

# Expanding the Conversation: Factors Influencing Quality Multicultural Literature in Western United States Elementary School Libraries

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## Abstract

*This study is a follow-up analysis of the 2012 study titled, A Study of the Availability of Multicultural Children's Literature in Treasure Valley Schools: Quality, Access, and Inclusion. The focus of the initial study was the quantity of multicultural literature available in elementary schools; the focus of the current study is the selection process of the literature. Quality multicultural literature encourages children to reaffirm the values of their own culture and come to appreciate those of others. Thus, multicultural literature has a significant impact on students developing identities. For this reason, this article seeks to investigate factors that affect elementary school's quality multicultural literature acquisition process. Of particular interest are several elementary schools that have a relatively high content, compared to other elementary schools, of multicultural children's literature. Librarians from these elementary schools were interviewed regarding the school's literature acquisition process and the librarian's personal accounts of multicultural children's literature. Through this analysis this study examines the elementary school's success in attaining quality multicultural literature.*

## Introduction

The primary purpose of this study is to gain a more holistic view of the rationale in the process of selecting literature in elementary school libraries. This paper takes particular interest in multicultural literature, how it is selected, student access to it, and the influence of the librarian viewpoint and perception of multicultural literature in the selection process.

### The social responsibility of multicultural education

Social justice through education is driven by a viewpoint of social transformation by means of education. Nieto and Bode (2008) define social justice education as “a philosophy, an approach, and actions that embody treating all people with fairness, respect, dignity, and generosity” (p. 11). In addition they outline social justice education into four components. The first includes challenging and confronting misconceptions, untruths, and stereotypes that lead to structural inequality and discrimination based on race, social class, gender, and other social and human differences. The second is providing all students with the necessary resources to learn to their full potential, including books, curriculum, financial support, and so on. The third is drawing on the talents and strengths that students bring to their education. The last component of social justice education according to Nieto and Bode (2008) is creating a learning environment that promotes critical thinking and supports agency for social change.

Grounded in Nieto and Bode's second component, quality multicultural literature is certainly an essential resource, which contributes to the opportunity for students to learn to their full potential. In the forward to *Promoting a Global Community Through Multicultural Children's Literature* (2001) by Stanley F. Steiner, Alma Flor Ada interprets children's literature as a “realm of discovery for young minds and nurturance for the young spirit” (ix). She goes on to explain that by facilitating the “magical encounter” between children and books of diverse human experience, we foster their contact with a diversity of realities and nurture their appreciation for ways of life different from their own.

Nieto and Bode's third component of multicultural education is critical as it not only considers awareness of issues but highlights the importance of action. One way that students can achieve the action piece is by first

becoming proactive in their own learning. Nieto and Bode (2008) explain a truly fulfilling education as “education that is liberating and encourages students to take risks, to be curious, and to question. Rather than expect students to repeat teachers’ words, it expects them to seek their own answers” (p. 56). Nieto and Bode (2008) reinforce this same concept as they further define multicultural education as “An approach that values diversity and encourages critical thinking, reflection, and action” (p. 56). Multicultural education enriches student’s understanding of the world, developing their interest and passion for issues in such a way that they will be inspired to “do something” about it. Rasinski and Padak (1990) claim that “Multicultural learning achieves its pinnacles when students are motivated to challenge and act upon their beliefs and values about people who are different from them or from the mainstream” (p. 580). Vasquez (2004) explains a school event in which students who attended a school barbecue came to the realization of lack of inclusion when one of their classmates was not able to eat because he was vegetarian and there were no vegetarian options. The students decided they would write a letter to the chair of the school barbecue committee expressing their concern. They extended the issue by writing letters to other folks in the school; it is import to recognize that students were entirely invested in the issue they had developed a passion for. Inevitably this issue brought to the forefront further conversations about other groups of people who may be marginalized in similar ways at school (Vasquez, 2004).

Literature can do more than help children develop an awareness and internal value system about multicultural events and issues. Literature can provide the impetus for acting in a positive fashion on that awareness and those values. (Rasinski and Padak (1990, p. 580)

### Importance of quality multicultural literature for all students

Quality multicultural literature is essential, as not all literature that expresses or seems to express diversity achieves the goal of multicultural education. Yakota (1993) argues, “without cultural accuracy, a book cannot be considered a quality piece of multicultural literature” (p. 159). Furthermore, DeNicolo and Franquíz (2006) claim, “quality multicultural children’s literature engages readers with critical encounters of social (in) justice through its selective use of language, plot, and characterization” (p. 158). To be considered quality multicultural literature the ideology of the storyline must promote the importance of multiculturalism. A major purpose of using multicultural texts is the implementation of authentic multicultural education that promotes cultural pluralism, rather than monoculturalism that focuses on assimilation to a dominant culture (Yoon, Simpson, & Haag, 2010).

Inevitably, educators approach multicultural education at various levels of awareness in terms of multiculturalism and consciousness, their approach toward multicultural literature can also come from various levels. Banks and Banks (2007) use the following framework, Ford-Harris Multicultural Gifted Education Framework, which incorporates Bloom’s Taxonomy. This framework covers four different levels: contributions, additive, transformation, and social action.

Table 1. Ford-Harris Multicultural Gifted Education Framework—description of levels

	<b>Knowledge</b>	<b>Comprehension</b>	<b>Application</b>	<b>Analysis</b>	<b>Synthesis</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
<b>Contributions</b>	Students are taught and know facts about cultural artifacts, events, groups, and other cultural elements.	Students show an understanding of information about cultural artifacts, groups, etc.	Students are asked to and can apply information learned about cultural artifacts, events, etc.	Students are taught to and can analyze (e.g., compare and contrast) information about cultural artifacts, groups, etc.	Students are required to and can create a new product from the information on cultural artifacts, groups, etc.	Students are taught to and can evaluate facts and information based on cultural artifacts, groups, etc.
<b>Additive</b>	Students are taught and know concepts and themes about cultural groups.	Students are taught and can understand cultural concepts and themes.	Students are required to and can apply information learned about cultural concepts and themes.	Students are taught to and can analyze important cultural concepts and themes.	Students are asked to and can synthesize important information on cultural concepts and themes.	Students are taught to and critique cultural concepts and themes.
<b>Transformation</b>	Students are given information on important cultural	Students are taught to and understand and can demonstrate an understanding	Students are asked to and can apply their understanding of important	Students are taught to and can examine important cultural concepts and	Students are required to and can create a product base on their new	Students are taught to and can evaluate or judge important cultural concepts and

	elements, groups, etc., and can understand this information from different perspectives.	of important cultural concepts and themes from different perspectives.	concepts and themes from different perspectives.	themes from more than one perspective.	perspective or the perspective of another group.	themes from different viewpoints (e.g., minority groups).
<b>Social Action</b>	Based on information about cultural artifacts, etc., students make recommendation for social action.	Based on their understanding of important concepts and themes, students make recommendations for social action.	Students are asked to and can apply their understanding of important social and cultural issues; they make recommendations for and take action on these issues.	Students are required to and can analyze social and cultural issues from different perspectives; they take action on these issues.	Students create a plan of action to address a social and cultural issue(s); they seek important social change.	Students critique important social and cultural issues, and seek to make national and/or international change.

Note: This framework was adopted from “Multicultural Education: Issues and Perspectives” by Banks, J.A, & Banks, C.A.M.G. (2007). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

At the knowledge – contribution level, for example, students are provided with information and facts about cultural heroes, holidays, events and artifacts. For example, students might be taught about Martin Luther King, Jr., and then asked to recall three facts about him on a test. They might be introduced to *Cinco de Mayo* and be required to recite the year when it became a holiday. On the other hand at the evaluation- social action level, students might be asked to conduct a survey about prejudice in their local stores or businesses. This information could be given to store owners, along with a plan of action for change, such as developing a diversity-training program (Banks & Banks, 2007). At its deepest and most ideal form, Banks and Banks (2007) argue that multicultural education “consists of deliberate, ongoing, planned, and systemic opportunities to avoid drive-by-teaching- to make learning meaningful and relevant to students” (p. 416). Multicultural education is neither an activity that happens at a set period of the day nor another subject area to be covered (Nieto & Bode, 2008). In order to be most effective, multicultural education needs to be a consistent and thoughtful process throughout the classroom experience. Nieto (2002) states, “culture is complex and intricate: it cannot be reduced to holidays, foods, or dances, although these are of course elements of culture” (p. 9).

Despite the growing awareness of the importance of multicultural literature, a limited approach to learning about diversity is all too common. Some schools dedicate only one day or several days to a cultural group. We observe classrooms around the country recognizing the birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr. or *Cinco de Mayo* celebrations with their displays of African American and Latino/Latina books. The observance of these two occasions is commendable, but we have to ask, is this enough? Does this limited attention given to an ethnic group reach an overall goal of promoting awareness and harmony? (Steiner, 2001, p. 4)

Multicultural literature is an asset in the lives of all students. Students from all backgrounds benefit from it, as all students have the potential of suffering from a biased education. As a result from a biased education the humanity of all students is jeopardized (Nieto & Bode, 2008). It is a common belief that Anglo dominated schools don’t have a need for multicultural literature, under the argument that underrepresented groups are the principal beneficiaries, but in fact the Anglo student community can greatly benefit from the exposure to other cultures and beliefs other than their own,

Multicultural education is, by definition, *inclusive*. Because it is *about* all people, it is also for all people, regardless of their ethnicity, ability, social class, language, sexual orientation, religion, gender, race, or other differences. It can even be convincingly argued that students from the dominant culture need multicultural education more than others because they are generally the most miseducated or uneducated about diversity. (Nieto & Bode, 2008, p. 51)

Quality multicultural literature is important for all students, depending on their individual experiences and backgrounds they may be affected differently by this type of literature. Regardless of the angle that multicultural literature impacts them, certainly all student benefit from quality multicultural literature.

Educators through their educational choices, influence the development of student identities, it is imperative to recognize the importance resources such as literature, particularly multicultural literature, can add to this development. Students, as people, are experiencing identity development and they can be at various stages of this process. Literature should be a support in this exploratory phase in their lives, in Ferdman's (1990) view, curriculum, and by extension, instruction ought to "facilitate the process by which students are permitted to discover and explore ethnic connections" (p. 200). I argue that this can also be true for other identity connections such as gender, sexual orientation, etc. Quality multicultural literature can certainly provide the exploratory opportunity for students. In the following excerpt, Alma Flor Ada explains the important role literature plays in understanding one's own culture in order to embrace others.

Books that allow children to see themselves, in a positive role particularly when the prevailing vision of their own culture has been ignored, distorted, or hurt by stereotypes, is to give them an opportunity to affirm their identity. Once a child's sense of dignity and belonging is truly affirmed, it will be possible to accept and celebrate the dignity of others, and to develop full understanding of the uniqueness and humanness of others (Steiner, 2001, X)

Educators and authority figures in educational settings have the power to foster connections for students. Nieto and Bode (2008) explain the findings of a recent study conducted by Marco Pizzaro.

Significantly, the most successful students were those who had been mentored, through the various transitions of their schooling, by teachers and other authority figures who linked the student's identities with their schooling. That is, when teachers viewed student identities in a positive way and connected the student's education (2008, p. 80)

Also, Cummins (1986) claims that students are empowered or disabled as a direct result of their interactions with educators in the schools.

Not only is multicultural education and literature beneficial to students at a personal level as they develop their identities but it can also affect their academic growth. Cummins (1986) argues that English language learners will succeed or fail to the extent that their language and culture are incorporated into the school program (Jiménez, 2000, p. 973). Likewise, multicultural education can enhance the academic experience for students of the dominant or gifted culture, Banks and Banks (2007) claim, "Multicultural gifted education challenges students culturally, affectively, academically, and cognitively" (p. 416). In a study by DeNicolo and Franquíz (2006) students read literature containing racially loaded social labels in literature circles. The researchers explain, after their encounter with this type of text students were inspired to construct meaning by becoming active participants in the discussion, they expressed agreement and disagreement, despite having roles and being reluctant participants beforehand. The critical encounter gave students the ability to use language, not just for surface features, but also for communicating thoughts, taking positions, and questioning the inferential reasoning of others (p.165).

## **Background**

This study is a follow up analysis of the 2012 study titled, *A Study of the Availability of Multicultural Children's Literature in Treasure Valley Schools: Quality, Access, and Inclusion*. The primary purpose of this first study was to focus on the availability of quality multicultural children's literature in elementary school libraries in Western United States. The quality of the literature was measured by using a select group of twelve awards (Martinez, 2013, p. 54), which honor culturally relevant literature. This literature is representative of various cultures including the LGBTQIA culture, physically and mentally challenged culture, as well as diverse ethnic cultures. Twenty-nine school libraries across four different school districts in Western United States were analyzed. Through this study I found that multicultural literature is very limited in elementary school libraries in the area studied. In addition, it was also found that the number of quality multicultural books varied greatly from school to school and across school districts. Due to this irregularity, this study will focus on finding out more about the decision making process at the school library level.

Though literacy is a much broader concept than merely reading and writing or the materials necessary to go about these activities, both reading and writing are a large part of literacy in the lives of elementary students. Reading is a significant part of the elementary school curriculum, thus students interact with literature in every content area on a daily basis. This is why it is vital that students are provided with adequate access to quality literature, whether students are being instructed with specific literature or students are learning to read for pleasure. They should have access to quality literature that is enriched with meaningful content and interactions among characters, including quality multicultural literature where students see their culture represented in the books.

School libraries are constantly filled with young students eager to discover books that capture their attention. Students from every grade level and every class get to experience the library throughout the week, making its literature content a valuable collection. All elementary students have access to the library's literature, for some students it could potentially be the only library they have access to. Elementary school libraries are the perfect location for students to begin exploring quality multicultural literature.

## **Methodology**

This study was administered through three open-ended interviews conducted with elementary school librarians. I made an effort to interview eight librarians based on the results of my first study. According to the results from the 2012 study, these eight libraries contained the highest content of multicultural literature of the twenty-nine schools that were studied in Western United States. However, not all school librarians were able to participate due to scheduling conflicts and/or personal decisions. The three participating librarians, who agreed to participate, were chosen based on the content of their school libraries. The three school libraries all had over ten of the titles from the measure used in the 2012 study, seventy-one titles total<sup>3</sup>. Though this is not a high number by any means, it was significantly higher than other school libraries studied the previous year (Martinez, 2013).

The interview included four sections. The first section was regarding general personnel information about the school librarians, such as their educational background and the length of time they had carried on their profession. This part of the interview contained questions such as, what is your official title? The second part addressed general school library information, which looked into the general operation and organization of each particular library. This part of the interview included questions such as, what type of catalog does your library utilize? The third part focused on the book selection process itself, this is where questions were asked regarding the specifics of how books are selected, for example, financially, how does your library attain books? The last section centered on the personal viewpoint of the school librarians, this section focused largely on the opinions of the school librarians regarding multicultural literature. This section of the interview included questions like, what do you consider to be multicultural literature? What is your definition of multicultural literature?

The focus of the interview was to find factors that most affect the content of the school libraries in terms of quality multicultural children's literature. In these particular schools, selected based on their high content of quality multicultural literature, in comparison with others in the area, the factors were predicted to inform ways to attain a higher quantity of multicultural literature at other school libraries. It was hypothesized that the selection process from these libraries could be used as models for other schools looking to improve their selections of quality multicultural children's literature.

## **Results and Discussion**

Findings indicate factors that have allowed elementary school libraries to succeed in the attainment of quality multicultural literature, but also factors that limit the attainment of such literature. Findings also reveal that student demographics, as well as personal world experiences and personal concern for multiculturalism may positively influence the content of their elementary school libraries in Western United States. On the other hand, explanations given by the librarians revealed major limitations in attaining multicultural literature for their school library and school libraries in general, including lack of resources and limited personal understanding of the

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<sup>3</sup> To reliably measure quality of multicultural books in the elementary school libraries, a measure was composed of awarded books. Thirteen different awards were chosen and used based on the purpose and criteria for which they award children's literature. The measure included the three most recent books, which had been awarded each of the awards, at the time of the study.

significance of multicultural literature. Librarians also report suggestions for improvement of quality multicultural literature in elementary school libraries.

### Success of multicultural collection in libraries

As discussed earlier, the librarians interviewed had a higher number of quality multicultural books than did others in the Western United States. Librarians attribute their success in attaining more literature than other schools to several factors including student populations, personal experience, and personal viewpoint about multiculturalism.

Librarians recognized their school's student population, specifically the diverse ethnic demographics of their school, to have a significant influence in the selection of multicultural literature in their libraries. Ms. Tonya shared, "at our school we have a bigger ELL (English Language Learner) population, so I've tried to incorporate books that are from their countries, or you know, from their backgrounds." Ms. Tonya<sup>4</sup> demonstrates being cognizant of a large group of students in her school who have recently arrived to the United States from various countries. To make students feel welcome in their new school she deliberately puts forth effort to include literature that represents their background in some form.

Another significant factor librarians revealed as meaningful to their selection of multicultural literature was their own personal experiences, particularly their experiences with traveling. Ms. Yolanda shared,

I love to travel and I was very fortunate to travel very early in my life from the time was about ten, I traveled to Europe and other continents and I know how important it is. I know how it helped me be more tolerant and understanding of other people (personal communication, October 8, 2013).

Ms. Martha also expressed her sentiments based on their experience of seeing the world,

I also think it's very important to be exposed to other parts of the world. I was very lucky, I grew up in the Air Force, I traveled a lot of different places that other kids my age didn't, and it shaped me. I learned a lot. I was in high school... but I think those things are important, kids need to know that the world is not just what's happening in their house (personal communication, October 9, 2013).

Librarians point directly to their personal experiences of traveling as an important part of their lives from which they were able to gain insight into the lifestyles of other parts of the world. They made connections with this experience and how that has shaped them as people. Ms. Martha mentions her desire for students to also learn the experience of people around the world, alluding to the possibility of literature providing this opportunity.

Lastly, not only do librarians value worldly perspectives based on their own experiences but they go on to indicate their regard for the importance of multiculturalism to be a contributing factor in their collection of multicultural literature. Ms. Martha explains her reason for having a larger collection of multicultural literature than other schools,

I've tried to always look for something that's a little extra, something that's multicultural, something that comes from a different viewpoint because I think it's important, it teaches tolerance. That's something our kids don't necessarily get and I think it's important. When I can find a book about a famous person that's different from what they expect to see... if I can find a famous person that's from their heritage [I try to get it] (personal communication, October 9, 2013).

Ms. Martha values the viewpoint of the likely, underrepresented groups. She also indicates that she keeps mindful of the underrepresented students she serves by looking to provide literature that represent students and possibly role models from their own background. On the flip side she also looks into providing literature that may raise awareness of both underrepresented students and students from the dominant group by expanding on viewpoints that may be different from both.

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<sup>4</sup> Pseudonyms are used for all participating library professionals in this study.

## Limits of attaining multicultural literature

*Lack of resources.* As budgets suffer in various divisions of educational settings, the budget for elementary school libraries does as well. School libraries receive a very low budget on an annual basis and it is subject to change from year to year. All three librarians interviewed express their concerns regarding funding. Ms. Martha states, "I have a \$190 budget for the year, mostly for repairs." Ms. Yolanda also shares about her budget, "The first time when I came in 2009 the budget for the library I think it was about \$2,000 and the next year... From then on it was \$0, yeah \$0!" Ms. Tonya also gives a brief history of what her budget has been over the course of the past few years.

When I first started, the district... in this district I think we were given about \$10 per student... \$8-\$10, maybe \$11 per student so each school, depending on your population would get you know \$3,000, \$4,000, \$5,000 depending on the number of kids you'd have. My school has about 350 well now it's about 340 I think. So when I first started I had a little over \$3,000, and there were a couple of years when we had zero budget, nothing from the district. Now we're back to about \$4 per student (personal communication, October 8, 2013).

In response to the low budgets allotted to the librarians from their respective school districts, on an annual basis, they discussed turning to various forms of fundraising such as relying on the Box Tops for Education®<sup>5</sup> collection at their schools, book fairs, Parent Teacher Organizations (PTO) events, and applying for grants in order to supplement the annual funding received from their school district for purchase and repair of books.

We have a Scholastic book fair every year and the PTO is so wonderful that they give me [Ms. Yolanda] the money they earn. There are two fairs and we get the money for one of them, the first one. And that's usually maybe a couple thousand dollars. With that money I buy only through Scholastic, because you get dollar for dollar. If we had \$2,000.00 and they gave me [Ms. Yolanda] a check I would only get \$1,000.00 so it's half so... I've written grants before... so I'll write a grant, like last year I wrote a grant and I got \$1,500.00 that I will be spending all on nonfiction because we were so deficient in certain areas. This last summer we got a grant for about \$1,600 for our pre-k through 1<sup>st</sup> grade (personal communication, October 8, 2013).

Having a low budget significantly and directly impact the literature available in the school libraries, thus affecting the availability of quality multicultural children's literature. Librarians are concerned with funding repairs and replacements of lost or damaged books, which is currently on their shelves. Librarians also focus much of their time and energy toward seeking financial aid that can be applied toward supplying their libraries with literature.

*Understandings of multicultural literature.* Librarian definitions of multicultural literature was significantly different from the one presented in this paper. My definition of quality multicultural literature is literature that accurately portrays views and cultures of underrepresented populations, discussed earlier. Ms. Tonya describes multicultural literature in her view, below,

If it's you know around Martin Luther King Day, I go through and pull all those books out (display) or if it's you know African History Month, which I think is February, I try to pull those books out... something that I know is happening at that time of the year (personal communication, October 8, 2013).

Ms. Tonya's definition of multicultural literature indicate her approach of multicultural education to be at the Contribution and Additive levels and stay within the Knowledge and Comprehension levels, based on the Ford-Harris Multicultural Gifted Education Framework.

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<sup>5</sup> Box Tops for Education® is one of the nation's largest school fundraising loyalty programs. Participating products include coupons, each worth 10¢, on their packaging. Consumers collect the coupons, turn them in to local schools, and schools can then redeem them for money.

In addition, librarians also indicate understandings of multiculturalism to be concepts of foreign experiences from abroad, rather than the daily lived experience of a multicultural society. Ms. Tonya shares her approach,

It's [multicultural literature] dealing with different nationalities, or cultures or countries. So each .... I guess you would say race, or religions, you know... they have different traditions, holidays... so anything that deals with that. So like even at Christmas time the Spanish, you know like we have a book about tamales (personal communication, October 8, 2013)

In this explanation of her definition of multicultural literature, Ms. Tonya, expresses her view of multicultural literature to express ways of life from other places of the world. She expresses her understanding of multiculturalism to be of the cultural components of people in other parts of the world, not necessarily the experiences of people from other parts of the world here, in the United States. Ms. Tonya continues to express her approach to be at the Contribution and Additive levels and stay within the Knowledge and Comprehension levels, based on the Ford-Harris Multicultural Gifted Education Framework.

### Willingness to improve quality multicultural literature collections

Elementary school librarians reported knowing about the lack of multicultural literature in elementary school libraries and offered some suggestions for improvement.

First and foremost, librarians suggested an increase in their budget. Ms. Yolanda shares her opinion about helping increase multicultural literature in school libraries, "I think whoever is in charge needs to look at the budget of our libraries..... if there's more money for more books than, you know it would teach compassion and understanding that people are very much the same." Ms. Yolanda looks at a budget increase as not only an opportunity to increase the availability of literature but she connects the idea of exposure to quality multicultural literature as an opportunity to increasing multicultural education.

They also communicated interest in more direct information about available quality multicultural literature. Ms. Martha, "Not being totally aware of what's out there [affects the content of our libraries]. Maybe just having information sent to our school, like pamphlet like when the award winners come out [would improve our collection of multicultural literature]." She suggests that simply outreach to the librarians from companies or award associations would help in librarian awareness of the availability of quality multicultural literature.

Lastly, librarians consider themselves and their libraries to be resources, and they highlight their desire for classroom teachers to utilize their expertise to make connections with classroom curriculum. Ms. Martha shares, "(teachers utilizing the library as a resource is) happening more, but I think it could happen more often. That's what I'm here for. I want them to be using me for that sort of thing." She is interested in helping supplement materials and topics being addressed in the classroom, as Ms. Yolanda describes her experience,

I try to go along with what the different classes are teaching. I know that some of them have units on different countries, and it would be nice if the curriculum included a little bit more on that. I think they do this in a very small way and I'm not sure that they even do it in every grade. So that would be nice to have the curriculum reflect the different cultures of our country (personal communication, October 8, 2013).

It's important to Ms. Yolanda to be alert of the different topics that classes are focused on in the classroom. She expresses deliberate intentions of making connections with the classroom curriculum. However, she does voice her concern for the limited attention to multiculturalism in the classroom, and her desire for multiculturalism to be more embedded in the curriculum.

### Conclusion

Despite a handful of school librarians having been successful at attaining a reasonable<sup>6</sup> quantity of multicultural literature in elementary schools in Western United States, as a whole there is certainly room for

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<sup>6</sup> Eight schools, of the twenty-nine analyzed in 2013, had over ten books from the measure (seventy one books).



improvement in these school libraries as well as others. The issue of elementary school libraries having limited quality multicultural literature can be attributed to various factors, there is no one single pointing element. However, funding is certainly a major player. The current lack of quality multicultural literature is directly connected to the limited budget allotted to school librarians for purchase of literature. Not only is funding literally affecting the quantity of quality multicultural literature in elementary school libraries, but it also has the potential to have effects on professional development opportunities concerning multicultural literature and multicultural education for elementary school librarians. The librarians interviewed indicated having professional development meetings, at least once a month, depending on the district. Professional development opportunities can be a tremendous benefit, as they are a prospective way for outreach in education and awareness for librarians regarding multiculturalism in education and quality multicultural literature. This is particularly important, as there are no specific librarian training requirements for the position of elementary school librarians in the area studied. In fact, the official title of the participating librarians was either library media manager or library paraprofessional. None of the participating interviewees had received any field specific training or education for the position of elementary school librarian. There are little to no academic requirements for library positions in the area studied, which can impact two areas I have discussed earlier. The first is understandings of diverse student populations and ways in which culturally relevant literature can impact all students, particularly students from underrepresented groups. Secondly, because of the lack preparation library professionals receive; the literature collections of elementary school libraries are predispositioned to be bias. The collections can more noticeably reflect the personal viewpoints of library professionals. Despite all these issues and needs, librarians demonstrate a strong willingness to participate in educational opportunities, which could improve their understandings of the importance of quality multicultural literature.

It is crucial that librarians and administrators continue to seek ways to attain reasonable sums of quality multicultural literature for their elementary school libraries. The literature and school librarians agree, it's beneficial to students in many ways to have accessibility to quality multicultural literature.

Based on the findings of this study, I recommend funding be provided, either by school districts or even from the state level, specifically for multicultural literature. In addition, professional development such as workshops, courses, and or presentations on multicultural literature elementary school library professionals should be a requirement. In an ever-growing diverse society it is vital for students to be exposed to worldly views in academic resources.

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