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Inclusivity in Children's Services within the School and Public Library

Phoebe Levin

Queens College, City University of New York

Author's Note:

Phoebe Levin, Graduate School of Library and Information Studies,

Queens College, City University of New York

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This research paper was submitted to Prof. Simone L. Yearwood (LBSCI709) as a partial requirement for completion of the Master's Degree of Library and Information Science.

Correspondence regarding the contents of this paper should be addressed to Phoebe Levin, Graduate School of Library and Information Science, Queens College, Flushing, NY 11367.

[Phoebe.Levin75@Qmail.Cuny.Edu](mailto:Phoebe.Levin75@Qmail.Cuny.Edu)

### **Abstract**

The children's library has the potential to not only aid in knowledge-seeking conquests but to help establish a relationship of acceptance between the differences spewing from the child's own self, and the diversity of their peers. The increasing rate of underrepresented peoples in America, and the growing number of representative titles, have contributed to the trend of diversity and inclusivity in the library.

The efforts to make the library diverse and representative have been an ongoing struggle, yet in recent times efforts have proved that the exposure of diversity and inclusivity is beneficial to children. While examining how diversity and inclusivity have been advocated for in the children's library and how it is beneficial to young learners, the researcher intends to explore how practicing public and school librarians maintain and promote collections that celebrate multiculturalism and inclusivity in literature. An online questionnaire was distributed to expose how diversity and inclusivity are advocated for and how it makes for a true reflection of the community that the library serves.

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## **Chapter I: The Problem**

### **Introduction**

The value of diversity and inclusivity for children in both the school and public library are essential components to a child's learning process and understanding of the world around them. Diverse literature teaches one acceptance of differences and spreads the message of an alliance to the reader. Representative literature reinstates how compassion is the basis of accepting the differences of others. While still realizing that despite our differences our experiences as humans are more shared than differentiated. Thematic messages like this, further lead to aid a child's perception of our global world and build upon their camaraderie as young learners.

Since the 20th century, children's literature had rarely centered around characters and plotlines of underrepresented groups; however, since that very century, the fight for more representation has also persisted strongly (Doll, 2013). According to the American Library Association (2017a), the central mission of libraries is "to provide leadership for the development, promotion, and improvement of library and information services and the profession of librarianship in order to enhance learning and ensure access to information for all."

This makes the librarian responsible for fostering materials that encompass strong social messages of good morals and promote knowledge seeking. Yet, this initiative is only achievable when a solid foundation of content is available, and collectivism as people is welcomed. To then further make this message of unification between the community and the library authentic; its collection materials should then contain content that is diverse and inclusive for children of all kinds. If the library ensures a fulfilling collection that features diverse and inclusive works truly its facility then serves its authentic purpose, being a universal center for all.

The turning point for the growing availability of diversity in children's literature was because of the advocacy by publishers, teachers, and librarians alike (Crisp et al., 2018, p.2). Which has led to a long-awaited, but finally heard realization that a diverse collection has a rich benefit to stimulating readers, and allows young people to explore their own self-identity. Rudine Bishop (1990) explains that inclusive and diverse literature was critical to children because it can shift a child's perspective on celebrating, recognizing, and appreciating the similarities and differences of others. She coined her philosophy as "Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors" where books were used as a medium to allow children to reflect, and celebrate the connections between their own self and other children. Bishop (1990) explained that children exhibit a rich self-awareness as they educate themselves and embrace their differences from each other in a cultural context. Thus the realization of the benefits of reading representative literature, had led to a surge in demand for inclusive works. Which concurrently works towards making progress in ultimately sealing the gap in lack of representation.

### **Background**

According to the United States census results of 2020, minorities are increasing faster than predicted (Frey, 2020, p.1). Thus the recent diversification of America makes for not only a more multicultural population but an increasingly growing diverse population of minority youths (2020, p.3). As a response to the rise of minorities in the United States, Charles, (2019) writes that social media campaigns and publishing professionals have testified to transitioning children's literature to becoming more diverse. This accommodation was in response to the sudden change in culture and demographics. Leading to, children's books featuring underrepresented characters, content, and authors to symbolize the sudden change in culture and demographics in America (Charles, 2019, para. 11).

While there is a growing need for diverse literature for children, the relationship between diverse works and their availability in schools and libraries is unbalanced (Crisp et al., 2016). Thus, most content in libraries is uniformly white, and lacking inclusivity. Rather than being a reflection of the classroom and community, diverse people meet a disparity for diverse books. However, according to the Cooperative Children's Book Center, (School of Education, University of Wisconsin-Madison, n.d.), a turning point for representative literature had improved, as an increase of available books marketed for children had exploded since March of 2020.

The emergence of more representative literature can make for a new population of readers who benefit from the library. As those who have disregarded reading because its content was not a reflection of them. On the contrary, it can entice readers who are curious about the cultural differences of others, thus making for an uprising of possibly newfound solidified lifelong readers.

Although diversity is an intricate and fluid social structure, for the sake of this research study, the following definition of diversity and inclusivity that appeals to children's literature will be followed: "all diverse experiences, including (but not limited to) LGBTQIA, people of color, gender diversity, people with disabilities, and ethnic, cultural, and religious minorities" (We Need Diverse Books, n.d., as cited in the American Library Association 2017b, para. 3).

### **Problem Statement**

The focus of this research study was to investigate how inclusivity and diversity were advocated for, and portrayed, in both the school and public library. The American Library Association is dedicated to promoting equal access to information to all persons. Leading to the consciousness that libraries were crucial in empowering diverse populations (2018). Although

libraries have always garnered support from minorities who deemed library services as “very important” (Gohr, 2017, p.42) an insufficiency of representation in the library was prevalent because of a lack of resources, and knowledge on what diverse content truly means. With this in mind, the marginalization of representation in the library was further defined because of children’s literature being inadequate in representing diverse characters, authors, and stories (Doll, 2013).

The need for inclusivity had led librarians to act as changemakers and advance the library by expanding their collections to welcome representative titles. While still being informed of how to convey diversity appropriately inside the realms of the library. Occasionally, librarians will seek supplemental expertise from cultural insiders who work besides the library to initiate proper protocol (ALSC, 2016b). Transformations in the library were necessary and continuous to its evolution of being a center for knowledge and a space for community support. Thus with these efforts combined, the end-goal is to make for an authentic presence of well-balanced, and enriching resources that reflect our current nation, and entice our diversified youth to become excited about reading. This research project will attempt to answer how diversity was portrayed in the library and how librarians work towards fostering representative content for all children alike.

### **Purpose and Research Questions**

The purpose of this study was to explore how practicing public and school librarians maintain and promote collections that celebrate multiculturalism and inclusivity in literature. To help determine how libraries advocate for diversity, the following questions have been posed:

RQ1: How has diversity and representation been advocated for in the library’s collections and programs?

- RQ2: What strides have been made to the library acquiring literature that has been written by or features underrepresented groups?
- RQ3: How does a diverse collection affect a child's viewpoint of the library, and/or reading?
- RQ4: What successes or difficulties has the library faced when promoting inclusivity and multiculturalism in literature and programming?

### **Importance of Study**

The availability and advocacy for diverse books in the library were critical to children because of their benefits to inherently better young readers academically and socially. According to Boyd, Causey, and Galda (2015) when multicultural and inclusive books were available in the library children were then relayed the message that all races, cultures, and populations of people were embraced and appreciated. Expanding upon this belief, the researchers further developed their argument for multiculturalism in children's literature and expressed that when children do not see themselves in literature, they then depict the message that they were not worthy as individuals and that reading is not for them (p.379). In comparison, children who often recognize themselves in the books that they read were also prone to suffering due to a lack of representative content. As these predominantly represented children could then likely view any works featuring those who were underrepresented or centering around diverse subjects as ultimately books not marketed for them (Boyd, Causey, & Galda 2015, p.379).

Finally, the significance of fostering diverse and inclusive works is relevant solely for its alignment to the obligations of being a librarian. Books were the primary component of the successes in progressing child-developmental identity and academic growth. While the librarian is responsible for advocating and managing the assortment of books, it is also their responsibility

to invoke acceptance in the library. Thus making the availability of representative works widespread. A properly maintained collection means its choice of options is sound, thus making for an equal and diversified collection.

A librarian is always working towards expanding their knowledge within the field. This means being aware of the fundamentals of diversity and fairness and staying savvy to the topics of social justice and how it applies to the realms of the library. Gohr (2017) suggests that the modern-day librarian should start with educating themselves about institutionalized racism to make for progressive and fitting support of diversity in an educational and public setting (p.45). Moreover, the librarian's own capacity to construct an influential collection in the library starts with the basis of fostering a multiperspective and rich assortment of titles. Thus, incorporating representative books in the library offers an outlet for enriched learning. As its titles offer many outlooks of enlightening content, which simultaneously acts as a solid foundation towards developing skills in research-based needs. Conclusively, it was vital to explain that diverse literature teaches one acceptance of differences and perpetuates to the reader the recognition that despite differences, as humans alone, we are unified.

## **Chapter II: Review of Related Literature**

### **Overview**

To achieve the answer of how practicing public and school librarians maintain and promote collections that celebrate multiculturalism and inclusivity, while gaining an understanding of how diversity is advocated in the library, a review of the literature was executed. This section centers on the development of diversity and inclusivity in children's literature within the library forefront, and how it has been used as a tool to teach children acceptance, compassion, and foster a passion for reading. This chapter is arranged into the subsequent components:

1. Historical Background
2. Diversity and Inclusivity as a Concept
3. The Significance of Diversity and Inclusivity
4. The Lack of Diverse Children's Works
5. Inclusivity and Diversity Challenges in the Library
6. Related Research
7. Summary of Literature

### **Historical Background**

The need for diverse and inclusive children's books has persisted since the 20th century eleven years after the Supreme Court outlawed segregated schools. As reported by Doll (2013), In 1965, Nancy Larrick expressed her disapproval for the lack of black characters in children's literature. What sparked Larricks' desire to critique the current state of children's literature had been a 5-year-old black girl, who asked why all children's books she had read were white. In 2014, Dean Myers, a writer from *The New York Times* posed the question "where are the people

of color in children's books?" Still relevant after fifty years— the answer is still unresolved. The fight for more representative works remains an obstacle today. Yet, advancement is happening currently, as unrepresented works have streamlined into mainstream culture, and are now universally recognized for being a critical value in education and self-development for children.

While diverse books were not prevalent in the 1960s, it is commonly misconstrued that the push for representation was not established until present times. Rather, diversity in children's literature was discussed and advocated for within the early 1900s due to the efforts of multicultural and inclusive writers who pioneered change within the library (Horning, 2015, p.1). As time had persisted, the literary field created awards to celebrate accomplishments, and strides in diversity, multicultural, and inclusive based works. Such honors not only commemorate the advancement of children's works but such awards simultaneously measure the cultural progress of literature. The establishment of awards in children's literature, emphasizes the library's efforts as an institution for change as historically, awards for progressive record-breaking firsts that showcase the depletion of barriers, proving that all readers are welcomed. Kathleen Horning (2015), the Director of the Cooperative Children's Book Center states that awards within children's books are significant because "they can reflect social morals and the critical mindset of children's librarians, both historically and currently" (p.1). Thus when obstacles are overcome in children's literature, a relationship between those of color who win awards reflects upon the publishing of more diverse literature, or as Horning describes a case where "success breeds imitation" (2015, p.1).

Horning (2015) notes that the advocacy for the underrepresented in children's literature dates back to the pioneers of influential library leaders. All of whom shared a nation-wide emphasis of urgency towards diversity within the children's department. She highlights librarians

Pura Belpré, Chalemae Hill Rollins, Augusta Baker, and Clara Breed who were the firsts of their kind in invoking change in the depiction of minorities in both storytelling and children's librarianship and services (p.1). The first person of color to win the Newberry Medal in 1928, was Dhan Gopal Mukerji for his book, *Gay-Neck: The Story of a Pigeon*; the turning point for diversified children's literature began with the creation of the first annual award that celebrates multiculturalism (Honing, 2015, p.8). She also notes that in 1969, the Coretta Scott King Award was created to celebrate the excellence in writing and illustrations by blacks (2015,p.1). Thus, the creation of awards that center around the recognition of outstanding books that encompass diverse peoples, and experiences were followed. The Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) curated a book list that was deemed for diversified high quality-literature for children (2016a). These titles were distributed into categories, of award-winning books highlighting the triumphant characteristics of the human experience in general multiculturalism, Asian Pacific and Middle East Americans, Latinx, Feminsim and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (LGBTQ), Native American, Disability, and Judaism (ALSC, 2016a).

Such awards acknowledge and continue the efforts to continuously produce high-quality literature by underrepresented and marginalized populations but also allow teachers and librarians alike to realize that such works are valuable to their collections for their distinguished content. This statement is supported by Boyd, Causey, and Galda (2015) who believe that drawing from such lists is an appropriate and sure way to identify works that are both authentic but qualified to aid in the learning components of a classroom (p.381). In that regard, the distinguished listing of books should be an obvious tool to dramatically shift a library collection to one where being white, able-bodied, hetero, and middle class is not the norm. Which in comparison to our nations' growing unrepresented population, is a true statement.

### **Diversity and Inclusivity as a Concept**

The definition for diversity and inclusivity is fluid. It derives from human interaction that lies within the intricacies of being a social construct, making its interpretation ambiguous. Although the concept as a whole is delicate and sometimes unclear, in the children's literary world its meaning is widely agreed upon. In which diversity and inclusivity are an occurrence where children can see themselves within the literature that touches upon diverse experiences (We Need Diverse Books, n.d.). Additionally, in the realms of children's literature, diversity and inclusivity is only a feature of the work, when either its characters are ultimately underrepresented; or it mentions an experience that centers around the diversity of race, ethnicity, culture, lifestyle, and language. However, the differentiation that makes for a diverse human experience like families, gender identity, religion, disabilities, and socioeconomic status are also a part of inclusive literature. Boyd et al. (2015) argue that this is included and is intertwined into diverse and inclusive literature because it hails from race, ethnicity, culture, and language (p.379). Writers like Logan, et al. (2016) and Martens, et al. (2015) also believe that diversity and inclusive texts simultaneously expose children to the fundamentals of intersectionality. Moreover, when such diverse works are read, children begin to gain an intercultural understanding that despite differences, our experiences as people are a shared belief of living. This message is supported by the organization We Need Diverse Books (n.d.) who also believe that the principles of diversity and inclusivity are synthesized. In their vision statement, they describe diversity and inclusivity in literature as being attained when "a world in which all children can see themselves in the pages of a book" (para.1).

### **The Significance of Diverse and Inclusive Literature**

Diversity teaches children a strong and positive attitude towards the acceptance of differences in others. This ultimately makes for a more empathetic and inclusive child. The representation of both cultural storylines and underrepresented groups makes children from these demographics feel embraced. Such diversified stories reiterate to other children that our emotions and experiences as humans are connected. Moreover, this leads to aiding in the child's perception of others, and challenges their understanding of our global world, furthering their curiosity to learn more.

The value of how empathy and unity are fostered throughout diverse and inclusive literature is perhaps the most critical reason to study inclusivity in children's libraries. Such works can make children feel less alone and enlighten others to make for a more tolerable world. James A. Banks, a Multicultural Director and Professor from Seattle University argues that despite our growing racial, ethnic, cultural, and language-based diversity climate, our world issues with each other stem not from intolerance but illiteracy (2004, p.291). Thus, to bring peace to our world, empathy and accepting the differing opinion of others is made true when young people learn morals from diverse readings (2004). While Banks's (2004) argument may be a reach to some, the ability to use books as a medium to learn from each other is a more achievable idea to combat misjudgment and intolerance. The potential to use books as a tool of empowerment and allow children to see each other is explained in the emotionally connecting and timeless piece, by Rudine Sims Bishop (1990). She uses mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors as a metaphor to explain how diverse literature can benefit children, and describes her theory as:

Books are sometimes windows, offering views of worlds that may be real or imagined... These windows are also sliding glass doors, and readers have only to walk through in imagination to become part of whatever world has been created... When lighting conditions are just right... A window can also be a mirror. Literature transforms human experience and reflects it back to us...we can see our own lives and experiences as part of the larger human experience. (para.1)

Moreover, mirrors are a reflection of the self, they allow one to explore their idea of self-identity, while windows are a way to view other worlds which makes for a more positive attitude about accepting differences, and finally, sliding glass doors which act as a tool of action towards windows, where readers can blend their windows, making for the ultimate camaraderie. Bishop (1990) then describes that when children can not see themselves in their “windows” that it makes for low self-esteem, and tells these children that they are not worthy as readers. Furthermore, for other children who constantly see themselves in books, they too suffer as they never experience the focal viewpoint of gazing in a “window” thus resulting in a further marginalization between both groups of children, and the “sliding glass door” remains unused as there is no exchange amongst themselves and others. She summarizes this narrative as “when children cannot find themselves reflected in the books they read, or when the images they see are distorted, negative, or laughable, they learn a powerful lesson about how they are devalued in the society of which they are a part” (1990, para.4). This statement is agreed by Boyd et al. (2015), who states that when children are not seen throughout the books they read, they then determine that these works are not for them (p.379).

### **Authentic Illustrative Representation and Inclusivity**

The most eye-catching aspect that determines, if a book is representative and inclusive, is its artwork. The illustrations of a title can fulfill Bishop's (1990) metaphors, by allowing children to see themselves, and activate their traits of empathy and respect for others' differences. Furthermore, children need to see themselves in books, to help develop healthy self-esteem, as children look at the media for proof of validation. When they do not see themselves they then are communicated the message that they are not capable, or worthy of being seen which can over time make for both low self-esteem and desire to read (Penberg, 2017, para.6).

While the desire for more representation is present, its production must be carefully executed. Artwork is an imperative component towards making a statement about diversity by visualizing just how ultimately powerful imagery can be. Art is a universal statement, where both Martens, et al.(2015) and Hart (2012) explain that illustrations weigh heavily on the impression of the book because representative cover art and illustrations are as essential to the story as the text is because it communicates an impactful message on representation. For this reason, children need to be able to see themselves not only in the text they read but the illustrations, yet it needs to be conducted correctly. For example, in 2020, Barnes & Noble controversially released renditioned classics, called Diverse Editions that featured covers of classic titles to be ethnically diverse (de León, 2020, para.1). Although the book chain had the intention of using their status to “raise awareness and discussion” it instead received criticism from writers. Angela Hayes (2020) a senior vice president for diversity and inclusion at Brodeur Partners, a branding corporation, explains that an authentic effort is a basis for making a diverse message as a corporation. She explains that corporations should be wary of how their decisions to make a diverse statement can affect businesses who hail from an underrepresented background (para.4).

Thus, this mentality crossed the mind of critics, who questioned why would classics written by whites be promoted as compared to currently published books of color?; consequently making the collection rise to its downfall and cancellation (de León, 2020, para. 3). This reiterates the common joint principles of diversity and inclusive books; authenticity and intention. However, the progression of cover art featuring minorities has made substantial improvements. In the 2010s, more minority representation has graced the covers of books especially within the last remaining part of the decade (Kimura, 2019). To prove its advancement the following studies from within the earlier part of the decade, and the later were analyzed. Both studies were intended to prove why book covers are important to promoting representation, as it is the first element of a book that can encapsulate a potential reader.

### **The Progression of Representation in Cover Art**

In 2012, Kate Hart, a young adult author conducted her informal study of book covers featuring 624 traditionally published books. Her methodology centered around the sampling of Goodreads's 2011 young adult book list. Hart then self-scanned the cover art to discover that 90% of her findings featured white characters on the covers. The second most significant finding to be 10% of ambiguous characters being found, while the remaining percentages of black, Latinx, and Asian ranged within 1% (2012, para 6). While Hart's (2012) research is an excellent tool to reference the coming of representation on book covers, her research lacks certainty as to how her statistics were determined. The unknowingness of which visuals she was measuring is unclear, as it is questioned if she measured only visuals on the cover, or both the cover and back, furthermore, what composes a character, as both 1-person covers and multiple-individual covers were included (Kimura, 2019, p.4).

To strengthen these gaps, and further answer how the raised awareness for more representative works has changed the publishing industry is the replicated study of Hart's (2012) findings, led by Jenny Kimura (2019) a cover design artist. Kimura (2019) focuses on titles from 2014, which was the starting point of the social media hashtag phenomenon #WeNeedDiverseBooks (p.6), and compares those findings to the year's most recent young adult titles dating back to 2018. Like Hart (2012) Kimura (2019) uses Goodreads to catalog her findings of 1400 titles and records the title, author, and publisher, and notes how many people were present on the cover, then as replicated she self-determines race/ethnicity of the covers (p.7). After completing the data set for 2014 and 2018, Kimura (2019) notes an increase of racial representation on young adult book covers (p.16), with the most significant finding was an increase of 8% amongst Blacks featured on book covers (p.9), thus a dramatic increase as compared to Hart's (2012) initial findings. Yet, while racial diversity and inclusivity are expanding, which Kimura describes a message that publishers can recognize and project from as "diverse representation on covers is not only necessary to help promote diverse books, but a choice that is recognizable, noticeable, and one that could make a difference in terms of sales" (2019, p.16).

Kimura's (2019) results, while an improvement from Hart's 2012 study, are still proof of indefinite progress. While quantitatively her results are still underwhelming it demonstrates that representative children's works are still an ongoing and necessary movement. Furthermore, Kimura (2019) uses her background as an artist within the publishing industry to make a critical point, "while the quantity of diverse books is dependent on content, book designers, illustrators, and art directors can play an important role in increasing the visibility of the diverse stories" (p.17). Similarly, artists who make an effort to create diversified covers that reflect our

population are similar to the endeavors of librarians who use their role to make a collection that is inclusive to all patrons. Such small endeavors like these can over time lead to a great impact on mainstreaming representation in children's literature.

### **Inclusivity and Diversity Challenges in the Library**

Libraries as a center for the community are designed to be an open and welcoming space for all to be treated fairly and respectfully. According to the ALA (2017c), to make patrons of the library feel truly embraced, the library staff should be intertwined into its community demographics, making its librarians a reflection of the demographics and beliefs of its region (para.5). However, this statement is deceptive, as librarian demographics prove that over 80% of librarians are white women (ALA, p.2). Researchers Hathcock (2015) and Gohr (2017) discuss that the reasoning behind the librarians being predominantly white is because libraries are historically rooted in whiteness. The initial development of public libraries in the United States was intended for immigrants to use and assimilate to a "white society" (Honma, 2006, p.27). This is problematic because libraries are meant to serve their population, and remain current. Making it also contradictory to the current demographics of underrepresented peoples who are rising, and leading to further unequal representation.

To combat this Hathcock (2015) and Gohr (2017) challenge the library to acknowledge the library's white privilege and rethink its policies that derive from institutional racism. Hathcock (2015) particularly believes that the reasoning behind so few diverse candidates in librarianship is because the path to being librarianship is only achievable when one has the privilege of free time, financial backing, and family support to allow them to apply for programs, internship, and residencies (para.9). To lessen these matters, and foster unity between multiculturalism and inclusivity in the library, she proposes mentorship as the answer. This can

be vital to the library forefront as it simultaneously educates seasoned librarians who are unaware of the library's racist inner workings. It can also guide diverse, prospective applicants towards learning how to reverse the wrongdoings of the past. To make for even greater diversity in the library, its materials and collection should be supplied from multiple locally independent book vendors. By utilizing independent and local services from within the community, it reinstates how the library is a community and cultural center. The ALSC explains that materials should hail from voices and publishers within the local community (2016b). When many voices are formatted into books and ready in the library, it is not only a genuine reflection of the community but also a showcase of how the library is an active center that supports the region's cultural progress.

### **The Lack of Diverse Children's Works**

Books are written by people of color (POC), and individuals who hail from different backgrounds are often lacking in school libraries. It is not because they are nonexistent, rather it is because they are not consistently advocated for. When libraries cannot provide a collection that represents a child's experiences and physical traits, it can make for unfulfilled, and uninterested readers. Without representative books, children from underrepresented backgrounds suffer. This contributes to a link of inadequate engagement towards education, following a cyclical low literacy rate (Henderson et al., 2020).

McNair (2008), a professor in education, discovered that perhaps the reasoning behind the lack of diverse books in children's libraries is because POC writers and illustrators are not promoted regularly within discounted book club catalogs. She proves this by analyzing discounted Scholastic book club catalog forms that circulated within the past year. McNair (2008) then discovers that her one-year-long search has gathered that authors and illustrators of

color were only featured 34 times, as compared to whites being featured over 600 times (p.196). The availability of diverse writers and illustrators was not lacking, rather it was abundant, and award-winning (p.199). She concludes her research advocating for independent publishers who specialize in diverse writing and also urges educators to have a critical consciousness towards the power of media conglomerates who rule major publishing houses (p.201).

Researchers Henderson et al. (2020) and Crisp et al. (2016) take on a modernized analysis of diversity in libraries. Using Goodreads as a tool to categorize their findings, the researchers identified an imbalance of inclusive and representative works. To persevere amongst this, these authors urge librarians to choose titles that are representative of the children who are a part of the library. Works that are written by members within that community are essential to the movement of diversity in books. When writers who are from the same background as the works they write, it tells children that their experiences are worthy and that one day they can become authors. Moreover, works written by those who hail from the same background are reflective of Bishop's (1990) philosophy of mirrors where children can truly see themselves within the work, and children from the outside can gaze into its window. Cultural authenticity is a necessity to diverse and inclusive works, the ability to convey insider background and thoughts. Researchers, Pennell et al. (2018) analyzed the representation amongst picture books centering on disabilities. They state that negative perceptions can be disproved by humanizing characters and proving that as people, there is more to their character than the label they are born with. Furthermore, your own voice is an important token to represent children's works. The analysis of Latinx children's literature by Braden et al. (2016) and the study of Asian children's literature by Rodriguez et al. (2018) conclude that cultural authenticity is accomplished when such works are written by cultural insiders, making the work true to its own voices.

While there is a discrepancy between available diverse works being published and advocated for against white, hetero, and able-bodied children's literature works, the number of diverse and representative titles is rising, and available. Oftentimes it is not because these books are unwanted in the library, rather it is because the state fails to adequately fund libraries, affecting educators to then use their funds to diversify their library (Henderson et al., 2020, p.754). To alleviate the shortage between its available works, teachers, and librarians can utilize awards that recognize achievements by POC and those of different backgrounds. To acquire free or low-cost credible, and authentic resources Crisp et al. (2016), Henderson et al. (2020), Kirch (2020), and McNair (2008), all advise using professional organizations that specialize in preventative children's literature to obtain additional representative titles.

These programs are dedicated to not only distributing multicultural and inclusive books but simultaneously urging underrepresented writers and illustrators to continuously produce content that closes the opportunity gap of literacy in underrepresented children. Furthermore, such groups are dedicated to spreading books for the sole purpose of enriching children and allowing other children from diverse populations to finally be seen.

### **Related Research**

In a work on how diversity and inclusivity enrich the children's library, Naidoo (2014), a member of the Association for Library Services to Children, explains the benefits of how it affects child development, drawing on the theories from sociocultural psychology. First, he mentions how Vygotsky's beliefs describe that language and culture are the building blocks to a child's social and identity development, where cultural traditions and social boundaries define the way children think and learn (1934, p.2). Furthermore, Naidoo (2014) draws similarities between Vygotsky (1934) and Bishop (1990), where children use books to understand their

world, which aids in their own perception, and self-image (p.3). To represent the exponential growth of diversity in America, Naidoo argues that inclusive programs and collections allow children to make connections despite differences in culture. Changing the course of the library, against once being a center for assimilation as explained by Honma (2006), Naidoo (2014) argues that the library's welcoming to differing cultures. Which will later make for a child that can function in a diverse society because of their enriched beginnings.

In an honors thesis, Taylor (2020) analyzes two first-grade classrooms, using content analysis and interviews to study how diverse elementary classrooms read-aloud book titles are. Taylor (2020) describes that there is a lack of diverse books available, and even if diverse books were available in the library; they need to be read aloud (p.8). Her advice for accessing more diverse and inclusive literature is in line with Horning (2015) where educators should utilize award-winning literature to select diverse but quality content. While her resources cross-similarities between this paper, her research is lacking depth, as her findings are only based on two classrooms. By having a small study sample, she can not accurately measure how available representative works are in the classroom. Furthermore, Taylor (2020) fails to address how diverse and inclusive children's literature can make for a more welcoming pluralistic society. She mentions the importance of how reading aloud allows children to become exposed to new experiences that support their personal development in both self-identity and acceptance (2020, p.18). Yet, she fails to mention how diversified works are also intersectional, and can allow children to also understand that diversity is on paper serrated based on ethnic and social background, yet both categories are similar because they have faced stigma and exclusion.

While Taylor's findings state how teachers are confined to using the approved curriculum that takes up 22.5% of their selection, she also mentions the power educators have to expose

children to more culture because they have the power to make their own book selection choices (2020, p.24). Taylor (2020) found a lack of diversity in literature, yet perhaps this insufficiency is apparent because of her minuscule sampling. It would be interesting to see her include more classrooms in her study, and also to see how many educators make an effort towards building a diverse and inclusive bookshelf using award-winning titles. A survey instead of an interview could mitigate these gaps, and allow for a bigger pool of participants. While her analysis on the importance of diverse books can be a helpful starter, this paper expands upon that despite an insignificant amount of available published literature, librarians and educators have always recognized the importance of inclusivity and diversity in literature. Furthermore, this paper explains how the library has historically been a center for the community by making an effort to promote an alliance through all its patrons. This expands upon Taylor's (2020) piece as she mentions the importance of different groups being accepted and represented, yet fails to mention its significance and history of diverse children's literature.

### **Summary of Literature**

There are several ways to add diversity and inclusive texts to the children's library, despite its accessibility being weak in comparison to other available children's works. While historically, the diversity and inclusivity of children's books are lacking. However, because of the rising representation in the nation, efforts to improve its availability have increased from publishers and creatives alike. Thus, the cultural and academic advantages children will receive from reading these works will continue to flourish and grow, as our societal culture becomes more pluralistic. These benefits will simultaneously impact our children towards feeling accepted as readers and also cast the ability for people to relate to one and all despite differences. This also means that new diversified works will make for a wider audience of readers of all kinds, which

in time can affect the bettering of literacy rates tremendously and also make for a newfound population of enthused readers.

## **Chapter III: Methodology**

### **Overview**

The objective of this research project was to explore how practicing public and school librarians maintain and promote collections that celebrate multiculturalism and inclusivity. A review of the literature revealed that despite the increasing number of underrepresented people living in the United States, the availability of diverse and inclusive literature for children is limited, but emerging. Libraries as we know are the reflection of the current culture and the community. In which, when the library's collection and services mirror its patrons it makes for authentic relationships. Moreover, representation in the library, simultaneously reassures children that they are valued as readers, while teaching children the fundamentals of intersectionality and acceptance (Boyd et al, 2015; Logan et al, 2016).

### **Restatement of Research Questions**

This study examined how inclusivity and diversity are currently advocated and strategized for in the library forefront. To learn about how the library fosters unity amongst peoples and gain insight on this prevailing topic the following questions were investigated:

RQ1: How has diversity and representation been advocated for in the library's collections and programs?

RQ2: What strides have been made to the library acquiring literature that has been written by or features underrepresented groups?

RQ3: How does a diverse collection affect a child's viewpoint of the library, and/or reading?

RQ4: What successes or difficulties has the library faced when promoting inclusivity and multiculturalism in literature and programming?

### **Definition of Terms**

The following are definitions of diversity and inclusivity phraseology encountered in this study:

**Authenticity:** “The reader’s sense of truth in how a specific cultural experience has been represented within a book, particularly when the reader is an insider to the culture portrayed in that book” (Boyd et al., 2015, p.5).

**Diversity:** In library collections and programs refers to cultural diversity. Culture includes shared characteristics that define how a person lives, thinks, and creates meaning. These characteristics include customs, traditions, rituals, food, dress, and language. Typically people from the same cultural group share similar characteristics (Naidoo, 2014).

**Multicultural literature:** A social construct that is intricate and multidimensional, its diverse characteristics make its content focus on race, ethnicity, culture, and languages (Boyd et al., 2015).

**Representative literature:** Works that feature characters or situations that stand for something, specifically marginalized people who otherwise feel and are invisible to those who are unfamiliar with their circumstances (Penberg, 2017).

### **Scope and Focus**

The focus of this study was to gain insight into how public and school librarians promoted and advocated for diversity and inclusivity for children. The focus expanded upon analyzing how diversity and inclusivity were fostered in the library forefront, and if its efforts of support were appreciated and reflective of the community that the public and/or school library serves. The scope of this study revolved around public and school librarians who work with children within the United States. While librarians could promote diverse and inclusive content that is international, the participants and information used towards this research were limited

geographically. Public institutions with libraries and librarians within the United States were the sole provider of research because their information is reflective of the current rising demographics of underrepresented peoples within the nation (Frey, 2020, p.1).

### **Description of Research Methodology and Justification**

The results from this research study were intended to provide data and recommendations for children's librarians who are looking for more information on why representation is essential and to learn about the long-winded struggle to incorporate more inclusive and multicultural literature content in the library. Thus, the research method chosen for this study was a survey that was written out as a questionnaire. As an exploratory survey, Connaway and Radford (2017) explain that its usage is intended to “help to clarify concepts, establish priorities for future research, identify new problems, and gather information with practical application” (p.99). Thus, this research method was preferred because it could be distributed to a large group of people and it was based on experience, where there was no correct answer, rather responses were mere glimpses of insight. To gain a wider audience of school and public children’s librarians, the survey was distributed electronically.

This survey was composed of multiple-choice, checklist, Likert scale, and short answers to help respondents clarify their thoughts and experiences easier. By allowing more than one style of surveying it makes for more accurate responses. Being that there was no hypothesis to test, and insider knowledge was the main motive of this research, any answer was sufficient for this survey (Connaway & Radford, 2017). An advantage of this survey was being that it was administered online; its anonymity was guaranteed (Connaway & Radford, 2017). This made the questionnaire more alluring as respondents were free to share any personal insights, share accurate practices of diversity and inclusivity in the library based on their expertise as librarians.

Moreover, Connaway and Radford (2017), stress that the elimination of personal contact between the respondent and the researcher eliminates the potential of an interview bias during the questioning process (p.108). The disadvantages of the questionnaire were it being accessible in only an online medium. This makes the survey more “impersonal” because there was no one to respond to and the questions were only administered electronically. To not run the risk of anonymity being jeopardized, participants could be hesitant to contact the researcher for an elaboration on what each question means. Consequently, this could lead to either a higher non-response rate which can lower the sample size, or in extreme cases the answers from the survey could be purposefully wrong to “sabotage” the research study (Connaway & Radford, 2017, p.109).

### **Research Design**

The results of this study were to help outline how diversity and inclusivity are advocated and portrayed towards children in the library. The questionnaire survey was chosen because of the semester-long time constraint. Using Google Forms to produce the survey, data was accumulated by emailing the survey to library listservs. In the recruitment email, it was explicitly stated that this survey is directly about inclusivity in children’s services within the school and public library. The desired respondents should be either school librarians who work with kindergarten through twelfth grade, or children’s librarians who work with that same grade school demographic. The questions concentrated on how children’s and young adult librarians promoted diversity and inclusivity within their community. The questionnaire from this research study included close-ended questions for a more straightforward analysis but also contained short response answers for insightful and precise replies. Additionally, checklist-styled questions were

included to gain a complete summary of how a current working children's library serves its community and acknowledges those who are underrepresented.

### **Research Instrument**

This survey questionnaire was inspired by Cade (2019) who constructed a survey titled 'Incorporating Multicultural Literature into the Classroom' for her honors thesis at Ball State University. Her survey acted as a model because it was formatted in both short responses and multiple-choice, making for a better chance at collecting participants' viewpoints on multiculturalism for children. Additionally, like the questionnaire for this research project, she asked participants about how the content of the library reflects the population they serve, and the general attitude of librarians towards multiculturalism and inclusivity (Cade, 2019).

The electronic questionnaire survey contained 19 questions. Before participants started the survey, information regarding its purpose and background information of the study are available. The anonymity of the survey was re-stated, and the participant was made aware of information regarding the personal safety and possible privacy concerns of the survey.

Question 1 to 5 of the survey was regarding the background of the participant, and information of the community that they serve as a librarian. Questions 6 to 7 were regarding the content made available to children in the participant's library. Like Cade's (2019) survey the focus of questions 8 to 18 was to garner responses that indicate how librarians feel about diversity and inclusivity in the library. Throughout these questions participants were asked about how they defined multiculturalism and inclusivity, the specific details they search for that constituted books as being inclusive or diverse, how multiculturalism and inclusivity are currently celebrated in their library, and how advocating for diversity affects the public both for the better and worse. Question 18 was an optional short response question where participants

could comment on any experiences regarding multiculturalism and inclusive literature that they have lived through in both the public or school sector.

### Research Questions and Corresponding Coding Sheet Elements

Research Questions	Corresponding Items on Questionnaire Coding Sheet
RQ1: How has diversity and representation been advocated for in the library's collections and programs?	Q3, Q4, Q9, Q10, Q11
RQ2: What strides have been made to the library acquiring literature that has been written by or features underrepresented groups?	Q6, Q7
RQ3: How does a diverse collection affect a child's viewpoint of the library, and/or reading?	Q5 ,Q8
RQ4: What successes or difficulties has the library faced when promoting inclusivity and multiculturalism in literature and programming?	Q12, Q13

### **Sample Selection**

This study was open for librarians who work with children ranging from grades kindergarten through twelfth grade in either the public and/or the school library sector. This questionnaire was distributed via an email invitation (Appendix A) to librarians who are a part of The American Library Association (ALA) Emerging Leaders (EL) program, The New York State Library (NYLINE), public libraries, and public schools with librarians. Many librarians responded to my initial contact asking if they could share the survey with their associates. The researcher encouraged this behavior, on behalf of the survey was only forwarded to librarians who work with children in either the school or public library sector. Thus, the survey was shared by participants' who referred the study to other librarians through word of mouth and email, making its sample selection entirely random.

### **Survey Procedures**

The survey was sent to public and school librarians, and those in the EL program. Both parties forwarded its contents to other librarians. The email template was inspired by Osterman (2019) who also completed their own research study per the same graduation requirements. Included in the invitation of participation (Appendix A) was information regarding the questionnaire's affiliation with being a partial requirement for completion of a Master's Degree of Library and Information Science Program at Queens College. Also incorporated in the questionnaire invitation was:

1. A statement of purpose to familiarize participants with the scope of the topic
2. An estimated time allotment of (15) minutes to complete the survey
3. Information about the participant's safety and confidentiality

4. The guarantee that it is an unpublished student project, therefore IRB approval is unnecessary
5. The researcher's contact information for clarification, and questions regarding the research study

### **Data Collection and Recording**

This questionnaire (Appendix B) was made as a survey on the user-friendly and free platform, Google Forms. When distributing the survey through email, Google Forms produced an accessible shortened link to make both share and navigation easy. Once respondents had completed the survey, their responses were instantaneously collected and arranged in visual data figures.

### **Data Processing and Analysis**

Responses from the survey that were formatted in either a multiple-choice, Likert scaled, or checklist fashion are aggregated by Google Forms. Participant's responses from these styled questions were then also made into visualized data charts, of bar graphs or pie charts. Questions where the short response was necessary to answer, were either grouped based on their similarity by the researcher or differentiated as a completely new answer choice. Collectively this data will help assess how diversity and inclusivity were advocated and embraced in the children's library. The last and optional, survey question #19, where additional comments about inclusivity and multiculturalism in the children's library were also analyzed. This was because it gave the ability for participants to express their own thoughts on what they feel was an imperative aspect of diversity and inclusivity, which could aid in interpreting their responses.

### **Limitations**

There were multiple limitations to this research project. The questionnaire being sent out via email made the nonresponse rate relatively higher (Connaway & Radford, 2017, p.108). Due to the availability of the questionnaire only being online, participants may be less inclined to answer the questionnaire. Furthermore, participants could perceive the questionnaires' questions as ambiguous. On the contrary, the researcher could not ask the participant to further clarify their answer because of its anonymity (Connaway & Radford, 2017). Additionally, because the questionnaire was passed on from participants to their associates and because the survey assures a standard to privacy and confidentiality, it had the potentiality to only gain traction from only one type of library, which could make for a small sample size and bias.

## **Chapter IV: Preliminary Findings**

### **Restatement of Research Problem**

It has been established that within the growing change of underrepresented peoples in the United States, a realization for more representative content has also increased (Frey, 2020). Librarians have enforced this trend by the promotion and services of content that directly reflected this demand and current shift in demographics. Simultaneously, libraries as a whole, are constantly changing to adapt to both the current culture in media and also to the needs of its patrons and community. This study analyzed how practicing public and school librarians have maintained and advocated for collections that display multiculturalism and inclusivity in both literature and services. The data garnered from this study was based on a 19 question Google form questionnaire survey that was answered by 60 children's librarians. Utilizing the information from this study the researcher will decipher and interpret its findings of how multicultural and inclusive literature is an important, but developing aspect of both the public and school children's library.

### **Overview**

This project was intended to study how diversity and inclusivity are supported in the library, results were also evaluated to gain an understanding of how librarians justified their exposure and content. In this chapter, the following survey responses were analyzed to answer the previously stated research questions posed in Chapter 1:

RQ1: How has diversity and representation been advocated for in the library's collections and programs?

RQ2: What strides have been made to the library acquiring literature that has been written by or features underrepresented groups?

RQ3: How does a diverse collection affect a child's viewpoint of the library, and/or reading?

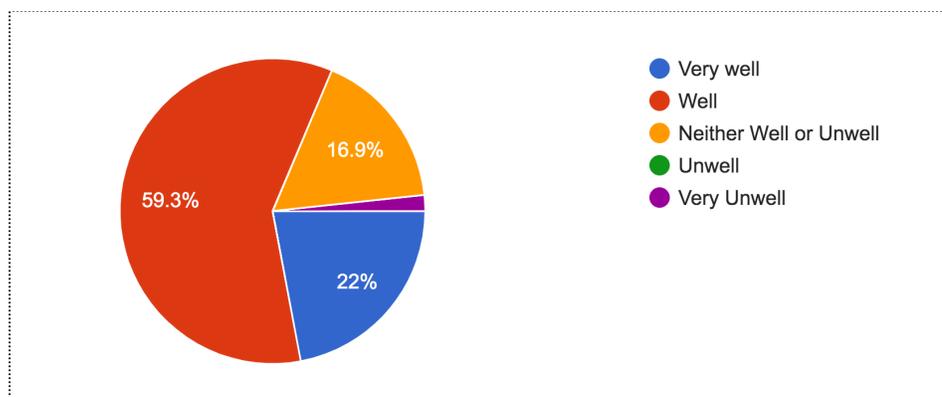
RQ4: What successes or difficulties has the library faced when promoting inclusivity and multiculturalism in literature and programming?

Each research question is discussed in its own section and then analyzed in a summary of its findings by the researcher.

### Research Question 1

RQ1: How has diversity and representation been advocated for in the library's collections and programs?

Survey Questions 3,4,9/9c, 10/10c,11/11c were examined to understand how diversity and representation have been advocated for in the children's or school library's materials and program engagement. These questions asked participants the general demographics of their library patrons. Moreover, how well the content in their library represented and commemorated the culture and achievements of its community. Additionally, if there is a relationship between the push for representation in the library, and reading for pleasure.



*Figure 1.* In your opinion, how well does the library's collection represent your students/patrons? This figure displays the results of Survey Question 4 as percentages of the 60 responses.

As shown in Figure 1, 81.3% of respondents declared that their library collection has at least some present form of representation for their students and patrons. This suggests that libraries may intentionally select the content that is based on the demographics of the community that they serve, therefore they are adhering to making the library an authentic reflection of their community (ALA, 2017c, para.5).

To determine how well the library adhered to the culture it served, Survey Question 3 asked participants the race of students and patrons. Additional questions included if any other language besides English is spoken and if there are a significant number of students or patrons from low-income families. These questions were proposed in both checkboxes and short responses. Later, they were used as context for this study, as the researcher depicted its information from the library's patrons and students as a surrounding factor of research. This was further analyzed to determine how the library attempted towards making inclusivity and reading accessible for all. Results from participants declared that 61% of their students/ and or patrons hail from low-income families and that the racial makeup of the library's visitors besides, White, was mostly Hispanic/ Latino, Black, and Asian/Southeast Asian. Participants also declared that besides English, the most predominantly spoken language was Spanish. Other languages listed included: Arabic, Creole, Hebrew, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, Polish, Russian, and Urdu. The variety of languages was a definite influence on Survey Question 10/10c and 11/11c, where the likeliness of libraries that acknowledge achievements and celebrations of diverse and inclusive communities was significant.

Survey Questions 10/10c and 11/11c asked how well the library reflected its diverse patrons. If respondents had stated "yes" that their library presently honored achievements by those who are underrepresented, they were then asked to elaborate the specific celebratory events

in the short response Survey Questions 10c and 11c. Out of 60 respondents, over 78% said that their library celebrated multicultural and inclusive holidays and historical achievements. Curated displays vocalize the library's support for advancement and equity between those who are the majority and minority. Participants then used the short response question to list diverse and inclusive celebratory events that their library acknowledged and often made book displays, programming, and informational events for. The following historical and holiday events are:

Asian Pacific History Month, Black History Month, Chinese New Year, Day of the Dead, Diwali, Eid, Hispanic History Month, Holi, Juneenth, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Ramadan, Rosh Hashanah, Passover, Kwanzaa, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Women's History Month.

In Survey Question 9, only 8.5% of respondents said that diverse and inclusive content does not make for enthusiastic readers. Yet, it is interesting to account that 91% of librarians felt that diverse literature helped students and patrons become more enthused about reading. Moreover, those who agreed that diverse literature helped enthuse their students and patrons about reading had answers that were reminiscent of Bishop's (1990) principles. In Survey Question 9c, the short response follow-up question to Survey Question 9, one participant declared that "reading diverse contents helps others understand the lives of others, while children who hail from diverse backgrounds feel reassured as young people; for their lives are worth reading about". Similar responses included, "children enjoy seeing themselves, as it makes the thought of reading become more naturalized in their life". Notably, one participant explained "kids sometimes like to read about other cultures. Mostly, though, they like to read about their own. Since I have a diverse population, I need to have a diverse collection." This sample size is not substantial enough to declare a strong conclusion towards how diverse and inclusive content

is associated with reading motivation. Yet, it can be inferred based on these results that participating librarians aimed to at least draw ties of camaraderie and representation throughout the development of their collection. Which offered children an opportunistic lens amongst the lives of the majority and underrepresented.

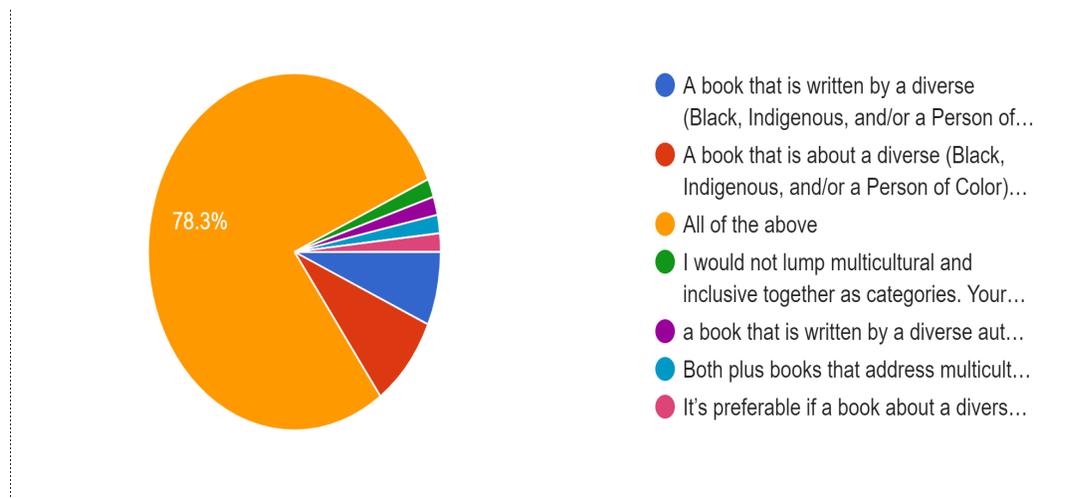
### **Research Question 2**

RQ2: What strides have been made to the library acquiring literature that has been written by or features underrepresented groups?

Survey Questions 6 and 7 were examined to determine how librarians clarified how children's literature would be described as diverse and inclusive. These questions analyzed how diverse and inclusive literature is defined. The research drawn from this study is based on the perspectives of librarians who detailed how they classify works to be reflective, and also beneficial to the overwhelming number of underrepresented children. The researcher examined the librarian's explanations from short response answers to make for interpretative analysis for this study.

Survey Question 6 is a multiple-choice question that asked librarians to select a definition that they agreed with as the meaning of diverse and inclusive literature. This question exposed that out of the 60 respondents, five respondents declared that a diverse/ inclusive book is about a diverse (Black, Indigenous, and/or a Person of Color) or inclusive (disabled, LGBTQ+, etc.), the main character and its featured subject on diverse or inclusive issues. While, four respondents, stated that under the same context, a diverse and inclusive book is purely defined as being written by an author or illustrator who hails from a diverse or inclusive background. However, most significantly, 47 librarians elected the option "all of the above" making both the subject line, featured character, and background of the author or illustrator, equal components towards

declaring if the literature is diverse or inclusive. The remaining four respondents left short responses containing their answers, mentioning the limits of this question, the ambiguity of the definition, and how texts that featured multicultural or diverse lifestyles, account as diverse and inclusive— overall, an overwhelming majority of respondents suggested that any representation that deviates against the norm is classified in their libraries as diverse and inclusive.



*Figure 2.* Which definition do you agree with that defines “multicultural and inclusive literature?” This figure displays the results of Survey Question 6 as percentages of the 60 responses.

Survey Question 7 is the short response question that follows Survey Question 6 asking for the definition. In Survey Question 7, participants were asked their own thoughts on what the concept of multicultural and inclusive literature truly meant. Participants were asked as librarians which particular details about children’s literature they searched for that allows them to determine if a work is multicultural or inclusive. Throughout the short responses, participants suggested numerous features that they look for to deem a work as representational. For example, one respondent suggested that they browse the “ ‘OwnVoices’ title, written by an author from a diverse and marginalized group about the character(s) from the same diverse/marginalized groups”. Another participant wrote that they look for books “...that reference a family's culture

(food, religious practices, dress, gender relationships". A third respondent wrote that during their analysis on selecting diverse and inclusive literature, they try to keep it as simple as possible and just look for features that "keep it real". These short responses verified that the central objective of selected diverse and inclusive literature is providing children with a chance to see themselves in books, and also to allow other children to learn from the global world. The most vital concern amongst participants was ensuring that the literature selected was relevant, and has accurate details. All participants agreed that the story must be merely organic. whereas, diverse and inclusive representation is an element of the story. The most essential element of the story is it must not be a display of stereotypical behavior or inappropriate actions. Like Braden et al. (2016) stated, when the work is widely misrepresentative it only tarnishes the purpose of representation, to combat this is to write as a cultural insider who can add evaluative information that is critical to the details of the story. The findings from this research support Braden et al. 's (2016) stance, as respondents concluded that inauthentic nature is detrimental to readers because it does not allow for proper teaching or reflection.

### **Research Question 3**

RQ3:How does a diverse collection affect a child's viewpoint of the library, and/or reading?

Survey Questions 5 and 8 were analyzed to understand if librarians supply a collection that is versatile towards all reading levels and interests. Moreover, the motive of these questions was to determine if a librarian purchased books completely based on the work being correlated to diverse/inclusive themes. These questions considered how well the library strives towards including not only multicultural and inclusive content, but other genres to make for a well-developed collection. In Survey Question 5, most respondents (94%) answered "yes" to their library featuring an array of titles that features differing genres, Lexile levels, and

non-fiction-based interests. This can be reasoned that most librarians do indeed attempt to support all children's interests and facilitate a collection that is readable for all levels and curiosities. Moreover, this is beneficial to the fundamentals of the library, as it has been discussed in previous literature how providing non-fiction interests can make for open-ended conversations that make learning about other cultures, and social-justice-based issues reflective, and richer (Crisp et al., 2018).

While this question did not explore specifically what librarians carry throughout their library; it can be concluded that a majority of librarians agree that their library strived towards owning and developing a collection that is multi-faceted, and intriguing for all children alike. However, to determine if diversity and inclusivity affected the collection development process of librarians, Survey Question 8 was asked about whether librarians solely purchased materials that are intertwined with diversity and inclusivity. As shown in Figure 3, 81.4% of respondents stated that they do agree that they do buy new materials for the library solely because they are centered around their own definition of being inclusive or multicultural. This finding is not unforeseen based on the findings of Survey Question 6, where librarians had defined multicultural or inclusive books as a work where any element of the story is centered around the ambitions, characteristics, or makings of diverse or inclusive peoples.

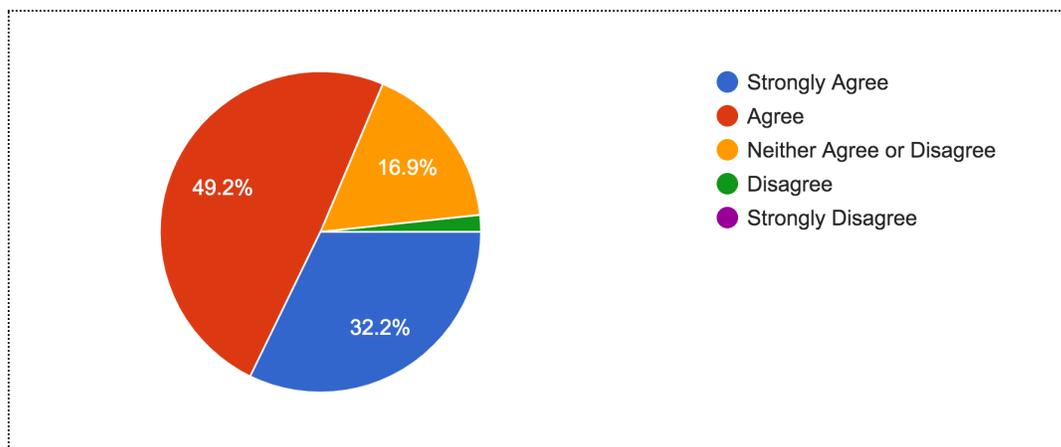


Figure 3. I buy new books for the library based on the work centering around inclusivity and/or multiculturalism?  
This figure displays the results of Survey Question 8 as percentages of the 59 total responses.

Sixteen point nine percent of respondents claimed that they do not agree or disagree that they purchased new books for their library based on the work centering diverse or inclusive content. From this statement, it can be gathered that while most librarians deliberately purchased books because they are diverse and inclusive, others purchase books because they are rather conventionally appealing.

#### Research Question 4

RQ4: What successes or difficulties has the library faced when promoting inclusivity and multiculturalism in literature and programming?

To determine if there have been any obstacles amongst the fight for more representation in the children's library, Survey Questions 12 and 13/13c were posed to measure any controversy within the field.

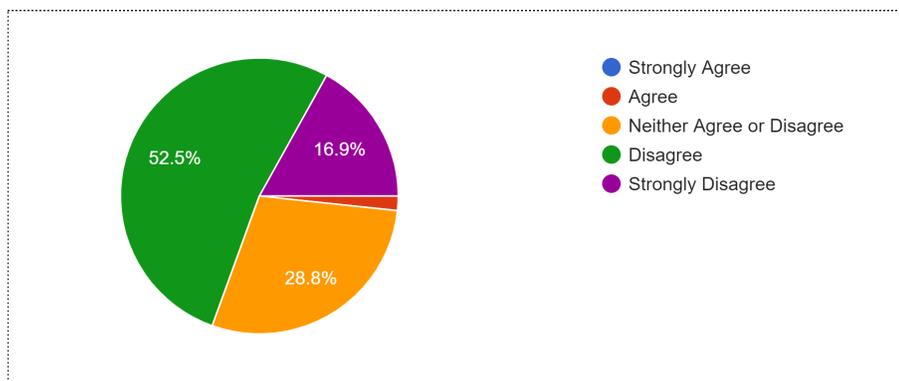


Figure 4. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement: When my library promotes diverse content, challenges between students and patrons often occur? This figure displays the results of Survey Question 12 as percentages of the 60 total responses.

As illustrated in Figure 4, 69.4% of respondents selected that they disagreed about any challenges occurring because diverse and inclusive content is being promoted. Banks (2004) stated that while our world is becoming more diverse, our issues amongst each other may not be a direct effect of bigotry and ignorance, but the inability to read for morality. Therefore based on Banks (2004) beliefs, acceptance of difference is achievable through the power of reading (p.291). Therefore, those who project negativity and hate from the library's advocacy of diversity and inclusion would benefit from reading its assortment. While 28.8% declared that they have had neutral experiences when it comes to patrons/students challenging materials. Nevertheless, despite only one respondent agreeing that challenges do regularly occur because of diverse content, numerous librarians offered anecdotes of their unfavorable experiences.

In survey Question 13, librarians expressed how frequently challenges within the library occur when diverse and inclusive materials are promoted. Instances were elaborated in short responses in Survey Question 13c, where librarians described offensive and foul remarks as a response to the highlighted works of underrepresented peoples. Thus the few occurrences, made for the only accountable tribulations of fostering inclusive and diverse works within the realms of their library. Commonly, these bigoted comments stemmed from disgruntled observers being provoked by book displays and organized collections that symbolized the library's support and awareness of struggle. Although most librarians claimed that there was very little trouble; and students/patrons viewed underrepresented works as non-controversial, aggravation towards these materials had still occurred. Librarians explained their instances of complaints from irked observers, and shockingly, from those within the field of libraries itself. For example, one respondent remarked, "... patrons have sent in comments saying that the library shouldn't be promoting an anti-racist agenda". Most objections from the short responses were negative

remarks regarding the library's alliance with those within the LGBTQ+ community. A respondent recalled an example of a protest from their own working library administration "I had to justify to the director why I wanted to put up a Pride Month display in the teen room". Another respondent remarked a time when a parent had no issue with the mentioning of bestiality in a modern-day fantasy novel, but raised concern for same-sex romance, "she was more upset about the inclusivity of that statement! That shocked me. She wanted me to put a warning on the book!".

While this Survey Question mostly had responses that stated that there were no outstanding difficulties, besides the examples listed above, it is still clear that disgruntlement for the advancement of others is still present. Although some people are unsupportive of the library using its community space as a center for unification and support, the true intent of the library will continue.

### **Summary of Findings**

This Survey Questionnaire found that the majority of librarians are in support of making the library a relevant, and accurate representation amongst not only their very own community but the changing population of America. Librarians who participated in this survey had results that were similar to the experiences of others, making the data from this research utterly shared and predictable.

While the findings of this survey that summarized how librarians promoted collections that celebrated multiculturalism and inclusivity in literature are simply ongoing efforts. It is the majority of results that vocalized a librarian's own ambition to recognize a willingness for change and to fully embrace the complexity of diversity and inclusivity for the better of tomorrow. Furthermore, data from this survey can be concluded from the lens of the library as a

public institution; results from librarian-respondents displayed an effort of making all feel welcome in the public space that is the library. As depicted from the results, this hunger for change can be concurred as a probable growth that continuously moves towards acceptance and alliance amongst the library as a whole and those who benefit from its services. Therefore from the efforts and results from the librarians in this survey, one can assume that the continuation of libraries is its drive to be evolutionary and encompass totality and knowledge. The curation of an inclusive collection has now become a significant professional priority for librarians; who now not only need to provide a stimulating collection that meets the necessities for child-based reading development. Moreover, librarians are now advocating and acting as a walking emblem for allowing children to use both “mirrors” and “windows” comparatively allowing students and patrons to witness their differences and similarities, which moreover accounts for their experiences that make us purely human.

For example, in Survey Question 19, an option question for those who would like to share any additional experiences, most librarians explained that the library system is becoming more inclusive because of the availability of diverse books, which librarians then use as a medium towards making their library a reflective community hub. The results from this survey and the most striking response from Survey Question 19 was “you need to know who lives in your area— children within the community need to see themselves; and children who constantly see themselves need to witness the perspectives of others”. The data from this survey shows that this change is an ongoing endeavor by librarians, making the role of a librarian also one who created and navigated change. This is supported by the multiple short response answers where librarians were fully able to interpret in their viewpoint what diversity and inclusivity meant to them, and how as change-makers they go about making change. While responses and

experiences vary, the most vital finding of this research is that the fight for representation in the library is fully efforted and omnipresent, as a wide spectrum of librarians agree that the library is a communal resource that has a place for all experiences and viewpoints alike.

### **Conclusion**

To support the growing trend of the increasing representation of minority populations in the United States, the outcry for representation has been a historical proposal towards librarians, educators, and publishers alike. Yet, in current times, the shift towards increasing awareness, and making literature and the library a welcoming safe space for children has become a timely topic that has recently yielded many results. Educators and librarians concluded that diverse and inclusive materials provide children with the ability to feel essential, and united with their own experiences, while simultaneously allowing others to gain perception of the lives of others. This is crucial to a child's developmental process and their ability to develop empathy and tolerance for others. On the contrary, libraries' relevance depends on the relationship of supplying modern services to the changing issues within society. As a public institution, libraries support the current transformation of growing underrepresented peoples, by educating, learning, and developing principles and materials to mitigate the obstacles of both resources and knowledge in its community. Thus, as seen historically, the library continuously shapes and adapts to the incoming needs of its population and pridefully welcomes all patrons alike. As it offers diverse and inclusive literature and services that allow all to reap the benefits of acceptance and provide the ability to learn from others. Thus, the library resumes its position as the primary entity that utilizes its resources to promote a culture that enlightens its community and shapes minds to become more empathetic and enriched. For grade-school patrons and students fostered diverse and inclusive resources by the library can in time make for a brighter and more unified

generation, where the recognition of our differences are validated and championed through the ability to read.

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### **Appendix A: Invitation of Participation**

Greetings,

I hope this email finds you well. My name is Phoebe Levin, and I am a graduate student in the School of Library and Information Science at CUNY Queens College. A part of finishing my degree is to take the capstone class, Research, and Bibliographic Methods.

My project is on Inclusivity in Children's Services within the School and Public Library. The purpose of this study is to explore how practicing public and school librarians maintain and promote collections that celebrate multiculturalism and inclusivity in literature.

#### **Reason for This Email**

I am hoping that you will be able to assist me with this study by answering 19 multiple-choice and short response questions. Your responses will assist me in gathering data for this project and help with my analysis on why diversity and inclusivity are vital components of the children's library.

#### **Please note:**

- Your participation will involve approximately (15) minutes of your time filling out an anonymous web survey
- While there are no known risks to completing the survey, you are allowed to skip questions that make you uncomfortable
- Participation in this survey is completely voluntary. Your participation is anonymous, and you may withdraw from the survey for any reason.

As this is a student project that will not be published, IRB approval is not required.

If you are interested in participating in this questionnaire, I have included the link to the Google Form below:

<https://forms.gle/FznpaD6Lskcu1CnE7>

Thank you for your time and attention to this email and your participation in the survey. It is greatly appreciated. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at:

[Phoebe.Levin75@gmail.cuny.edu](mailto:Phoebe.Levin75@gmail.cuny.edu)

Best,  
Phoebe Levin

**Appendix B: The Questionnaire**  
**Research Instrument: The Survey**  
**Inclusivity in the Library Questionnaire**

1. Are you a:
  - a. Public Children's Librarian
  - b. K-12th Grade Library Media Specialist
  - c. Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_
2. Does your library mainly serve:
  - a. Children (Kindergarten-5th grade)
  - b. Young Adults (6th-12th grade)
  - c. Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_
3. How would you describe the demographics of students/ patronage by children and young adults who visit your library/school library?

**Race of visitors**

- Asian
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Black or African American
- Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- Biracial
- White
- Other

**Is there a knowledge of any other languages other than English spoken at home?**

- Yes
- No

**If yes, which? \_\_\_\_\_**

**Are there a significant number of your students and/or patrons from low-income families?**

- Yes
- No
- Unknown

4. In your opinion, how well does the library's collection represent your students/patrons?
- Very well
  - Well
  - Neither Well or Unwell
  - Unwell
  - Very Unwell
5. Do you agree that there is a full-range of literature in your library that features different genres, lexile levels, and non-fiction based interests?
- Yes
  - No
  - Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_
6. Which definition do you agree with that defines “multicultural and inclusive literature?”
- A book that is written by a diverse (Black, Indigenous, and/or a Person of Color), or inclusive (disabled, LGBTQ+, etc.) author or illustrator
  - A book that is about a diverse (Black, Indigenous, and/or a Person of Color) or inclusive (disabled, LGBTQ+, etc.), main character and/or its subject features on diverse or inclusive issues.
  - All of the above
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
7. What specific details about children’s literature do you look for that constitutes it as multicultural or inclusive?

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8. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement: “I buy new books for the library based on the work centering around inclusivity and/or multiculturalism”?

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neither Agree or Disagree
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly Disagree

9. Do you feel diverse literature helps students and patrons become more enthused about reading?

- a. Yes
- b. No

9c. If you answered “yes” to the previous question, how does diverse literature enthuse students/patrons about reading in your library?

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10. Does your library promote literature that is based on observing multicultural holidays?

- a. Yes
- b. No

10c. If you answered “yes” to the previous question, which holidays does your library celebrate?

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11. Does your library celebrate the achievements of underrepresented groups both historically and currently?

- a. Yes
- b. No

11c. If you answered “yes” to the previous question, how does your library celebrate historical achievements?

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12. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement: “When my library promotes diverse content, challenges between students and/or patrons often occurs”?

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neither Agree or Disagree
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly Disagree

13. Have you encountered any difficulties in the library because of your curation of content that features multicultural and inclusive literature?

- a. Yes
- b. No

13c. If you answered “yes” to the previous question, which difficulties has your library encountered because of multicultural or inclusive literature?

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14. Please add any additional comments in regards to your experiences with multicultural and inclusive children's literature as a Children's Librarian in either the public or school library sector:

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