recommend 30 books (Tolson, 1998).

In 1954, The Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka decision to desegregate our nation's schools drastically shaped the field of education and schools themselves (Horning, 2015). Although this decision diversified the populations of schools, it did not immediately impact the diversity of books present in communities and school libraries (Larrick, 1965; Sims, 1983). August Baker, a children's librarian at the New York Public Library became the first Black librarian to be elected as the president of the Children's Services Division of the library and worked with publishing companies to outline what they should and should not do when publishing books about African Americans (Horning, 2015). In 1965, Nancy Larrick, the former president of the International Reading Association, published an article in the *Saturday Review* where she examined the world of children's books and publishing. She examined 5,206 children's books published by 63 publishers from 1962-1964 and discovered that less than one percent of children's trade books were about contemporary African Americans (Larrick, 1965). Because of her research, the Council on Interracial Books for Children (CIBC) was established in 1966 by a coalition of authors, illustrators, and educators to advocate for more diversity and more accurate portrayals of characters in children's books (Horning, 2015; Myers, 1986).

Sims (1983) continued Larrick's research and examined 150 contemporary, realistic fiction books about Blacks published since 1965 in grades ranging from those appropriate for preschool through Grade 8. Two issues emerged from Sims's research: the interpretation of the term "Afro-American experience", and the author's perspective

when writing the text. Sims then categorized the books reviewed into three categories of books, social consciousness, melting pot, or culturally conscious.

In the early 1960s and early 1970s, 14% of children's books fell into a social conscience category with four basic plot lines: school desegregation, where Black children enroll in a formerly all-White school; "guess who's coming to dinner", where a Black child or family moves into a neighborhood; peaceful social change, where Blacks and Whites fight discrimination through peaceful demonstrations; and childhood relationships, where Black and White children become friends, but the Black child/children expect hostility. Sims (1983) found that 27% of the books she reviewed were melting pot books, created to show a "desire to recognize that people are people are people" (p. 651). These books seemed to suggest that all Americans shared the same middle-class values and even went as far to suggest that any character could be changed to another race and the story could continue with no change to the outcome or plot. These melting pot books have been recognized as a positive contribution to the landscape of diverse children's literature because characters were depicted realistically and attractively, stereotypes were generally nonresistant. Finally, Sims identified 59% of the children's books as being culturally conscious. Stories in this category were told from the point of view of the Black character and were set in a Black neighborhood or family. According to Sims (1983), these books were unique in the fact that they "employ culturally distinctive language or portray typical activities, values, attitudes, and perspectives of U.S. Blacks" (p. 653).

Sims helped shape the narrative around multicultural diversity in children's literature by showing that publishing of books about Blacks had improved, but it was not

where it needed to be. In 1986, Walter Dean Myers, an African American pioneer in children's literature, published an editorial in *The New York Times*, where he reflected on his experiences in a personnel office and how his co-worker consistently selected White males to fill certain positions over White women or Black applicants. Myers (1986) wondered "how many books he had read – how many images of Blacks – had led him to believe that a Black man would not be a successful chemist or sales manager. Had he ever seen a Black person in a book who was not an athlete or a service worker?" (p. 50).

In 1966, the CIBC demanded that the publishing industry focus efforts on diversifying the field of children's literature by publishing more content by Black authors (Horning, 2015; Myers, 1986; Tolson; 1998). The counter by publishing companies was the lack of Black authors interested in writing books for children (Myers, 1986). The CIBC responded by sponsoring a contest with a \$500 prize to incentivize Black authors to write for children. In 1969, Walter Dean Myers won this award for his picture book *Where Does the Day Go?* He recalled it being the first time he had been solicited to write about his own experience. The award from the CIBC helped revolutionize the publishing industry and companies began to "see the error of their ways and fully intended to correct the situation" (Myers, 1986, p. 50). Myers understood that he was writing for all children, White, Asian, and Black—when he developed a story. In his 1986 publication, Myers noted that if the literary culture continued to ignore race in books for children and fails to expose young people to meaningful racial and ethnic experiences, the country's culture may experience the next racial crisis.

In 1963, The CCBC (n.d.) was established at the School of Education at University of Wisconsin-Madison with a mission to:

support teaching, learning and research related to children's and young adult literature and provide informational and educational services based on its collections to students and faculty on the University Wisconsin-Madison campus as well as librarians, teachers, child care providers, researchers and other adults throughout the state of Wisconsin. (p. 1)

The CCBC was committed to identifying excellent literature for children and evaluating multicultural diversity statistics. In 1985, the group conducted their first diversity audit based on children's books by Black authors and illustrators published in the United States. From 1985 to 1993, they found the Black authors and illustrators were disproportionately underrepresented in the books published (CCBC, 2021). Their research continued to take shape as they reevaluated their criteria for determining multicultural diversity to include books by and about different races from 1994-2001. These diversity audits included a closer look at children's books published and looked at more racial and ethnic diversity including authors and illustrators who were Black, Indigenous, Asian Pacific and Latinx. The research from these audits showed a large disparity and underrepresentation of non-White authors and illustrators. From 2002-2017, the CCBC shifted their focus from all books published, to books that were received at their center from publishers. This allowed the CCBC to analyze books by racial category into books by a racial group and about a racial group. The CCBC found that while there was a small increase in the diversity of authors and illustrators of children's books, there was a gap between the number of books written by and written about, meaning that a large percentage of the books that were about a specific group, were not written by someone who identified as a member of that group. Currently, the CCBC is

expanding their criteria to include a breakdown of more races and ethnicities from 2018-2021 (see Table 3).

Table 3

Children's Books By and About Black, Indigenous, and People of Color Received by the CCBC 2018-2021

| Books Received & Ethnicity | By/About | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 |
|----------------------------|----------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Books Received at CCBC | | 3,682 | 4,075 | 3,447 | 3,415 |
| Black/African | By | 214 | 235 | 255 | 313 |
| | About | 405 | 479 | 409 | 450 |
| Indigenous | By | 44 | 51 | 39 | 60 |
| | About | 56 | 70 | 53 | 74 |
| Asian | By | 400 | 446 | 416 | 502 |
| | About | 343 | 369 | 328 | 356 |
| Latinx | By | 222 | 253 | 247 | 328 |
| | About | 252 | 236 | 204 | 242 |
| Pacific Islander | By | 2 | 5 | 2 | 8 |
| | About | 7 | 6 | 5 | 7 |
| Arab | By | 18 | 22 | 21 | 24 |
| | About | 28 | 37 | 27 | 21 |

Note. Adapted from *Data on Books By and About Black, Indigenous, and People of Color Published for Children and Teens*, by CCBC, 2021.
<https://ccbc.education.wisc.edu/literature-resources/ccbc-diversity-statistics/books-by-about-poc-fnn/>

Because of the CCBC's research, it is evident that for the past several decades only around 20-30% of books published each year feature multicultural diversity, which is not representative of the changing population in the United States, which shows a decline in White student enrollment. An examination of CCBC research leads to further

questions about the authors of diverse literature for children, including who are the people writing these diverse books, specifically in the racial categories of Black/African and Indigenous people. According to Thomas (2016), “if today’s children grow up with literature that is multicultural, diverse, and decolonized, we can begin the work of healing our nation and world through humanizing stories” (p. 115).

Characters in Text and Diverse Representation in Literature

Literature has the power to enrich the life of a reader by reflecting the current reality and moving the reader beyond the world they know (Martinez et al., 2016). Hall (2008) suggested that when selecting literature to put into classroom and school libraries and to read aloud, the decision should be made with care and include literature from “authors and illustrators who authentically depict various cultures and backgrounds” (p. 80). Books help build empathy and bring an awareness and acceptance though providing a space for exploring community (Hall, 2008).

Children’s picture books are a useful tool when introducing children to the world around them (Barta & Grindler, 1996; Erbas, 2019; Johnson, 2017; Levin, 2007; Martinez et al, 2016). Children learn from seeing themselves and others in text, helping to create their cultural perspectives (Erbas, 2019). When teachers employ culturally relevant teaching strategies into their classrooms, they create a safe environment for students to bring their own cultures to the table. As described in Himmelstein (2021), promoting and selecting diverse literature is imperative to the work in schools, but most important in White majority communities.

Putting diverse books in front of White children helps to dispel stereotypes and offer a more balanced world view (Himmelstein, 2021). This work is consistent with that

of Sims-Bishop (1990) whose research indicated that “if White children see only themselves, they will grow up with an exaggerated sense of their own importance and value in the world—a dangerous ethnocentrism” (p. x). School and classroom libraries help to create an equality of perspectives for students and introduce diverse literature (Hall, 2008), with Himmelstein (2021) indicating that “the ultimate goal of diversifying literature for White students is not just to expand their horizons but also to make them question racist actions or systems” (p. 4).

The concept of books functioning as windows, mirrors and sliding glass doors was introduced by Sims-Bishop (1990). Her research indicated that books could provide the reader with either a mirror of an experience unique to them, a window into a new world or new world view, or a sliding glass door that makes the reader walk through the door and create a new reality or experience as a result of the literature. Bishop stated that “reading becomes a means of self-affirmation, and readers often seek their mirrors in books” (p. ix). Many non-White children find the search for mirrors in books to be futile (Horning, 2014; Larrick, 1965; Sims, 1983; Bishop, 1990). According to Sims-Bishop (1990),

Books could, however, help us to understand each other better by helping to change our attitudes towards difference. When there are enough books available that can act as both mirrors and windows for all our children, they will see that we can celebrate both our differences and our similarities, because together they are what makes us all human. (p. xi)

School librarians are beginning to join the discussion on diversity in literature and the importance for student development; they want to create better reading experiences

for their students (Ishizuka, 2018; Mancuso-Mohsen, 2019). According to Mancuso-Mohsen (2019) research, several things were introduced that school librarians are doing to show they value diversity in their collections, including equity audits, increasing diversity during collection development, increased professional learning, and improved library marketing. Many school libraries are developed over years or even decades, which emphasizes the need for librarians to be relentless in their collection curation to make sure books are representing their population and the population of our country. Equity audits can be a useful tool as librarians look at collection diversity. Equity audits help to show a need for diverse resources within a collection, then provide librarians with next steps that could include targeted purchasing and acquisition to fill gaps noted in their collections (Mancuso-Mohsen, 2019).

Benefits of Exposure to Diverse Literature

Literature and positive classroom environments play an important role in the development of children, especially as children develop their sense of identity (Martin, 2021). If children do not have opportunities to view themselves or their experiences in schools, their learning is negatively impacted (Enciso, 1997; Krasnoff, 2016). Libraries, librarians, and classroom teachers provide chances for students to see themselves in texts through mirrors and experience the lives of others in the form of windows (Bennett, 2011; Sims-Bishop, 1990). Lawson (2013) stated that students who do not see themselves represented in literature or curriculum are more likely to struggle academically or not show engagement in school. She further stated that students “may also begin to think that because they do not see themselves reflected within the literature they are less of a person and start to feel as if other cultures, races, genders, or other

backgrounds are more important than theirs” (p. 1). Interactions with diverse books give children an opportunity to develop higher levels of self-esteem and value in their race and culture (Hall, 2008). These interactions with diverse texts also give children the chance to make connections to the world around them and their lives. Exposure to diverse literature lets readers experience “how others deal with their emotions, frustrations, and fears, while providing them with insight on their personal problems” (Lawson, 2013, p. 5). Books help readers develop a sense that humans are more similar than different (Adichie, 2009); Erbas, 2019; Himmelstein, 2021).

In 2013, Lawson conducted research to identify the effects of diverse literature on students learning and their perception of family and family structures. During the study, participants participated in an initial survey to identify their beliefs about families. After the initial survey, participants engaged in three lessons with books focusing on different family structures. At the completion of the lessons, the participants completed the survey again. The initial data showed that the students had a limited understanding of family structure and identified families to have the same components of their own family. The final survey revealed that the students’ perspective of what a family could look like changed and students included different portrayals of family structure in their responses. Lawson’s (2013) research provided support for exposing children to diverse books and the ability of literature to foster empathy and understanding of differences.

Library Collection Curation

A primary purpose of schools is to provide students with the skills necessary to become productive citizens. School libraries play an important role in this process through library collection development (KSDE, 2022). Maintaining and curating

collections is a key feature of school librarians that distinguishes them from other educators in schools (Keeling, 2019). Librarians must be considerate when selecting resources for the library.

Philosophy and policies. Loertscher (1985) developed a technique, called collection mapping, that was used by librarians for examining a library collection. The philosophy of collection mapping was based on the idea that a library collection should be unique and specific to the community it serves. As described by Loertscher (1985), a collection should serve three major purposes. The first purpose is breadth. A library collection needs to serve the needs and interests of the community. The second purpose is depth. A library collection should provide resources on a wide range of topics from beginning readers to complex cultural and historical topics. The third purpose is full depth. A library collection should provide rich resources that connect to the state standards and district curriculum. Utilizing collection mapping helps librarians analyze their collections for areas of strength and areas of weakness.

Curating a diverse collection in elementary libraries is not a simple, straight forward task. As described in Philippi and Calzada (2022), “the most important thing to remember is that every collection and campus is unique. To fully support a campus, the school librarian must know both the collection and the campus community well” (p. 13). Schmidt (2021) suggested that all library collections need to be culturally diverse, and to do this “the collection should be a representation of the language, cultures, and ethnic groups of the school and it should not be represented only on culturally celebrated monthly themes” (p. 15). Furthermore, according to Philippi and Calzada (2022), librarians must be careful to select resources for the library that compliment, enhance,

and support the content taught in grade level curriculum while also adding depth and breadth to the lessons taught in the classroom. Their research indicated that the library collection should serve two purposes. The first being to provide materials for teachers to aid in teaching curriculum in ways that pique student interest and enhance learning. The second being to provide students with books for their reading pleasure.

Many states have specific library standards focused on guidelines and requirements for collection curation (Philippi & Calzada, 2022). Currently, the state of Kansas does not provide any specific guidance, leaving school districts and librarians to look to other states or professional organizations such as the American Library Association, ALA, for recommendations. In the state of Kansas, librarians utilize the Kansas Curricular Content Standards for Library/Information and Technology (KSDE, 2022) to guide their practice, including creating “spaces where children and youth can read, think, create, explore, and grow either individually or collaboratively” (p. 5). When creating library spaces and collections for children, Kerby (2019) suggested librarians must “(1) know your standards, (2) know your learners, (3) know the curriculum, and (4) identify your selection criteria” (p. 9). Many school districts do have specific selection policies in place that help support librarians as they curate collections.

Selection policies are important guides for librarians when they are analyzing their collections. Policies should support librarians in creating learning environments that are inclusive and equitable for the populations they serve (Dawkins & Edison, 2021). According to their research, strong selection policies and resources for districts support librarians in curating diverse collections.

Diverse collection development. The nation continues to diversify and it is increasingly important that children learn to understand the key role their culture and the cultures of others play in creating a global society. The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) Initiative (2010), stated that students are college and career ready if they “come to understand other perspectives and cultures” (p. 7). The CCSS Initiative continued to state that “students appreciate that the twenty-first-century classroom and workplace are settings in which people from often widely divergent cultures and who represent diverse experiences and perspectives must learn and work together” (p. 7). These values are instilled within students through the literature they are exposed to at a very young age. Doll and Garrison (2013), described an educator’s job as giving children an opportunity to develop cultural understandings of themselves and others, partially done through the literature chosen to use and display in classrooms and libraries. Naidoo (2014) continued to support this idea by explaining, “librarians can help children develop favorable attitudes toward these perspectives as the ‘other’ by introducing them to authentic, high-quality literature about diverse cultures” (p. 5).

Children need to develop a global perspective to help identify and acknowledge cultural differences, impacts of personal decisions, and how these relate to their lives outside their current community (Martin, 2021; Naidoo, 2014). Naidoo (2014) stated that “a library has the potential for helping children make cross-cultural connections and develop the skills necessary to function in a culturally floristic society” (p. 5). If children are constantly exposed to literature that features characters that look and behave like themselves, they may become unmindful of others who are labeled as different (Martin, 2021). The text that children are exposed to at a young age can shape their lives well past

their time in school. The books chosen for libraries can reinforce oppression, or celebrate identities and differences (Taylor, 2012).

To help librarians curate their collections, the ALA provided resources and guidelines. The ALA (2019a) outlined this guidance for libraries in their collection and program development by stating that,

A well-balanced collection does not require a one-to-one equivalence for each viewpoint but should strive for equity in content and ideas that takes both structural inequalities and the availability of timely, accurate materials into account. A diverse collection should contain a variety of works chosen pursuant to the library's selection policy and subject to periodic review. (p. 1)

The ALA (2019a) also recommended that diverse collections contain a variety of works that are periodically reviewed in accordance with selection policies. The NCTE, (2015), also highlighted the importance of high quality literature in classroom libraries, stating that access to a variety of books across levels, interests, and abilities is essential for students.

Auditing collections. According to Jensen (2018), diversity audits of a library collection can help to bridge the ALA selection policies to practice. A diversity audit can be a useful tool to help librarians learn about their collection and identify areas for greater diversity in resources. When conducting a diversity audit, a librarian is provided with concrete data about the diversity of their collection; it helps to put the science in library science (Jensen, 2018). Koss and Paciga (2022) suggested that “a diversity audit challenges us to critically examine our collections for equitable and inclusive depictions

that reflect and expand our students' worlds, and to incorporate its principles when procuring new books for identifying future titles" (p. 263).

The goal of a diversity audit is to critically examine a current set of materials or identity and representation within the collection, then illuminate gaps existing in that representation (Koss & Paciga, 2022). In filling the gaps within a collection, the ultimate outcome is curating resources that celebrate the lives of all students and the communities served (Sims-Bishop, 1990; Martin, 2021; Naidoo, 2014). The process of a diversity audit is the same no matter the demographics of the classroom or community (Koss & Paciga, 2022). Koss and Paciga (2022) suggested a four-part plan for successfully completing a diversity audit. First, librarians or educators need to visualize the library. Next, the inventory needs to be completed. Third, the educator or librarian needs to reflect on the findings. Finally, a plan needs to be developed for next steps and action.

The first step of a diversity audit is crucial as it requires the educator or librarian to reflect and think deeply about the collection of resources they currently have. Many professionals inherit a collection and have not had the opportunity to dig deep into the resources. According to Koss and Paciga (2022), it is essential to remember that "the quality of the collection and the people and world views it represents are more important" (p. 263) than the quantity of resources present. Koss and Paciga (2022) suggested that educators and librarians consider and write down the answers to the following questions before performing a diversity audit:

- What do you think you have in terms of diversity and inclusion, broadly defined?

- How do you organize the space? By genres? Levels? Topics? Alphabetical order?
- What/who do you think students see first and last?
- What books are featured or placed in prominent locations? (p. 263)

The second step of a diversity audit is to complete the audit. This process can be complex and multifaceted, especially with a large collection. Koss and Paciga (2022) suggested starting with a manageable plan that does not have to be completed in a short period of time. During the inventory, the auditor should have their hands on each title and understand the content within the book, not only looking at the cover (Koss & Paciga, 2022). Resources can be labeled in multiple categories, such as race, ethnicity, culture, gender, or ability. At the completion of the inventory, the educator or librarian should analyze the data to determine a current reality of the collection.

The third step of a diversity audit requires educators and librarians to reflect on the findings from the audit. Koss and Paciga (2022) suggested that during this step it is important to “remember that not all representation is good representation” (p. 264). How characters are presented in the resources are equally as important as the actual inclusion. (Sims-Bishop, 1990; Hall, 2008; Koss et al, 2018; Koss & Paciga, 2020, 2022; Levin, 2007). Reflecting on the range of representation in the collection helps to curate collections representative of communities and populations and helps to create a balanced collection. According to Koss and Paciga (2022), “a balanced collection will offer students opportunities to learn about diversity across a range of intersections” (p. 266). Educators and librarians need to consider the opportunities they are providing for

students to experience windows and mirrors in the collections (Sims-Bishop, 1990; Koss & Paciga, 2022).

The final step of a diversity audit is to develop plans and next steps for the collection. This step allows educators and librarians to plan for the future, reflecting on titles that need to be removed, titles and viewpoints that need to be added, ultimately creating an ideal collection for the population served (Koss & Paciga, 2022). Koss and Paciga (2022) encouraged educators and librarians to collaborate with other professionals to share titles and resources that could be added to the collection. By engaging in a diversity audit, educators and librarians could critically engage in reflection on the resources they have available to students and how those resources are presented and displayed.

Lack of diverse resources. Historically, the amount of racially and ethnically diverse literature for students is lacking (CCBC, 2021; Horning, 2009; Koss, 2015; Larrick, 1965; Naidoo, 2006; Sims, 1983), and therefore requires librarians to work even harder to ensure the collections are diverse. Cahill, Ingram, and Joo (2021) analyzed library collections primarily used for story time at 25 libraries and found that over half of them had main characters that featured non-human characters, such as animals, while only 15% contained content that was multicultural, and 5% that showcased children with disabilities. Naidoo (2014) noted that these numbers were not enough for our children to experience diverse perspectives.

Two of the largest book awards in children's literature are the Caldecott Medal, for outstanding illustrations, and the Newbery Medal, for outstanding literature. Koss et al. (2018) analyzed the 337 books that were a Caldecott Medal winner, or Caldecott

Honor selection. Of those books, they found that the main characters were predominately White (70%), and the representation of authors and illustrators were similar, with 86% of the authors being White as were 70% of the illustrators. Similar representation was found when analyzing the Newbery Award winners, of the 98 titles, 70% of the main characters were White (Koss & Paciga, 2020). These trends were not reflective of the population or the students in classrooms.

Books children often read depict familiar characters and plotlines that are popular in the media. These books are typically easily available to teachers and librarians as they are distributed through mass markets, such as book fairs or book orders. According to Koss and Paciga (2022), “many high-quality texts representing marginalized characters are not available in mass market editions, and relying only on book clubs and mass market availability can impact the range of titles procured” (p. 1). If marginalized populations are not exposed to literature representing their identities and viewpoints, they may have lower self-esteem and feel as if they don’t have a place in society (Machado & Flores, 2021). Equally important to amount of representation is the quality of the representation. According to McNair (2016), if children are experiencing misrepresentations or underrepresentation of diversity, they can develop broken mirrors or windows, or even sliding doors that become closed and locked.

Organizations such as We Need Diverse Books (WNDB) and Lee and Low Publishing have been established to encourage the storytelling of marginalized authors and illustrators. WNDB is a non-profit that provides resources for marginalized authors and illustrators to get connected in the publishing field, promote books featuring diversity, and get books onto the shelves of bookstores, classrooms and libraries that

promote diverse perspectives (WNDB, n.d.). Lee and Low is a specifically diverse publishing company established in 1991 out of the need for more representation of marginalized characters, authors, and illustrators. Lee and Low's mission is to produce "high quality books that are truly about everyone—for everyone" (Lee & Low Books, n.d.). The publishing world is seeing an increase in organizations like these promoting diversity in literature and representation. As a result, more diverse books end up on the shelves in libraries and classrooms and in the hands of children.

Book Challenges and Policies

Currently, in school libraries across the nation there has been a rise in book challenges and criticism of librarians (Taylor, 2023). Lambert (2022), a public high school librarian, shared that "book challenges and the reconsideration process are a natural part of how libraries function in a democratic society" (p. 59). She further stated that "we want our patrons and stakeholders to be invested in our libraries and provide feedback. Criticism and discourse are necessary to ensure the viability of a collection" (p. 59). The current book challenges happening across the country are specifically targeting books by marginalized people, books about racism, and identity development that challengers are identifying as harmful to students (Lambert, 2022).

States have passed legislation that target librarians and criminalize providing access to diverse materials, such as those around sexual orientation. Florida's law, passed in 2022, mandates that school districts provide more transparency around the materials students can access, requiring that schools must log every book and resource, and create a formal review process for any stakeholder complaints (Shah, 2023). Missouri's law, also passed in 2022, makes it a "Class A misdemeanor for librarians or

teachers to provide ‘explicit sexual material’ to a student” (Tager, 2023, p. 1). New state legislation, such as those in Florida and Missouri, are making it easier to ban books and have caused increased scrutiny on school libraries and librarians. In many cases, librarians, and even teachers, fear legal action over the books in their collections. A federal investigation is currently underway between the state of Texas and the American Civil Liberties Union over book ban challenges. According to Taylor (2023), the “investigation will consider whether book bans, which are often argued to be an infringement of First Amendment rights, are also a violation of civil rights” (p. 1).

When librarians and educators live in fear of legal action over the choices of books they have in their collection, it creates a practice of self-censorship that could potentially be harmful to the development of children’s diverse perspectives. According to Lambert (2022), “librarians engage in soft censorship practices by quietly removing books from their collections or opting not to purchase certain materials for fear of blowback or controversy” (p. 59). Librarians and education professionals must safeguard against this practice and use their expertise to provide equitable opportunities for children to learn and grow through experiencing high-quality, diverse literature (Sims-Bishop, 1990; Koss & Piciga, 2022; Lambert, 2022; Machado & Flores, 2021).

Summary

The population of the United States is diverse, and that diversity continues to increase (Diamond & Posey-Maddox, 2020; Futrell et al., 2003), resulting in a need for more diverse literature for children. Books provide children windows into experiencing cultures and opportunities different from themselves; mirrors to allow all readers to see themselves represented in literature; and sliding glass doors to foster building empathy

for those different from themselves (Sims-Bishop, 1990). The books that are chosen to be on the shelves in classrooms and in libraries send a silent message about the cultures, the values, and the identities that are celebrated (Koss & Paciga, 2022).

The current amount of diversity in children's literature is increasing slowly, but librarians and educators still face challenges in procuring high-quality resources. Work in publishing needs to continue to provide increased awareness to the stories being represented in the mainstream market. Organizations continue to support marginalized authors and illustrators in sharing their stories and the stories of varied perspectives.

Analyzing collections and digging deep into the resources present through diversity audits allows librarians to take an unbiased look at a collection. Curating collections that provide rich opportunities for children to be exposed to diverse literature is essential to the growth and development of learners as they grow up to participate in an even more diverse future. In the end, everyone benefits from diverse literature.

This review of the literature focused on the changing population of the United States, the history of diversity in children's literature, the representation of diversity in literature, the benefits of exposure to diverse literature, library collection curation, and current book challenges and policies. Chapter 3 focuses on the methodology, research design, sampling procedures, and instrumentation. Further provided in the chapter is an explanation of the data collection procedures, data analysis and synthesis, a detailed account of the researcher's role in reliability and trustworthiness, and the limitations to the study.

Chapter 3

Methods

The purpose of this qualitative study was to gain a deeper understanding of diverse library collection curation in elementary schools through the investigation of the perceptions of suburban Kansas elementary school librarians as they curate diverse library collections. The researcher used a phenomenological approach to the qualitative research as she sought to identify barriers that librarians encounter when selecting diverse literature and supports that could be helpful to assist in diverse collection curation. This chapter explains the methodology: the research design, the study setting, a description of the selection of participants, and a description of measurement and data collection procedures. This chapter also includes an overview of the data analysis and synthesis, reliability and trustworthiness, the researcher's role, study limitations, and a summary of the chapter.

Research Design

A qualitative, phenomenological research study was selected as the means to examine the perceptions of librarians. According to Bloomberg & Volpe (2019) in phenomenological research studies the researcher seeks to “interpret the meaning of the lived experience” (p. 54). This approach is a qualitative strategy used in research to understand a human experience of a phenomenon surrounding a phenomenon, as described or experienced by the study participants (Creswell, 2014). Bloomberg and Volpe (2019) described the purpose of phenomenological research as investigating the lived experiences of people and using those common experiences to describe a phenomenon. Bloomberg and Volpe (2019) suggested, “the epistemological position of

phenomenology is that the knowledge gained through the research process should reflect the participants' perspectives regarding the ways in which they make sense of their worlds" (p. 96).

This study involved asking elementary librarians to share perceptions regarding diverse library collection curation. The researcher followed a semi-structured interview style by engaging in a formal interview with pre-determined interview questions but allowed for probing questions to gain further meaning from participants' responses. The researcher was responsive to the interviewee and maintained a conversational flow during the interview. The interview style and structure allowed the researcher to engage in a phenomenological research study that gave participants an opportunity to describe the experience, but also allowed the researcher the opportunity to interpret the meaning of the experience.

Setting

The setting for this study was suburban, public, elementary schools in northeastern Kansas. The researcher selected four school districts that represented the changing demographics of suburban school districts in Kansas. Selecting multiple settings allowed the researcher to gain a deeper insight into the world of library collection curation across school districts.

Sampling Procedures

The target population for this study was elementary school librarians in suburban public school districts in northeast Kansas because of the role they play in selecting the literature in their library collections. The researcher used criterion sampling during the study to select participants. According to Lunenburg & Irby (2008), criterion sampling

consists of “participants who meet some criterion” (p. 176). The following criteria were required for participation in this study: (a) the librarian was currently employed in a suburban elementary school in northeast Kansas, (b) the librarian had at least two years of experience in the current role, and (c) the librarian expressed interest and availability to participate in the interview.

The researcher sent an email to 12 elementary librarians in four school districts who met the criteria (see Appendix A). Participants were selected to participate in the interviews based upon the order they replied to the email. The first eight respondents received a study selection email (see Appendix B). Respondents also received a copy of an electronic participant consent form (see Appendix C), which was modified from a consent form developed by Stanford University (n.d). The remaining respondents received a study non-selection email (see Appendix D). Participants not selected in the first round were retained as standby participants in the event an initial participant was unable to participate in the interview or more interviews were needed for additional research.

Instruments

Three main types of questions are utilized to conduct in-depth, effective qualitative research, including main interview questions, probing questions, and follow-up questions (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The researcher designed interview questions based on and aligned to the research questions (see Appendix E), then sought feedback on the appropriateness of the questions from three experts in the field. The interview included an ice-breaker question, five main questions, five follow-up questions, and one concluding question to gather any further insights from the participants (see Appendix F).

Ice-Breaker Statement. Tell me about your background and experience as a librarian?

Interview Question 1. For this interview, we are going to be discussing diversity. How would you define the term diversity?

Interview Question 2. Tell me about the role literature plays in preparing students for their participation in our society today.

Interview Question 3. Tell me about your role in providing diverse literature that prepares students to be a part of our society.

Follow-up Question 3. How do you provide opportunities for students to be exposed to diverse literature in your library?

Interview Question 4. What can you share about the amount of diversity in your library collection?

Follow-up Question 4. To what degree do you believe your current library collection is diverse?

Interview Question 5. How do you view the role diversity plays when you are curating your library collection?

Interview Question 6. How do you know if you need to diversify your library collection?

Follow-up Question 6a. Explain your thoughts on strategies, tools, or procedures available to diversify your collection.

Follow-up Question 6b. What supports are provided by your school district for curating a diverse collection?

Follow-up Question 6c. What challenges or barriers do you encounter when creating library collections?

Concluding Question. What else would you like to tell me about curating diverse library collections that you were not able to share?

The main interview questions and follow-up questions were designed to relate to the research questions that guided the study. Questions were designed to allow for participant autonomy and a conversational flow while providing the participants opportunities for honest reflection in their answers. The interview questions allowed participants to share their experiences and provide more details to aid in data collection for the study. As previously stated, to validate the interview questions, the researcher sought the insight from three experts in the field of library sciences and children's literature, including the library services coordinator for School District A, a retired librarian, and a children's book expert. The experts examined the clarity of language in the interview questions as they relate to the research questions and provided feedback on the appropriateness of the vocabulary used in the questions. The experts suggested minor edits to the questions including asking participants to define diversity.

Data Collection Procedures

The researcher was granted approval for the study from Baker University on October 18, 2022 (see Appendix G). The researcher completed a request to conduct research in school District A on September 4, 2022 (see Appendix H). The request required the researcher to detail the purpose, methodology, and participant selection for the study. The researcher was granted approval on September 23, 2022, to begin the

study (see Appendix I), but with a request to include librarians from other school districts in the study.

The researcher identified and contacted 12 elementary librarians from northeastern Kansas school districts who had been in that role for at least two years using random selection and recommendations from education professionals. The consent form was collected from participants through email prior to the interview. The consent form outlined that the participation in the interview was voluntary, the interviewee could choose to end the interview or skip any questions if they felt uncomfortable, and their personal information would not be shared. Furthermore, details were included about the time commitment of the interview, how the interview would be recorded, the participant's right to review responses prior to being included in the analysis, and that data would be stored in a secure file for three years after the defense of the dissertation. Participants who were not selected to participate in the interviews were sent an email thanking them for the interest in the study and the researcher placed them on a reserve list if any participants were unable to complete the interview (see Appendix D).

The data collection consisted of eight interviews with librarians from four northeastern Kansas school districts. Seven of the interviews were conducted on Zoom, while one interview was conducted in person. The researcher used the REV application on an iPhone to record the interviews. Prior to the interview, participants were encouraged to select a comfortable, quiet space where they would not be interrupted. Eight interviews were conducted with veteran librarians in their current role for between six and 30 years. The interviews took an average of 19 minutes to complete.

Creswell (2014) suggested developing and using an interview protocol. For this study, the researcher began the interview by recording the date, place, and anonymized name of the interviewee, followed by the scripted interview questions (see Appendix F), and concluded with a final thank-you statement. Within 48 hours of the interview, participants received a copy of the transcript to read for accuracy of responses and content. Several participants responded, but had no changes to their transcripts. The researcher also kept a digital log in Excel of the interview information, including the date, place, anonymized name of the interviewee, link to the transcript of the interview, and interview coding. This log was stored on the researcher's password-protected computer.

Data Analysis and Synthesis

During the data analysis on a qualitative study, the researcher seeks to make sense of the interview transcripts, similar to peeling back the layers of an onion (Creswell, 2014). To analyze the data gathered from interviews, the researcher followed Creswell's process for data analysis in qualitative research:

1. The researcher recorded and transcribed each interview using transcription software through the iPhone application Rev.
2. Within 48 hours of the interview, transcripts were provided to interviewees for review and deleted from the researcher's iPhone.
3. After reviewing and revising the transcripts, they were uploaded into an Excel file for coding.
4. The data were coded by the researcher based on common themes.
5. After coding the data to look for common themes, the researcher offered to each interview participant the opportunity to view the coded information.

6. The researcher synthesized and interpreted the meaning of the themes and descriptions that emerged during the analysis.

Creswell (2014) described coding as the process of organizing data into chunks, then labeling those chunks with words to capture a common theme or essence. Coding data allows the researcher to critically examine what they remember from an interview and modify their beliefs or ideas on a topic (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The heart of qualitative research lies in making sense of the real-life lessons learned from study participants. Coding is the vehicle that was used to make sense of the themes discussed by the participants in this study. In this study, the researcher coded the interview data based on common themes and analyzed the codes to identify patterns within participant responses.

Reliability and Trustworthiness

For qualitative research to be reliable and valid, trustworthiness and transparency must be cornerstones (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Guba (1981) and Bloomberg & Volpe (2019) explained four components of trustworthiness criteria in qualitative research: credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. The researcher used these categories to verify a reliable and valid study.

During this study, the researcher focused on credibility, or the internal validity, through the use of self-reflection, thick description, and member checks. Bloomberg and Volpe (2019) defined self-reflection as the biases the researcher brings to the study. Bloomberg and Volpe (2019) further stated that through self-reflection, the researcher develops an attitude that is open and honest and should translate to the reader. During the interview process for this study, the researcher participated in continual reflection on

perspectives and biases by writing reflective notes throughout the research process.

Thick description was employed in the methods chapter of the study so that “readers can adequately understand the research process” (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2019, p. 203).

Finally, to ensure the validity of the study, the researcher used member checks (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019; Creswell, 2014; Shenton, 2004). During this study, the researcher built in multiple opportunities for member checks. Participants were provided a transcript of their interviews no later than 48 hours after the completion of the interview. Participants were asked to review the transcript and submit any changes to the interview responses. After the researcher completed the coding from the interview, participants were provided a second opportunity to view the findings and provide additional comment. Member checks are used to “determine the accuracy of the qualitative findings through taking the final report or specific descriptions or themes back to participants and determining whether the participants feel that they are accurate” (Creswell, 2014, p. 201).

To address the dependability, or reliability, and confirmability, or objectivity, of the study, the researcher used an audit trail. The researcher employed the technique of an audit trail to keep track of data not included in the research findings (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Bloomberg and Volpe (2019) and Denzin and Lincoln (2007) described an audit trail as a clear record of notes and transcripts kept by the researcher. This record of notes and transcripts have been retained by the researcher and can be made available to any other qualitative researchers in the field for up to three years after the publishing of the research.

Finally, to address the transferability, or external validity of the study, the researcher participated in purposeful sampling and thick description within the study. The researcher outlined the purposeful, or criterion, sampling strategy used in the study by selecting librarians in specific northeastern, suburban school districts with at least two years of experience in their current role. The researcher presented a thick description of the research processes in the study. Bloomberg and Volpe (2019) described thick description as “thoroughly describing the study’s setting, research participants, and related experiences so as to produce findings and interpretations that will allow readers to make contextualized meaning” (p. 205).

Researcher’s Role

In phenomenological research, the researcher is “someone seeking to understand and learn from the experiences of research participants” (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 74). In this study, the researcher was seeking to understand how elementary librarians curate diverse collections of literature for their school populations. According to Galdas (2017), “bias is commonly understood as any influence that provides a distortion in the results of a study” (p. 1). Qualitative research can contain bias based on the experiences of the researcher. Creswell (2014) shared that researchers must be aware, explain, and clarify the personal bias they may bring to a study.

The researcher at the time the research was conducted was an instructional coach in the state of Kansas. The researcher’s career in education spans 16 years, including ten years as an elementary teacher, two years as an elementary Title I literacy coach, and four years as an instructional design coach based in an elementary school with district-level work responsibilities, including serving on the district diversity team. This research was

conducted because the researcher desired to understand the perceptions of elementary school librarians on the curation and their role in providing diverse library collections. Creswell (2014) reminded researchers the power of clarifying bias brought to a study by saying, “self-reflection creates an open and honest narrative that will resonate well within readers” (p. 202). The researcher’s prior history could impact the ability to objectively interpret the findings from the interviews and cause a need for self-reflection during the study. The researcher maintained a professional demeanor throughout the interaction with study participants and during the interviews. Finally, the researcher engaged in reflexivity throughout the interview process. Patnaik (2013) referred to reflexivity as the ability to keep biases and attitudes regarding the research topic in check during the research process. In this study, the researcher considered their own biases and beliefs about diversity in children’s literature to ensure all judgments and synthesis were as objective as possible and commented about how these biases may have impacted the interpretation of the findings (Creswell, 2014).

Limitations

Lunenburg and Irby (2008) defined limitations as elements within the “study that are not under the control of the researcher; factors that may influence the interpretation of the findings or on the generalizability of the results” (p. 133). Three limitations were identified as potentially influencing this study. First, the researcher acknowledged that some of the interview participants may have personal and professional bias based on the library legislation passed in 2022 in Florida and Missouri, and issues around race, diversity, equity, and inclusion in the United States. Second, the budgets of school librarians vary among schools and school districts due to various funding sources and

may influence how librarians spend their budgets. Finally, the principal within a school may prioritize more monetary resources to the library for the purpose of addressing diversity and emphasize purchasing diverse resources for the library.

Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the study's purpose and overall methodology utilized to design and conduct the research. The procedures for selecting participants were explained in detail. The instrument for collecting the interview data was introduced. The data analysis procedures were discussed. The limitations of the study were acknowledged and presented. The results of the data analysis are discussed in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4

Results

The primary purpose of this study was to understand the perceptions of librarians regarding their collection curation. Chapter 3 outlined how the study was conducted. Chapter 4 explains the results related to northeastern Kansas librarians' phenomenological experiences while curating their library collections. This study involved interviews from eight elementary librarians from school districts in northeastern Kansas. All of the participants were female. The work experience of the participants ranged from 6-30 years as a librarian. The mean years as a librarian was nearly 13 years. All participants held a master's degree in library sciences and a current Kansas teaching certificate.

Anonymity was of the utmost importance during this study. To protect the privacy of the participants, and help anonymize the data collected, the researcher referred to the librarians as Librarian A through Librarian H. Specific information about the school districts was not collected as a part of the study, although school districts were anonymized and referred to as School District A through School District D.

All interviews were conducted between November 9, 2022, and January 12, 2023. Interviews were recorded and transcribed using Rev software. Upon the completion of the interview transcription, copies were sent to participants to be reviewed for accuracy. Next, the transcripts were compiled, the researcher coded the transcripts using paper copies of the transcripts, and key findings or themes were recorded in an Excel document. From the codes, the researcher identified ongoing themes between the interviews.

Characteristics of Participants

At the time of the study, participants represented four school districts from northeastern Kansas. The participants ranged from having 5-30 years of work experience with a mean of 9.5 years in the field of library science. All librarians interviewed in this study were White females. At the time of the study, Librarians A, B, C, D, F, G, and H were responsible for the collections at a single elementary building. At the time of the study, Librarian E was working as an elementary library coordinator, overseeing the collection curation and development of multiple collections in different buildings. Librarian E traveled between buildings and oversees three library paras, who run the day-to-day operations in the elementary school libraries. Librarians A, C, and H have had experience in multiple libraries.

Key Findings

Through the analysis of the interviews, the researcher identified seven key findings related to the research questions. To provide clarity for the discussion around diversity the researcher asked each participant to define diversity; Finding 1 provides a context for the discussion of diversity in library collection curation today. Finding 2 is related to research questions 1 and 2 and the central idea around the perceptions of librarians in providing diverse literature for students and the impact on their future. Finding 3 is related to research questions 6 and 9, providing context for the work librarians do outside of purchasing books for their collection, delving into what curation means in practice. Finding 4 is related to research questions 3 and 4, examining the role diversity and diversity audits play when curating a library collection. Finding 5 is related to research question 7, and focuses on the barriers librarians encounter when curating

their diverse collections. Finding 6 is related to research questions 5 and 8 and focuses on the supports librarians receive for collection curation.

Finding 1: Diversity is more than racial and ethnic differences. The central focus of this study was on the curation of diverse library collections. Before beginning the interview with each librarian, the researcher sought to gain an understanding of what diversity means to librarians today. The responses indicated that diversity is more complex than simply the race or ethnicity of a character within a text. All eight librarians mentioned a wide variety of differences that are represented in today's diverse literature, beyond simply race and ethnicity; and encapsulates, as Librarian A stated, "various identities and differences among people." Librarian G added to the definition of diversity by saying, "I believe diversity is just a grand variety of perspective on the human experience." Similarly, Librarian E shared, "Diversity is just making sure you include as much as you can for everyone you serve."

The definition of diversity is clearly shifting and librarians are recognizing the complexity of the term. Librarian B stated, "My definition of diversity has widened a bit from just the past five or six years. I used to define diversity more along the lines of race, and have widened it now to just think about diversity as everyone's story." Librarian B continued, "Everyone has a story that includes, yes their race, their country of origin, but also their gender identity, their socioeconomic status, their traumas in life, their disabilities, whatever it is that makes up that person." Librarians A, C, D, F, G, and H shared that diversity is representation and inclusion of different life experiences people may have. Librarian D shared, "I would define diversity as more of an inclusion." Librarian H elaborated and stated,

Representation is becoming more important than the term diversity. With the narrative around diversity in the past few years, it can make people instantly think ‘someone not like me’, we need to shift the narrative of diversity from differences to representation of people and their experiences.

Diversity is a vast term that spans so much more than simply a person’s race or ethnicity. Librarian A shared, “We often think of diversity as just having to do with race, ethnicity, and culture, but it also includes things like gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, abilities, disabilities, age, religion, and political persuasion.” Educators and librarians are aware of the shift in diversity as they analyze their practices and beliefs around representation in the library.

Finding 2: Representation matters and helps to build the skills of empathy and inclusion. Librarians A, B, and H cited research from Sims-Bishop’s (1990) windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors study. Participants stated that students need to be exposed to literature they can relate to and feel a part of. Students also need books to give some insight into what others are feeling, therefore increasing their empathy.

According to Librarian B,

Readers should be able to find someone in a book that feels like themselves, and they should also be pushed beyond their own experiences so that they can collect other stories and experiences of other people beyond their own cultures and common experiences.

Exposure to stories at a young age plant a seed for future development. Librarians B, C, D, and E focused on the role literature plays in creating citizens of the world in the future. Librarian D stated that, “Exposure to diverse literature creates a foundation of inclusion,

where individuals make connections and are able to see things as the same and not different.” Librarians C and E shared that by having students see themselves in literature, they feel like they have an important role in society. Librarian E described this representation as essential; “If books aren’t supporting them, I don’t know that they necessarily can picture, especially at a young age, what their role looks like out in the world.” She further stated, “I truly feel like students need to see themselves represented so that they know they do have a major, and important role in the world.” Librarian C described students going out into their futures by saying, “They’re going to be working in jobs that have changed to a global outlook rather than just a real small narrow outlook.” She went on to share that “Students will have to get along with people of all different cultures and backgrounds. We’re doing a disservice if we don’t introduce them to those things so they can explore, celebrate, and develop empathy towards others.”

Librarian G described why representation matters for students, “The school library should be a place where children can see themselves; not only their experiences, but also their physical appearance, the appearance of their family life, their situation outside of the school.” She went on to state that “After they [students] have seen themselves, diverse literature has such a great power to enable students to see others and see themselves not only as a token, but as fully human, to see them in their full humanity.” Librarian E shared that the goal of exposing students to diverse literature is to provide representation, show inclusion, and develop empathy to show that humans are more the same than different.

Finding 3: Exposure to diversity is more complex than having access to titles on library shelves. For participants of this study, curating diverse collections means

more than having diverse titles on their shelves. Three main themes associated with Finding 3 emerged from the interviews with librarians. First, librarians must be aware of the population they serve when purchasing new titles for the library. Second, weeding books from the collection is as important as purchasing new titles. Third, having diverse titles alone is not enough; librarians must be aware of how they promote those books.

Librarians must be aware of the population they serve. All participants in this study mentioned how important it is for librarians to be aware of the population they serve when purchasing books and resources for their collection. Librarians A, B, E, F, G, and H each mentioned this as a top consideration for collection curation. According to Librarian B, “You have to know your collection and know the population you’re serving.” She went on to state, “You also want to know what other stories, authors, and cultures you want to make sure you expose your population to. What perspectives might be missing?” Similarly, Librarian F stated that she wants students to be represented in books within her library collection. She said she thinks of ways she can support students within her population and give them opportunities to see themselves. One example is through purchasing popular titles and research materials in Spanish. Purchasing books and materials in other languages helped to support the growing number of Spanish speaking students in the community. According to Librarian F, “I know it may sound silly, but any materials I can get in Spanish, like *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, or research materials with multiple languages help my students feel they have a connection to the same work their classmates are doing, but through the vehicle of their native language.”

Similarly, Librarian B illustrated how impactful it is for a student to come in and see a book that represents themselves in the collection. She shared,

One day a student's eyes lit up and grabbed a book and ran over to me and said 'My mom wears a hijab. This is like my mom. I am going to check it out and read it with her tonight.' I had another student say, 'Thank you for having a Black person as your icon on your presentation.'

She went on to state, "This is when you know you are doing it right. When you see those examples, when you see the light and excitement from the kids." She concluded, "Representing the population of students in a school and community shows value for people."

Librarian H reflected that simply having diverse books for diversity's sake is not the ultimate goal in collection curation. She stated,

The agenda is that we want our books to represent our students. The books I am selecting should always center on our students as the client that I am serving. I want a child to pick up a book and see someone who looks the same or has had a similar experience. Each of my 388 students deserve that.

Librarians in this study alluded to the fact that the students they serve deserve to have the library feel like home to them. Librarian D stated, "I want my kids, in my school, to see themselves in a book. I want them to know they are deeply valued, and their cultures are valued. They are not separate or alone."

Weeding books from the collection is as important as purchasing new titles. In this study, seven out of the eight participants discussed the process of weeding books from their collection. Librarians B, C, E, F, G and H shared that they are always on the lookout for books that need to be removed from the collection, that don't tell a great

story, or simply tell one that is outdated. Weeding is a large project. Librarian C shared that she recently had 24 boxes of books picked up that were weeded from her collection.

Collection curation is a balance of selecting new material and getting old material out; all of the librarians in this study mentioned being in the middle of, or finishing this process. Librarian E shared that when she began in the position, she spent the first five years getting rid of some very old materials from the library collection. She found the average age of the books in the collection was from the 1980s. She shared, “When materials are that old, they are not relatable to my kids today.”

Librarians B, C, E, and G discussed that weeding books makes room on the shelves for new literature to be displayed and presented. If the library shelves are packed with books, students cannot see and check them out. Librarian C stated that “Weeding allows you to create space for new, current titles. It also increases visibility and ease of access for younger students.” Librarian G agreed and went on to state “You make the diversity of your collection better through weeding. You get the old, crusty, possibly problematic, things out of the library. They stop blocking the shelves and display space allowing kids to see the diverse titles you have.”

The promotion of diverse literature is a vital part of the library program. All participants in this study discussed the importance of promoting the books within their collections. Librarian G stated, “It is not simply enough for diverse books to be in the collection; they shouldn’t just be available.” Librarians do this in a multitude of ways, and participants in this study discussed the strategies of read alouds, book suggestions, displays, and holidays.

Read aloud. All the participants in this study mentioned read aloud books as an important way to promote diverse literature and diverse storytelling. Librarian B shared that every time she is doing a read aloud, she is considering what she has read in the past and looking for ways to diversify the resources she uses. She shared “I am always trying to tell a comprehensive story to my students by having them see diverse perspectives in my teaching resources.”

Book suggestions. Librarians A, B, D, E, G, and H each discussed the importance of sharing diverse literature through book suggestions. Librarians A, B, E, and H shared they are making sure they can make suggestions to staff about diverse literature that supports the curriculum at each grade level. They even find some unique ways of getting these titles in front of teachers. Librarian A placed new books on display in front of teachers several times a year at what she calls a ‘book tasting’. According to Librarian A, “A book tasting allows me to showcase new books to the collection that serve a need in the curriculum or in our community population.” During a book tasting, teachers are invited into the library for snacks and an opportunity to look at the new books organized by topic. Librarian B sets up a similar experience, but for students. After ordering and receiving a large order of books for her collection, she turns the library into a café, complete with checkered table cloths and menus. Here she allows both staff and students to come sample the new books being added to the collection.

Librarian G shared the importance of recommending titles to students. She stated, “Diverse books need to be a part of the regular rotation of books I recommend to students.” She continued, “When a student comes looking for the next book to read, I

need to have a wide variety of things available for them and I need to be recommending those diverse titles when appropriate to broaden their perspective.”

Displays and Holidays. Librarians A, D, E, G, and H each shared the value of displaying diverse titles in the library. These librarians mentioned diverse displays they put up throughout the year, such as Black History Month and Hispanic Heritage Month. Librarian E stated that “these displays help to make all our students feel welcome in our library.”

Librarians C and F had a counter opinion to the benefits of diverse displays in their libraries. Librarian F stated that she wants to go beyond broadcasting a diverse collection and shared “I try really hard and am very diligent about not setting up a specific diversity display, like for Hispanics, around a certain month. I want all these books to be a part of my regular rotation, not just one month out of the year.” She continued, “Displaying diverse books is about making sure that these books are on regular display. I try to focus on this inclusion all year round.” Similarly, Librarian C shared, “I don’t have a diverse display approach. I don’t like that. I promote diverse books all year long and don’t wait for a specific month.” She went on to say,

Just promote books as great literature and then students will read it. I’m not trying to preach to them or make them feel like they have to read those books. I want students excited about reading diverse books because they are good.

Finding 4: Librarians are aware of the amount of diversity in their collections and that diversity plays a significant role in collection curation. All librarians who participated in this study mentioned that they were aware of the amount of diversity in their collection and it is in the forefront when they consider the curation of

their collections. Librarian A stated, “Diversity is at the top of my mind when I am purchasing and weeding books from my collection.” Similarly, Librarian B said, “It is of the utmost importance and it is my role to provide access for kids to make diverse choices.” Librarians C, D, E, and F all shared that diversity is a guiding principle when it comes to adding books to the library. Librarians G and H shared that they are constantly thinking about diversity when it comes to their library collection.

All of the librarians in this study shared that diversity is something they are working on within their collection, but that their percentage of diverse titles is not where they would like them to be. Librarian C shared, “My collection is not where it needs to be. Not enough diversity exists in my library.” Similarly, Librarian F said, “I think we will always have work to do around diversity. Publishers are getting better at promoting diverse books to schools, but diversifying our collections will always be something we need to work diligently towards.”

Librarians A, B, C, D, F, and H shared about diversity audits provided by library vendors. Diversity audits are one of the current ways librarians can examine their collections for diversity. Vendors are tagging their books with labels to help librarians examine their current collections and their new orders. The audits provide percentages based on categories such as race, ethnicity, and population of characters or topics of books. Librarian F shared, “These diversity audits allow me to have a current, unbiased picture of my library collection. It allows me to rethink how my collection looks and what I need to add in the next few years.” Librarian D shared, “Based on the diversity collection numbers, we have about 15% of our collection representing diverse categories, so not ideal based on our population.” She went on to share “With every book order that

we do, I look for what is new out there and what diverse stories are being told; this is much easier than it was even six years ago.”

Librarian H stated, “A diversity audit is a fantastic place to start, especially if you have no idea what kind of a collection you are walking into, or if you’re new to the idea of creating a diverse collection.” Librarian F thought diversity audits can shock some people. “I can see how some people would be shocked or embarrassed by a diversity audit at first, but I think it is an opportunity to learn and make the appropriate changes.” Furthermore, Librarian C viewed diversity audits as a great way to analyze her older collection. She shared, “It is just one more thing that will help you update your collection and make sure there are no gaps, that you have a nice quality collection that is going to speak to your population.”

Librarian G shared that her collection is about 80% of where she would like it to be in terms of diversity. She stated, “It is not a one-year project. It is a multi-year commitment to make sure that the collection is diverse and really after that it has to continue to be a priority. You can’t just get your diverse titles and then decide you’re done with diversity.” Diversity isn’t something you can check off the list, as all the librarians alluded to in this study; diversity should be a guiding principle when curating collections.

Finding 5: Librarians encounter challenges when curating diverse collections. Librarians are tasked with the job of curating collections to meet the needs of their population. Librarians have perceived barriers. When asked about challenges around curating diverse collections, themes emerged around funding, time, and self-censorship.

Funding. When asked about barriers and challenges faced when curating diverse collections, each participant in this study stated that money, their budget, or funding was the number one issue they encounter. The budgets of librarians in this study ranged from \$1,500 to \$5,000, with a mean budget of \$2,500. These budgets come from the schools, but librarians are allowed to do their own fundraising or write grants.

Librarian C shared her thoughts on a lack of funding, “I think all librarians, or at least the librarians I know, are very thoughtful and maybe the lack of money makes you more thoughtful. You can’t waste a dollar. Everything purchased needs to have a purpose and a place.” Similarly, Librarian B stated, “I only have a set amount that I can spend per year, so I am trying to do a lot with a little.” Furthermore, Librarian B noted, “Books typically range from 15 to 22 dollars each, meaning maybe I can purchase a hundred or so new books a year.”

Time. Currently, librarians in this study shared that they are responsible for writing grants and doing fundraising to raise their budgets for collection curation. Librarian B shared that she earns extra funding for her library through a program called Birthday Books, where families can donate money and their child can pick out a new book to dedicate to the library. This process is time consuming to keep track of the donations, have students select books during their birthday month, and make sure books and name plates arrive on time. Librarian E and G also mentioned that they spend time searching for alternate funding opportunities including writing grants to enhance their collections.

Librarian C shared that weeding is a time-consuming process in her library. She shared that “Doing quality weeding is a very time-consuming process. I try to touch

every book in my library each year, and I have a large collection.” She also spends time researching new books to add to her collection.

Self-censorship. Librarians A, D, E, F, G, and H discussed issues around the recent pushback on types of books that people are looking at in school libraries, and book banning. Librarian H shared that,

Even the best librarians will still tell you that there is a voice in the back of their head that is constantly telling you, ‘I’m probably going to get an email for that book’ when you’re trying to represent different families, non-traditional families. Someone may challenge this book even if I see nothing wrong with it, even if it fills a need within our community.

In addition to Librarian H, Librarian D continued, “I’ve had parents challenge books that I’ve purchased” and it primarily turns out to be a case where she tells them “If you don’t feel like it’s appropriate for your child, that’s absolutely fine, just bring it back and they can check something else out.” She always reminds them “It might be appropriate for someone else’s child though.” Librarian F shared that “my biggest challenge right now, I personally would say, is just that fear of maybe upsetting too many people with books in my collection.” These types of worries may encourage librarians to self-censor the books they purchase or weed during collection curation.

Librarian G stated, “There is an ever-present temptation to soft censor.” She went on to share, “I have to think, am I going to be the only person in the district with this book on my shelf? Is that going to be a problem? Is this the hill to die on?” Furthermore, she said she has to think “Is there a better book to fill this need? Am I comfortable displaying this book? Am I comfortable teaching with this book? What will the reaction

be when I do those things?” Librarian F continued “I want to push the envelope with diversity in books, but I also want to be respectful that I serve a pretty conservative community.”

Finding 6: Librarians rely on their professional community to curate diverse collections. While many challenges exist for librarians curating diverse collections, there are also supports. Three themes emerged when talking with study participants about their perceptions of supports they have in collection curation. These themes include district curriculum, policies, and their professional network of other librarians.

District curriculum and policies. Librarian A and F discussed the support they receive from district policies and curriculum. Librarian A said, “Having diversity topics embedded in the curriculum and standards really helps us as we are making choices.” Librarian F was currently serving on District C’s policy revision committee. During this process, the committee was looking at the district’s resource selection policy and reconsideration policies. She stated, “District policies are essential to help support librarians in their collection curation and resource selection. These must be examined and separated from general curriculum resource selection policies, because library resources aren’t required to be used by everyone.” She continued to share that “librarians hold a master’s degree in library media science, so we have training, and I feel like sometimes the general public doesn’t remember that. Policies help protect us.”

Professional networks. Librarians B, C, D, E, and H mentioned the role their professional learning communities play in their development as professionals and collection curation. Librarians B, D, and H noted that their biggest supports are other librarians. Librarian H shared, “We are always sharing titles, we’re sharing different

things that we are seeing. Many of us are involved in ALA and different library associations.” Furthermore, Librarian D shared, “We are given time during our professional learning days to look at and discuss diverse titles.” Continuing with this theme, Librarian B discussed that she can always reach out to colleagues with questions on weeding books from her collection and shared, “It is always nice to get a second or third set of eyes on something.” Being a librarian can be an isolating position because oftentimes they are the only one in the building in this role and others don’t understand it. Having a strong professional network allows for collaboration.

Summary

This chapter presented perceptions of northeastern Kansas librarians from four different school districts in regard to curating diverse collections. The findings show that diversity is a foundational goal of participants. Librarians view books as a way to help students validate their own experiences and provide windows in the experiences of others. Books provide a vital foundation for developing empathy, acceptance, and inclusion. In this study, diversity has shifted from being thought of as simply race and ethnicity, to encompassing every part of humanity, including gender, race, ability, culture, and experiences.

Chapter 5 reviews this qualitative study, summarizing the problem, purpose, research questions, research methods, and findings. Additionally, Chapter 5 connects the current findings to the literature. Chapter 5 concludes with implications for action, suggestions for further research, and concluding remarks.

Chapter 5

Interpretation and Recommendations

Chapter 5 is organized into three major sections that review and summarize the qualitative study regarding librarian's perceptions of curating diverse collections. The first section is a study summary. The study summary includes the following four sections: an overview of the problem, the purpose statement and research questions, a review of the methodology, and a review of the major findings. The second section includes connections of the findings to the literature. The third section concludes with implications from the study and recommendations for continued research, followed by the researcher's concluding remarks.

Study Summary

This section provides context for the conclusions by revisiting the major parts of this study. This summary provides an overview of the problem, the purpose statement, research questions, and a review of the methodology. This section concludes with a review of the major findings.

Overview of the problem. Books can be a great equalizer and provide students with opportunities to see themselves and others as important, valuable members of the world (Sims-Bishop, 1990; Ishizuka, 2018; Levin, 2007; Mancuso-Mohsen, 2019). School libraries are often the places where this journey begins for young students (Koss, 2015; Mancuso-Mohsen, 2019). According to Adichie's 2009 TED Talk, "Stories matter, many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and malign, but stories can also be used to empower and humanize" (17:24).

As the population of the United States and public schools is becoming more diverse (NCES, 2019), children need more opportunities than ever to be exposed to multiple perspectives and stories. Literature provides children with opportunities to view and understand themselves, as well as to view and understand the lives and experiences of others (Sims-Bishop, 1990). Mancouso-Mohsen (2019) discussed the need for librarians to be present in the conversations around creating better reading experiences for students. Curating literature collections within libraries is a top job of librarians today (Ishizuka, 2018); however, the research is lacking regarding the robust knowledge base librarians must have regarding their diverse collection development, including the barriers encountered and supports received.

Purpose statement. This qualitative study examined librarians' perceptions and experiences with curating diverse library collections within northeastern Kansas school districts. This study specifically focused on elementary librarians with at least two years of current experience as librarians. The researcher examined the phenomenological experiences of elementary librarians regarding the role diverse literature plays in preparing students for their future role in a diverse society and the role diversity plays in collection curation. The researcher focused on experiences librarians provide to students to engage with diverse literature as this connects to students lives outside of school.

Review of the methodology. The methodology used for this qualitative study was a phenomenological research design which explored librarians' perceptions of curating diverse library collections. Interviews were conducted with volunteer participants from four school districts in northeastern Kansas. The interviewer followed a semi-structured

interview protocol containing six main interview questions, five follow-up questions, an ice breaker, and concluding question.

Interviews were conducted in person and on Zoom. Each interview was recorded and transcribed using Rev software. Upon completion of the interview, the researcher updated the transcripts and sent them to participants to review. One participant responded, but provided no changes. The researcher anonymized the data by assigning each participant a pseudonym, then organized the interview data in an Excel spreadsheet for coding. The researcher coded the interview transcripts to identify themes and key findings around the research questions.

Major findings. The researcher analyzed the interview transcripts and six key findings emerged relating to the role diverse literature plays in preparing children for participation in society, how librarians perceive their role in curating diverse library collections, the role diverse literature plays in collection curation, the perceptions of librarians on performing diversity audits on collections, the support librarians receive for collection development, supports and barriers to diverse collection curation, and opportunities learners have to be exposed to diverse literature within the library. Major Findings 2-6 related to the research questions. These findings are discussed below.

Finding 1 of the study provided context for the research and discussion around diversity by asking each librarian to define diversity. All librarians reported that diversity is complex and more than simply a focus on race or ethnicity. Librarians said they view diversity as a wide range of perspectives focusing on the entirety of the human experience, including, but not limited to race, ethnicity, gender identity, socioeconomic status, abilities, disabilities, and whatever else makes up a person's story.

Finding 2 of the study related to RQ1 and RQ2 and addressed librarian's perceptions of providing diverse literature for students and the impact diverse literature has on students' futures. Representation of diverse characters and stories matters and helps foster the development of empathy. The school library is a place where all children can see themselves and see the cultures and experiences of others represented.

Finding 3 related to the work librarians do outside of purchasing new resources for their collections and focused on what curation means in practice, connecting to RQ6 and RQ9. Three themes emerged when the work librarians do during diverse collection curation were analyzed; it is more than simply having diverse resources available on the shelves. Librarians need to be intimately aware of the population they serve. They must be as diligent in weeding out old or problematic titles from their collections as they are in selecting new titles. Finally, librarians must be intentional in how they promote the diverse literature within their collection.

Finding 4 in this study addressed RQ3 and RQ4 and examined the role diversity and diversity audits play in collection curation. All librarians in this study shared that they are aware of the amount of diversity in their collections and how diversity impacts their collection curation. Diversity is something every participant is actively thinking about during purchasing and weeding. Participants shared that library vendors are providing resources, such as diversity audits free of charge to help identify collection needs and increase collection diversity.

Finding 5 related to RQ7 and the barriers librarians encounter when curating their diverse collections. Several key themes emerged around these barriers, including funding, time, and self-censorship. Funding is one of the largest barriers librarians

encounter and it is an issue due to the amount of money each librarian receives for curating their collection. Time was also identified as a barrier and challenge for librarians today. Finally, the idea of self-censorship emerged as a challenge for librarians today.

Finding 6 addressed the supports librarians receive for collection curation, and addressed RQ5 and RQ8. Two themes emerged around district curriculum and policies and professional networks. Librarians receive supports from their district in the form of curriculum and standards that focus on diverse perspectives. Librarians also heavily rely on their professional networks for new learning and professional judgment in purchasing and weeding within their collections.

Findings Related to the Literature

Diversity is evident in the changing population of the United States (Diamond & Posey-Maddox, 2020; O'Hare, 2011) and the evidence in Finding 1 indicated that librarians are aware of these changing demographics. If the country continues to diversify at the same rate over the next 30 years, racial or ethnic minority groups are expected to approach 51% (Futrell et al., 2003). These projections mean that schools will be filled with students of more diverse backgrounds. Futrell et al. (2003) stated that if students are to receive a quality education, educators and librarians must address the diversity of experiences each child has, including their race, gender, culture, religion, ability, socioeconomic status, and general life experiences. As described in Hall (2008), "Our classrooms are diverse, and the books we choose should be, too" (p. 81). Finding 1 demonstrated that librarians are aware of the diversity of their populations and are prepared to curate collections that represent the population they serve.

In Finding 2, librarians stated that the materials they select for library collections should include diverse representation and exposure to diverse representations helps to build empathy. Hall (2008) described the care educators should take when selecting literature for libraries and read alouds, and stated, “Literature from authors and illustrators who authentically depict various cultures and backgrounds is an important part of building a classroom community” (p. 80). Empathy is developed through exposure to diverse literature. According to Barta & Grindler (1996), “Literature can highlight how people do similar things in different ways. If children learn our similarities, this awareness may overshadow the fear of differences” (p. 269).

By exposing students to appropriate literature, stereotypes are challenged and children begin to recognize and establish fairness, ultimately providing models that support the development of empathy (Sims-Bishop, 1990; Himmelstein, 2021; Levin, 2007). Furthermore, Levin (2007) suggested that the goal of exposure to diverse literature should be ethical respect and goes on to state that “ethical respect means empathizing with their situations and examining and reflecting on what it means to live their lives, respecting the reasons for their decisions, and leaving our biases behind” (p. 104). Finding 2 indicated that librarians are curating collections that provide intentional opportunities for exposure to diverse resources that build social emotional skills such as empathy.

Finding 3 addressed the complexity of collection curation. There is no “one size fits all” rule for library collection curation. Instead, librarians must address the unique needs of the community and population they serve by including diverse resources related

to themes such as language, race, culture, ethnicity, and ability (Loertscher, 1985; Philippi & Calzada, 2022; Schmidt, 2021).

Research has confirmed that all books that depict diversity are not created equal and that only some appropriately depict culturally appropriate models (Tolson, 1998). In school libraries today, librarians are not only tasked with procuring new resources that depict diversity, but also weeding books from the collection that are no longer culturally relevant (Sims, 1983; Tolson, 1998). The NCTE (2015) highlighted the importance of retaining only high-quality literature in classrooms and libraries, promoting diverse perspectives. Philippi and Calzada (2022), reminded librarians that the purpose of library collections must be to enhance the curriculum being taught in classrooms, while also adding depth to a student's educational experience.

Related to Finding 4, librarians indicated that a high awareness in the diversity of their individual collections was a factor in weeding books from their collection, and that diversity is one of the primary considerations when purchasing resources. The ALA (2019a) recommended that library collections contain a diverse range of works and that those collections are periodically reviewed for relevance and representation. In the state of Kansas, librarians are tasked with creating spaces for children to engage with a variety of materials to promote exploration, creativity, individuality, and collaboration (KSDE, 2022). Librarians need to be acutely aware of their population, the standards and curriculum, and the needs of the community with whom they serve (Kerby, 2019).

Finding 5 confirmed that librarians encounter challenges around self-censorship when curating diverse collections. The current political climate in the United States has brought heightened scrutiny to literature and as a result, libraries have seen an increase in

book challenges and criticism towards educators (Taylor, 2023). Some librarians and educators live in fear of political or legal action as a result of the resources they have in their collections (Lambert, 2022). Librarian H recalled the voice in her head that reminds her that someone may challenge a book because they don't feel like it is right for their child, even though it fills a community need. According to Lambert (2022), librarians must guard against the urge to self-censor because the "school library is a democratic institution, and at its best, helps students become informed citizens of a global world" (p. 59).

In Finding 6, librarians indicated that district curriculum and policies help support the work of developing diverse collections. The adoption of the CCSS (2010), has supported the need for students to be exposed to diverse perspectives and cultures to be considered ready for post-secondary success. The ALA and NCTE also provide guidance in resource selection in school libraries. Policies should be in place to protect librarians and educators as they curate resources for students.

Conclusions

School librarians are responsible for the collection development within their libraries. Their job is to create and maintain a space that provides access to diverse resources (ALA, 2019a; CCSS, 2010; NCTE, 2015). School libraries are places where children begin to learn about the world around them and develop skills necessary for success in a global society (Martin, 2021; Naidoo, 2014). Without access to high quality, diverse literature, students may struggle academically or feel as if they don't belong in the school community (Lawson, 2013).

Qualitative data analysis during the research indicated that elementary librarians perceive diversity as an important component of collection curation. Diversity and the composition of the community is something on the minds of librarians as new titles are added to the collection, and older or problematic titles are removed from the collection. Students respond positively to having representations that reflect their experiences, while some students develop skills such as empathy when they are exposed to literature that reflects a different experience. Furthermore, librarians work to provide students access to high quality literature that provides exposure to stories that reflect oneself, and provide opportunities to experience another viewpoint.

Implications for action. This qualitative study was designed and conducted to examine the perceptions and experiences of elementary school librarians. The results from the study indicated that school librarians curate collections to support the communities they serve. Librarians typically work in isolation, while supporting the needs of students and teachers. In analysis of the six key findings from this study, the researcher recommends the following actions.

The key findings from this study reinforced that the population of the nation, and therefore local communities, are becoming more diverse. Librarians reflected that diversity extends beyond racial and ethnic differences to include religion, culture, age, political persuasion, gender identity, sexual orientation, cultural celebrations, family structures, neurodiversity, socioeconomic status, traumas in life, abilities, and disabilities. They noted that having books that represent each of these diverse areas is essential for developing life-long skills of empathy and acceptance. Furthermore, librarians stated that there can be fear associated with collection curation that leads to self-censorship. This

fear comes from the current scrutiny around literature that includes gender and sexual orientation. These findings have led the researcher to recommend that school districts review and analyze their library collection policies to ensure protection for librarians when they curate collections that reflect current diversity, and to protect the right students have to access diverse materials. Additionally, the researcher recommends that school districts develop and fine-tune policies for book challenges that safeguard against individual bias.

Librarians face additional challenges when curating their collections, such as funding and time. Analysis of the interview transcripts highlighted that all eight participants indicated funding as the number one challenge librarians are facing in collection curation. Budgets range from \$1,000 to \$5,000 per year, leaving librarians to fundraise or write grants to supplement funds for their collections. The researcher recommends that school districts prioritize the need for adequate library funding annually determined by librarian recommendations. By utilizing district funds for collection curation, librarians in districts can have equal access to money for purchasing, creating more equitable experiences for students to be exposed to new, diverse literature. A result of providing consistent district funding could be a reduction in the amount of time librarians need to spend searching for and securing grant funding on their own.

Study findings indicated that librarians rely on their professional learning community to further the development of their collections and themselves as professionals. Librarians mentioned that it is common to reach out to a colleague to discuss new titles to add or ones to remove from the collection. Based on the study findings, the researcher recommends that schools continue to reevaluate and refine

structures for librarians to collaborate frequently with others in the school district and surrounding school districts. Librarians in this study noted that it can be an isolating position, because oftentimes there is only one librarian in each school, or even district. Providing time to collaborate across a district or county could give librarians a professional network to learn from and lean on as they encounter questions when curating diverse collections.

Recommendations for future research. The following recommendations represent areas for further research. Future researchers could build upon the results of this study by conducting mixed-methods research to analyze specific elementary library collections for diverse representation and gain insights into the perspectives of librarians as they curate those collections. Quantitative research could focus on percentages of diverse titles within a library collection, expanding to include other aspects of diversity, such as religion, culture, age, political persuasion, gender identity, sexual orientation, cultural celebrations, family structures, neurodiversity, socioeconomic status, abilities, and disabilities, while qualitative research could focus on the perceptions of elementary librarians as they purchase diverse resources for the library. Data could be compared to see how perceptions of librarians compare to the diversity within their collections.

The researcher sought to examine the perspectives of only elementary school librarians. Further qualitative research could be conducted to include the perspectives of middle school and high school librarians. Future research could analyze the various grade level libraries while identifying barriers, challenges, and supports needed for diverse collection curation extending beyond race and ethnicity.

During this research study, the researcher gathered perceptual data on library collection curation. Further research could be conducted on Loertscher's (1985) collection purposes as focused on community interest. It could be beneficial to explore the changing needs of communities and libraries based on specific demographic and social interest areas.

During this study, the researcher focused on the analysis of diverse collections relating to ethnic and racial diversity. During the interviews with librarians, many brought up that diversity has moved beyond focusing on only ethnicity and race. Future studies could analyze the representation of books within various categories of diversity, including LGBTQ, blended families, abilities and disabilities, sexual orientation, and religion.

Finally, future researchers could also build on the current study to examine the experiences of librarians in other regions of the country. This study's sample size was small and included librarians from northeastern Kansas. It could be beneficial to increase the sample size by interviewing librarians across the state of Kansas, or other regions of the United States with more diverse populations, to determine if similar findings occur.

Concluding remarks. School libraries are places where many children experience stories for the first time that help show mirrors of their lives and their experiences, create opportunities for exposure to new experiences, and develop acceptance and empathy (Sims-Bishop, 1990; Maughan, 2020). According to Thomas (2016), "students don't just need diverse literature because it is diverse. They need literature that inspires and awakens their potential to be the narrators of their own existence and to imagine a more just world" (p. 117). Results from the study reported

here indicated that school librarians are curators of diverse collections that engage students and allow opportunities for children to grow and learn about themselves and others, helping them view differences through the lens of similarities. School district leaders and building administrators must ensure that policies are in place to protect the library and the diverse resources within the collections. It is important for librarians to work diligently to curate collections that showcase the diversity within the community the school serves. Librarians must get the books off the shelves and into students' hands by engaging teachers in discussions around new books, displaying new literature, teaching with diverse resources, and incorporating diversity into lessons. All children deserve access to diverse literature and the opportunity to benefit from the experience of windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors.

References

- Adichie, C. N. (2009, July) *The danger of a single story*. Retrieved from https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story
- American Association of School Librarians. (2018). *AASL standards framework for learners: National school library standards*. Retrieved from <https://standards.aasl.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/AASL-Standards-Framework-for-Learners-pamphlet.pdf>
- American Library Association. (2019a). *Diverse collections: An interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights*. Retrieved from <http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill/interpretations/diversecollections>
- American Library Association. (2019b). *Library Bill of Rights*. Retrieved from <https://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill>
- Barta, J., & Grindler, M. C. (1996). Exploring bias using multicultural literature for children. *Reading Teacher*, 49(50), 269-270.
- Bennett, M. (2011). Children's social identities. *Infant and Child Development*, 20(4), 353-363. <https://doi.org/10.1002/icd.741>
- Bloomberg, L. D., & Volpe, M. (2019). *Completing your qualitative dissertation: A road map from beginning to end*. Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Cahill, M., Ingram, E., & Joo, S. (2021). Storytime programs as mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors? Addressing children's need through diverse book selection. *The Library Quarterly*, 91(3), 269-284. doi:10.1086/714317

- Children's Book Council (n.d.). *History and mission- Children's Book Council*. Retrieved from <https://www.cbcbooks.org/about/who-we-are/hisotry-and-mission/>
- Common Core State Standards Initiative. (2010). *Common Core State Standards for English language arts & literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects*. Retrieved from <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/introduction/students-who-are-college-and-career-ready-in-reading-writing-speaking-listening-language/>
- Cooke, N. A. (2019). White kids need diverse books, too. *Young adult library services*, 17(4), 27–31.
- Cooperative Children's Book Center. (2021). *Data on books by and about Black, indigenous, and people of color published for children and teens*. Retrieved from <https://ccbc.education.wisc.edu/literature-resources/ccbc-diversity-statistics/books-by-about-poc-fnn/>
- Creswell, J. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Dawkins, A. M., & Eidson, E. C. (2021). A content analysis of district school library selection policies in the United States. *School Library Research*, 24(1), 1-27. Retrieved from https://www.ala.org/aasl/sites/ala.org.aasl/files/content/pubs/slr/vol24/SLR_SelectionPolicies_V24.pdf
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. (2007) *The landscape of qualitative research*. Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications.

- Diamond, J.B., & Posey-Maddox, L. (2020). The changing terrain of the suburbs: Examining race, class, and place in suburban schools and communities. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 53(1/2), 7-13. doi:10.1080/10665684.2020.1758975
- Doll, C., & Garrison, K. (2013). Creating culturally relevant collections to support the common core. *Teacher Librarian*, 40(5), 14-18.
- Doll, C., & Petrick-Barron, P. (2002). *Managing and analyzing your collection: A practical guide for small libraries and school media centers*. Chicago, IL: ALA Editions.
- Enciso, P. E. (1997). Negotiating the meaning of difference: Talking back to multicultural literature. In T. Rogers & A. Soter (Eds.), *Reading across cultures: Teaching literature in a diverse society* (pp. 13-41). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Erbas, Y. H. (2019). Teaching diversity: Elementary school teachers' opinions and experiences on the use of multicultural children's books. *International Social Sciences Studies Journal*, 5(29), 404-409. Retrieved from ERIC database. (ED606339)
- Futrell, M. H., Gomez, J., & Bedden, D. (2003). Teaching the children of a new America: The challenge of diversity. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 84(5), 381-385. doi:10.1177/003172170308400512
- Galdas, P. (2017). Revisiting bias in qualitative research: Reflections on its relationship with funding and impact. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16, 1-2. doi:10.1177/1609406917748992

- Glushko, R. J. (2013). *The discipline of organizing: 4th professional edition*. Berkeley, CA: University of California, Berkeley.
- Guba, E. G. (1981). Criteria for assessing the trustworthiness of naturalistic inquiries. *Education Communication and Technology*, 29, 75-91.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02766777>
- Hall, K. W. (2008). Reflecting on our read-aloud practices: The importance of including culturally authentic literature. Retrieved from
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/234709951_Reflecting_on_Our_Read-Aloud_Practices_The_Importance_of_Including_Culturally_Authentic_Literature
- Himmelstein, D. (2021). *Why White children need diverse books*. Retrieved from
<https://www.slj.com/?detailStory=why-White-children-and-communities-need-diverse-books-libraries-antiracism>
- Horning, K. T. (2014). Children's books: Still an all-white world? *School Library Journal*. Retrieved from www.slj.com/?detailStory=childrens-books-still-an-all-white-world
- Horning, K. T. (2015). Milestones for diversity in children's literature and library services. *The Journal of the Association for Library Services to Children*. 13(3). 7-11. Retrieved from <https://web-s-ebshost-com.bakeru.idm.oclc.org/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=10&sid=d3668d58-2b9f-4bd8-8409-080ecc81cbaf%40redis>
- Ishizuka, K. (October 21, 2018). *Can diverse books save us? In a divided world, librarians are on a mission*. Retrieved from
<https://www.slj.com/?detailStory=can-diverse-books-save-us>

- Jensen, K. (2018). *Diversity auditing 101: How to evaluate your collections*. Retrieved from <https://www.slj.com/story.diversity-auditing-101-how-to-evaluate-collection>
- Johnson, L. (2016). *Students don't need diverse literature just because it's diverse*. Retrieved from <http://blogs.ncte.org/index.php/2016/04/students-dont-need-diverse-literature-just-diverse/>
- Johnson, N. J., Koss, M. D., & Martinez M. (2017). Through the sliding glass door: #empowerthereader. *The Reading Teacher*, 71(5), 569-577. doi:10.1002/trtr.1659
- Kansas State Department of Education. (n.d.). *Career standards and assessment services menu, library media, and technology*. Retrieved from <https://www.ksde.org/Agency/Division-of-Learning-Services/Career-Standards-and-Assessment-Services/Content-Area-F-L/Library-Media-and-Technology>
- Kansas State Department of Education. (2022). *Kansas curricular content standards for library/information and technology*. Retrieved from <https://www.ksde.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=QXYPPoDm4Iw%3d&tabid=47>
- Kansas State Department of Education. (2023a). *Kansas state building report card archive 2007-2008*. Retrieved from <https://ksreportcard.ksde.org/summary/FY2008/State.pdf>
- Kansas State Department of Education. (2023b). *Kansas state building report card archive 2012-2013*. Retrieved from <https://ksreportcard.ksde.org/summary/FY2008/State.pdf>
- Kansas State Department of Education. (2023c). *State attendance rate by type and gender public schools*. Retrieved from file:///Users/heatherjames/Downloads/D%25%25_Reports.html

- Keeling, M. (2019). What's new in collection development?. *Knowledge Quest*, 48(2), 4-5. Retrieved from <https://web-p-ebshost-com.bakeru.idm.oclc.org/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=3&sid=19fbdf62-388d-4fba-97ba-221c1492243c%40redis>
- Krasnoff, B. (2016). *Culturally responsive teaching: A guide to evidence-based practices for teaching all students equitably*. Retrieved from <https://educationnorthwest.org/sites/default/files/resources/culturally-responsive-teaching-508.pdf>
- Kerby, M. (2019). *An introduction to collection development for school librarians* (2nd ed.). Chicago, IL: ALA.
- Kids Count Data Center. (2021). *Child population by race in the United States*. Retrieved from <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/103-child-population-by-race?loc=1&loct=1#detailed/1/any/false/574,11/68,69,67,12,70,66,71,72/424>
- Koss, M. D. (2015). Diversity in contemporary picturebooks: A content analysis. *Journal of Children's Literature*, 41(1), 32-42. ISSN 1521-7779
- Koss, M., Johnson, N., & Martinez, M. (2018). Mapping the diversity in Caldecott books from 1938-2017: The changing topography. *Journal of Children's Literature*, 44(1), 4-20. Retrieved from <https://web-p-ebshost-com.bakeru.idm.oclc.org/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=4&sid=9545a803-8192-4a0b-ba5b-ecae4ee7fc37%40redis>
- Koss, M., & Paciga, K. A. (2020). Diversity in Newbery-winning titles: A content analysis. *Journal of Language & Literacy Education*, 16(2), 1-38. Retrieved from http://jolle.coe.uga.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Koss_Jolle2020.pdf

- Koss, M., & Paciga, K.A. (2022). Conducting a diversity audit: Who is represented in your classroom library? *The Reading Teacher*, 76(3), 243-374. Retrieved from <https://ila.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/trtr.2136>
- Lacy, K. (2016). The new sociology of suburbs: A research agenda for analysis of emerging trends. *Annual Review of Sociology*. 42(1), 369-384. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-071312-145657>
- Lambert, N. J. (2022). Collections under fire: When the culture war comes for the school library. *American Libraries*. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20220604152932/https://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/2022/06/01/collections-under-fire/>
- Larrick, N. (September 11, 1965). The all-White world of children's books. *The Saturday Review*. Retrieved from <https://www.unz.com/print/SaturdayRev-1965sep11-00063/>
- Lawson, M. (2013). *Multicultural literature: The impact it has on today's students*. Retrieved from https://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/education_ETD_masters/245
- Lee & Low Books. (n.d.) *About us*. Retrieved from <https://www.leeandlow.com/about-us>
- Levin, F. (2007). Encouraging ethical respect through multicultural literature. *Reading Teacher*, 61(1), 101-104. doi:10.1598/RT.61.1.13
- Loertscher, D. V. (1985). Collection mapping: An evaluation strategy for collection development. *Drexel Library Quarterly*, 21(2). 9-21.
- Lunenburg, F. C., & Irby, B. J. (2008). *Writing a successful thesis or dissertation: Tips and strategies for students in the social and behavioral sciences*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

- Machado, E., & Flores, T. T. (2021). Picture book creators as translingual writing mentors. *Language Arts*, 98(5), 235-345.
- Mancuso-Mohsen, J. (January 24, 2019). *Equity through the school library: Every child deserves to have characters that look like them*. Retrieved from <https://medium.com/everylibrary/equity-in-the-school-library-fdaec84b7b68>
- Martin, C. R. (2021). *Access to diverse literature in classroom libraries*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from the ProQuest Dissertations & Thesis Global: The Humanities and Social Studies Collection. (ProQuest No. 28645730)
- Martinez, M., Koss, M. D., & Johnson, N. J. (2016). Meeting characters in Caldecotts: What does this mean for today's readers? *The Reading Teacher*, 70(1), 9-28. doi:10.1002/trtr.1464
- Maughan, S. (2020). Building an inclusive learning environment. *Publisher's Weekly*. Retrieved from <https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/industry-news/libraries/article/82684-building-an-inclusive-learning-environment.html>
- McNair, J. (2016). #WeNeedMirrorsAndWindows: Diverse classroom libraries for K-6 students. *The Reading Teacher*, 70(3), 375-381. <https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.1516>
- Myers, W. D. (1986). 'I actually thought we would revolutionize the industry'. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/1986/11/09/books/children-s-books-i-actually-thought-we-would-revolutionize-the-industry.html>
- Naidoo, J. C. (2014). *The importance of diversity in library programs and material collections for children*. Retrieved from

[https://www.scoe.org/files/Importance_of_Diversity_in_Library_Programs_and_Material_\(1\).pdf](https://www.scoe.org/files/Importance_of_Diversity_in_Library_Programs_and_Material_(1).pdf)

National Center for Education Statistics. (2013). *Racial/ethnic enrollment in public schools*. Retrieved from

https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/pdf/Indicator_CGE/coe_cge_2013_03.pdf

National Center for Education Statistics. (2020). *Racial/ethnic enrollment in public schools*. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/pdf/coe_cge.pdf

National Council of Teachers of English. (February, 2015). *NCTE resolution on the need for diverse children's and young adult books*. Retrieved from <https://ncte.org/statement/diverse-books/print/>

O'Donnell, A. (2019). Windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors: The enduring impact of Rudine Sims-Bishop's work. *Literacy Today*, Retrieved from <https://www.literacyworldwide.org/get-resources/em-literacy-today-em-magazine>

O'Hare, W. (2011). The changing child population of the United States: Analysis of data from the 2010 census. Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED527048.pdf>

Patnaik, E. (September 2013). Reflexivity: Situating the researcher in qualitative research. *Humanities and Social Science Studies*, 2(2), 98-106. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Esha_Patnaik2/publication/263916084_Reflexivity_Situating_the_researcher_in_qualitative_research/links/57b3fff008aee0b132d8f2bb/Reflexivity-Situating-the-researcher-in-qualitative-research.pdf

Philippi, L., & Calzada, B. (March/April 2022). Why collection development is important. *Knowledge Quest*. (50)4. 8-13

- Richardson, J., & Craig, M. (2011) Intra-minority intergroup relations in the twenty-first century. *Daedalus*. 140(2), 166-175. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1162/DAED_a_00085
- Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. S. (2012). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Schmidt, J. (2021). *Serving diverse populations in the library media program*. Retrieved from https://repository.stcloudstate.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1039&context=im_etds
- School District A. (May 11, 2020). [REDACTED] *strategic plan 2020-2025*. Retrieved from [https://www.\[REDACTED\].org/Page/34782](https://www.[REDACTED].org/Page/34782)
- School Library Journal. (2018). *2018 diverse book collections survey*. Retrieved from <https://www.slj.com/binaries/content/assets/pdf/special-projects/diverse-books-survey-2018/slj-diverse-collections-survey-report.pdf>
- Shah, N. (2023). ‘Shelves have been left barren’: Florida teachers sue DeSantis’ government over school library regulations. Retrieved from <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/education/2023/03/17/florida-school-library-controversy-teachers-sue-desantis-government/11491268002/>
- Shenton, A. K. (July 2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative projects. *Education for Information*, 22(2004), 63-75. doi:10.3233/EFI-2004022201
- Sims-Bishop, R. (1990). Mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors. *Perspectives*, 6(3), ix-xi. Retrieved from <http://www.rif.org/us/literacy-resources/multicultura/mirrors-windows-and-sliding-glass-doors.htm>

- Sims, R. (1983). What has happened to the 'all-White' world of children's books? *Phi Delta Kappan*, 64(9), 6450-653. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20386841>
- Stanford University. (n.d.). *Sample informed consent form*. Retrieved from https://web.stanford.edu/group/ncpi/unspeficied/student_assess_toolkit/pdf/sampleinformedconsent.pdf
- Tager, J. (2023). Missouri's new effort to punish libraries is vindictive and harmful. Retrieved from <https://missouriindependent.com/2023/04/10/missouris-new-effort-to-punish-libraries-is-vindictive-and-harmful/#:~:text=In%20August%202022%2C%20Missouri%20passed,sexual%20material%E2%80%9D%20to%20a%20student.>
- Taylor, K. R. (2023). Are book bans a civil rights violation? A federal investigation into a Texas district will decide. Retrieved from <https://www.slj.com/story/Are-Book-Bans-a-civil-Rights-Violation-A-Federal-Investigation-into-a-Texas-District-Will-Decide>
- Taylor, N. (2012). U.S. children's pictures and the heteronormative subject. *Journal of LGBT Youth*. 9(2), 136-152. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/19361653.2011.649646>
- Thomas, E. E. (2016). Stories still matter: Rethinking the role of diverse children's literature today. *Language Arts*, 94(2), 112-119. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44809887>
- Tolson, N. (1998). Making books available: The role of early libraries, librarians, and booksellers in the promotion of African American children's literature. *African American Review*. 32(1). 9-16. doi: 10.2307/3042263

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2002). *Trends in the well-being of America's children and youth*. Retrieved from

<https://aspe.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/private/pdf/172206/PF1.pdf>

We Need Diverse Books. (2023). *Who we are*. Retrieved from

<https://diversebooks.org/about-wndb/>

Warinske, A. S., (2016). Missing multiculturalism: Finding diverse picture books for a

library collection. *Against the Grain*, 28(4), 25-26. doi:10.7771/2380-176X.7454

Appendices

Appendix A: Study Invitation Email

Dear (Librarian's Name),

As an elementary school librarian, you play a vital role in curating library collections that feature diverse literature to meet the needs of your students. To identify how librarians view their role in curating these collections you have been invited to partake in a qualitative research study through Baker University. Interviews will include eight questions and follow-up questions centered around how you curate and select resources for your library. Interviews will last approximately 30-45 minutes and will be conducted via Zoom or in person during the week in November and December 2022. If you would like to partake in their research study, please respond by November 18, 2022.

Sincerely,

Heather Payne

Appendix B: Study Selection Email

Dear (Librarian's Name),

Thank you for your willingness to participate in an interview to gain a deeper understanding of your perceptions on library collection curation. Please read the attached consent form and send any questions to hpayne02@bluevalleyk12.org. If you are scheduling your interview via Zoom please complete the attached consent form and return it to Heather Payne at Cedar Hills Elementary (CHE) via interoffice mail. If you are scheduling your interview in person, a copy will be provided prior to the interview.

I will begin scheduling meetings that work within your schedule. Please reply with your availability the week of _____.

Thank you for your service in education and making a difference in the lives of students, teachers, and communities. I look forward to speaking with you further.

Sincerely,

Heather Payne
Education Doctoral Candidate
Baker University

Appendix C: Electronic Participant Consent Form

Electronic Participant Consent Form

By signing this form I give my consent to participate in the study conducted by Heather Payne from Baker University. I understand that the project is designed to gather information about my perceptions as an elementary librarian. I will answer questions in a truthful, non-biased manner. Further, I understand the following:

- My participation in this interview is voluntary. I understand that I will not be paid for my participation. I can leave or cancel the interview at any point without penalty. If I decline to participate or withdraw from the study, my employer will not be told.
- I understand that most interviewees in this study will find the discussion interesting and thought-provoking. If however, I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, I have the right to decline to answer any question or to end the interview.
- My name and place of employment will not be linked to my responses or the study.
- Participation involves being interviewed by Heather Payne, a student and doctoral candidate at Baker University. The interview will last approximately 30-45 minutes. Notes will be written during the interview. An audio recording of the interview and subsequent dialogue will be made. If you don't want to be taped, I will not be able to participate in the study. I will have the opportunity to review responses prior to them being included in the study.
- Data collected during the interview will be stored in a secure file by the researcher for three years after the defense of the dissertation, then destroyed.
- I understand that this research study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board.
- I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.
- I have been given a copy of this consent form.

Email *

Your email

Full Name (first and last) *

Your answer

I understand the information presented above. *

☐ Yes

☐ No

Date *

Date

mm/dd/yyyy 

A copy of your responses will be emailed to the address you provided.

Submit

Clear form

Appendix D: Study Non-Selection Email

Dear (Librarian's Name),

Thank you for your willingness to participate in an interview to gain a deeper understanding of your perceptions on library collection curation. At this time, I have the number of participants needed for the initial interviews. You may be contacted in the next month to participate in the interview if other participants are unable to fulfil the commitment.

Thank you for your service in education and making a difference in the lives of students, teachers, and communities.

Sincerely,

Heather Payne

Appendix E: Research Question and Interview Question Alignment

Table E

Research Question and Interview Question Alignment

| Research question | Interview question |
|---|--|
| No RQ. Baseline definition of diversity. | Interview Question 1. For the purpose of this interview, we will discuss diversity. How would you define diversity? |
| RQ1. What are librarians' perceptions regarding the role diverse literature plays in preparing children to be a part of a diverse society? | Interview Question 2. Tell me about the role literature plays in preparing students for their participation in our society today. |
| RQ2. What are librarians' perceptions regarding their role in providing diverse literature that prepares students to be a part of a diverse society? | Interview Question 3. Tell me about your role in providing diverse literature that prepares students to be a part of a diverse society. |
| RQ3. What are librarians' perceptions of the role diversity plays in curating a library collection? | Interview Question 5. How do you view the role diversity plays when curating your library collection? |
| RQ4. What are librarians' perceptions of performing diversity audits on their collections? | Interview Question 6. How do you know if you need to diversify your library collection? |
| RQ5. What are librarians' perceptions of the district support they receive in curating diverse library collections? | Follow-up Question 6b. What supports are provided by your school district for curating a diverse collection? |
| RQ6. What are librarians' perceptions regarding strategies and procedures needed to curate diverse library collections? | Follow-up Question 6a. Explain your thoughts on strategies, tools, or procedures available to diversify your collection. |
| RQ7. What are librarians' perceptions regarding barriers to creating diverse library collections? | Follow-up Question 6c. What challenges or barriers do you encounter when creating library collections? |

| Research question | Interview question |
|--|---|
| RQ8: What are librarians' perceptions of the diversity of their library collection? | Interview Question 4. What can you share about the diversity of children's literature in your library collection? |
| RQ8: What are librarians' perceptions of the diversity of their library collection? | Interview Question 4a. To what degree do you believe your current library collection is diverse? |
| RQ9: How do librarians provide opportunities for students to be exposed to diverse literature in their libraries? | Follow-up Question 3. How do you provide opportunities for students to be exposed to diverse literature in your library? |

Appendix F: Scripted Interview Questions

Ice-Breaker Statement. Tell me about your background and experience as a librarian?

Interview Question 1. For this interview, we are going to be discussing diversity. How would you define the term diversity?

Interview Question 2. Tell me about the role literature plays in preparing students for their participation in our society today.

Interview Question 3. Tell me about your role in providing diverse literature that prepares students to be a part of a diverse society.

Follow-up Question 3. How do you provide opportunities for students to be exposed to diverse literature in your library?

Interview Question 4. What can you share about the diversity of children's literature in your library collection?

Follow-up Question 4. To what degree do you believe your current library collection is diverse.

Interview Question 5. How do you view the role diversity plays when curating your library collection?

Interview Question 6. How do you know if you need to diversify your library collection?

Follow-up Question 6a. Explain your thoughts on strategies, tools, or procedures available to diversify your collection.

Follow-up Question 6b. What supports are provided by your school district for curating a diverse collection?

Follow-up Question 6c. What challenges or barriers do you encounter when creating library collections?

Concluding Question. What else would you like to tell me about curating diverse library collections that you were not able to share?

Appendix G: Baker University IRB Approval



Baker University Institutional Review Board

October 13th, 2022

Dear Heather Payne and Denis Yoder,

The Baker University IRB has reviewed your project application and approved this project under Expedited Status Review. As described, the project complies with all the requirements and policies established by the University for protection of human subjects in research. Unless renewed, approval lapses one year after approval date.

Please be aware of the following:

1. Any significant change in the research protocol as described should be reviewed by this Committee prior to altering the project.
2. Notify the IRB about any new investigators not named in original application.
3. When signed consent documents are required, the primary investigator must retain the signed consent documents of the research activity.
4. If this is a funded project, keep a copy of this approval letter with your proposal/grant file.
5. If the results of the research are used to prepare papers for publication or oral presentation at professional conferences, manuscripts or abstracts are requested for IRB as part of the project record.
6. If this project is not completed within a year, you must renew IRB approval.

If you have any questions, please contact me at npoell@bakeru.edu or 785.594.4582.

Sincerely,

Nathan Poell, MLS
Chair, Baker University IRB

Baker University IRB Committee
Tim Buzzell, PhD
Nick Harris, MS
Scott Kimball, PhD
Susan Rogers, PhD

Appendix H: School District Research Request Form

Thanks for filling out [Request to Conduct Research](#)

Here's what was received.

Request to Conduct Research

Please complete this form to request to conduct research within the [REDACTED]
All research requests are brought before the [REDACTED] Research Review Board on a quarterly basis.
Individuals or organizations are not permitted recruit or solicit data from any member of the [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Community (e.g. staff, students, family members) without approval from the [REDACTED]
Research Review Board.

Due dates to be added to the 2022-2023 quarterly meeting agendas:

9/7/2022 to be added to the 9/22/2022 Quarter 1 Meeting
11/2/2021 to be added to the 11/15/2022 Quarter 2 Meeting
2/15/2023 to be added to the 2/28/2023 Quarter 3 Meeting
4/19/2023 to be added to the 5/2/2028 Quarter 4 Meeting

Email *

[REDACTED]

Name *

Heather Payne

Email address *

[REDACTED]

School/Organization/University *

Baker University

Phone number & best time to contact *

515-556-9095 After 4pm

What is the purpose of the research study? Note: responses are limited to 200 characters). *

The purpose of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of the intricacies of the elementary school library, specifically, the role the librarian plays in curating diverse collections.

Is this research study affiliated with an University or Organization? If so, identify the University/organization, department, and advisor (contact). If this study is funded, please provide the name of the funding agency. *

This research is affiliated with Baker University's School of Education under the advisor Dr. Denis Yoder. His email is denis.yoder@bakeru.edu.

Name of any [REDACTED] staff you have consulted about the proposed research and names of any specific schools you are requesting to involve...

I have spoke with [REDACTED] regarding the study. She has shared resources and presentations that have been given to librarians. She has also provided feedback on my interview questions. I would like to invite all elementary school librarians with 2 or more years of experience to participate in a 30-45 minute interview.

Please provide a description of the research, including impact on student and staff (e.g. procedure, time commitment, potential consequences, etc.). Note: responses are limited to 600 characters.

The researcher seeks to gain an understanding of how elementary school librarians view and curate diverse collections. The intent of the study is to help inform library collection curation. The researcher will interview [REDACTED] elementary librarians focusing on their perceptions of curating diverse collections. All interviewees will be made aware that no subjects will encounter any psychological, social, physical, or legal risks. The 30-45 minute interviews will take place in person or via Zoom. There are no expected consequences for participants or the school district.

What data is/are to be collected and how?

The researcher will collect qualitative data on the library collection curation process through individual interviews.

Attach copies of all data collection instruments. *

Submitted files

 Word Payne Interview Questions FINAL 8.20.22 - Heather Payne.docx

Where and when will the research activities and/or data collection take place?

The researcher will contact potential participants via email and invited them to participate in an interview. Interviews will be conducted in person or Zoom beginning at the end of September and going through October 2022.

How will you obtain subject permission?

Elementary school librarians with at least two years of experience in their current role will be emailed asking for their participation in the study. Each interviewee will be asked to sign a consent form prior to engaging in the interview.

Attach copies of all subject and if applicable, subjects' parent/guardian/family permission.

Submitted files



Word Payne Solitstion Email and Consent Form - Heather Payne.docx

Why should this research study be considered? Please provide a succinct synopsis of the review of literature and identify the benefit to [REDACTED] Schools (return on investment). Note: responses are limited to 600 characters. *

The American Library Association says librarians have an obligation to create diverse collections that contain resources by and about diverse people and cultures. Researchers have learned that children's literature is an essential element in the school experience and plays a considerable role in the lives of young students. Researchers have learned that children should see themselves represented in books & see and learn about those different from themselves. This research will help [REDACTED] understand how librarians curate their collections and their knowledge of diversity in literature.

Attach a copy of the IRB approval (do not include the entire research proposal sent to the IRB; proof of approval).

Submitted files

 Word Payne IRB Awaiting Baker University Approval - Heather Payne.docx

If you have any other documents to submit for review, please attach them here.

No files submitted

Appendix I: School District Research Approval

[REDACTED]

To: Payne, Heather L. 02

😊 ↩️ ↶ ↷ ...
Fri 9/23/2022 2:18 PM

Hi, Heather.

Happy Friday!

The Research Review Board had an opportunity to review your research request. Would you have time to meet or talk via phone in the near future? It is approved...with one condition we would like for you to meet.

Best,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]