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A Study of Self-Censorship by School Librarians

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Abstract

A study of Arkansas, Delaware, and North Carolina school librarians was conducted in 2006 to determine the extent to which self-censorship was practiced, if at all. Three possible factors influencing decisions to self-censor were assessed: (1) internal—self (individual belief system), (2) external—school (from within the school system), or (3) external—community (from the community at large).

More than one thousand school librarians at elementary, middle, and secondary public schools from the three states participated. The sample did not include representatives from other specialized public school campuses.

While the sample population as a whole did not demonstrate a practice of self-censorship in the selection process, four characteristics of the sample population did indicate self-censoring behaviors: (1) being of the age 60–69, (2) holding no formal collegiate education degree (bachelor of science in education, master of science, or master of science in education) with library media certification or licensure, (3) being at a secondary school library media center, and (4) having fifteen or fewer years of education experience.

Introduction

A primary purpose of the school library is to provide resources and materials in support of the curricular mission of the school district. It provides access to information for students via books, music, art, magazines, newspapers, software, videos, audio collections, and Internet access. Because the school library is an important complement to the school classroom, it is critical that these resources represent a wide range of ideas and information.

School librarians apply specific criteria, examine professional reviews, and assess reader-level suitability of content in collection development. These criteria help determine "what to add, what to access through resource sharing, and what to remove" (Van Orden and Bishop 2001, 7). Self-censorship by a school librarian involves making collection management choices on the basis of avoiding conflict with administrators, parents, or colleagues. Self-censorship decisions are often made on the basis of religious, sexual, political, or health factors (Klein 1985; Curry 2001).

Young (2002) found that profanity within materials was the basis for a majority of challenges encountered in school districts.

Pressure to block access to resources is ever increasing. A survey conducted by Kamhi (1981) indicated that the forces to censor books and other educational materials were real and growing at the time. As stated by the American Library Association (ALA) in its "Freedom to Read Statement" (2004), "Such pressure toward conformity is perhaps natural to a time of accelerated change. Yet suppression is never more dangerous than in such a time of social tension" (para. 4). Lukenbill (2002) further describes this pressure as "a basic sense of need to determine within a cultural and social context what is right and wrong, what is good and bad, and what is secular and what is religious" (26). Therefore an inevitable clash occurs between those who value the education system as a free marketplace of ideas and those who see the system as an effort to suppress certain items in a collection.

Statement of the Problem

Even though professional preparation programs emphasize the importance of information access, the literature claims that graduates of such programs continue to self-censor their school library collections. Several sources (e.g., Bellows 2005; Coley 2002; Kamhi 1981; McCarthy and Langdon 1993; Sacco 1993) indicate the removal of materials had more to do with value judgments by faculty, administration, and the community than with established educational criteria. Additionally, to avoid conflict with constituents or to protect students, school librarians removed and censored items they personally judged unacceptable or controversial.

Evans (1995) posits that it is not the responsibility of school librarians to dictate the choice or to substitute their judgment for that of the reader. The act of self-censorship affects the intellectual growth of the student body and their access to diverse information. According to ALA in "Free Access to Libraries for Minors: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights" (2008), "libraries should not limit the selection and development of library resources simply because minors will have access to them. Institutional self-censorship diminishes the credibility of the library in the community, and restricts access for all library users" (para. 4). The educative process not only expects but demands advocacy by school librarians for access to information.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to determine the extent to which self-censorship was practiced and the factors driving decisions to self-censor (internal—self [individual belief system], external—school [from within the school system], or external—community [from the community at large]) by school librarians in Arkansas, Delaware, and North Carolina. These three states require school librarians to have graduate degrees.

Significance of the Study

Previous studies have focused on the perceptions of and reactions to collection development policies of school librarians and other library professionals. Both a 2002 study of Texas' school library collections and a 2005 study of Florida online public access catalogs (OPACs) employed a survey method of data collection that utilized online collection catalogs (Coley 2002; Bellows

2005). The review of literature reflects a lack of focus on the self-censorship efforts of school librarians, who should serve as the unbiased supporter of the school's curricular mission.

Documentation of collection self-censorship would have implications for the enforcement and regulation of state-mandated school-district selection policies. This evidence also would influence the curriculum of master's-level professional preparation programs by increasing emphasis on the issue of self-censorship. Professionals should, as Bishop (2007) states, "be aware of their own biases and preferences so that personal prejudices do not inadvertently affect selection decisions" (170). Additionally, such evidence would result in the need to further investigate school-library professional internships, collection diversity, and school library administration.

Literature Review

Collection Development and the Role of Content in Self-Censorship

Library collections should be representative of society's knowledge. Unpopularity of ideas is not sufficient reason for schools or libraries to suppress viewpoints (Donelson 1987; Simmons and Dresang 2001). School collection development should be based on curricular needs representative of a variety of viewpoints. Books (both nonfiction and fiction), magazines, newspapers, music, art, software, video, audio, film, music, and the Internet are all necessary to the instructional mission of the school, which is to educate the populace (Swiderek 1996).

According to Vandergrift (1978), collection development requires a school librarian to possess knowledge, insight, judgment, courage, and imagination. Promotion and defense of information access is highly important. The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE 1978) made the following claim:

In short, professional responsibility means not only selecting print and nonprint materials, but also possessing a willingness and ability to defend the choices made. Teachers who are prepared to justify their choices and who have shared their thinking in faculty meetings will not be threatened by an objecting parent or would-be censor (4)

The school librarian is the person ultimately responsible for selection decisions (Vandergrift 1978). The building administrator provides the only oversight of materials selection. Daily effort to sustain the collection divides school librarians into one of two types: selector or censor.

Selectors and censors view collection development differently. Asheim (1983) notes that a selector seeks balance within a collection, while the censor seeks what he or she deems appropriate. Selectors look to be inclusive of items within the collection. Asheim (1953) stated "The aim of the selector is to promote reading, not to inhibit it; to multiply the points of view which will find expression, not limit them; to be a channel for communication, not a bar against it" (67). In contrast, a censor seeks to be exclusive within the collection. The focus is to control both the content of and access to information.

A book's content plays a significant role in the practice of self-censorship. Curry reported in a 2001 article that 11 content types are likely to be challenged: profanity, sexuality, religion/witchcraft, violence/horror, rebellion, racism/sexism, substance use/abuse, suicide/death,

crime, crude behavior, and depressing/negative tone. Sexuality and profanity were the two content types most noted in challenges. Other studies resulted in similar findings (Dillon and Williams 1994; Hopkins 1990, 1998; Horton 1986; International Reading Association 2001; Jenkins and Odean 1988; Jenkinson 1994; Kovarsky et al. 1997; Saykanic 2000; Swiderek 1996; Vrabel, 1997; Woods and Salvatore 1981; Woodworth 1976). From 2001 to 2009, ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom (ALA 2010a) reported several content types—sexually explicit material, offensive language, unsuited to age group, violence, homosexuality, anti-family, and religious viewpoints—incurring the most challenges.

The effects of these challenges are revealed by Adler's 1993 study that examined challenges and curriculum. Adler's research found that 40 percent of schools were disrupted by challenges to curricular materials. These same institutions stated that materials would not be chosen or used because of challenges in other schools. Napier's 1992 study demonstrated a belief that these challenges are substantially disruptive, even when no materials are removed.

While all individuals have the right to challenge ideas, none have the right to censor access of information. It was determined in Pico v. Board of Education that "local school boards may not remove books from school library shelves simply because they dislike the ideas contained" (Alexander and Alexander 1998, 265). The Supreme Court supported students' right to pursue information and that school libraries were an acceptable venue of information access. Information access is based in both the intellectual and physical. It is the right to "hear, read, and view information; to receive ideas; to express ideas; and to develop skills to receive, examine, analyze, synthesize, evaluate, and use information, . . . [as well as permitted] unimpeded location and retrieval of information" (Bishop 2007, 161). In an effort to protect the student, many education professionals, parents, and groups go beyond their legal right by denying everyone access to certain information, thus individually defining morality for the community.

School librarians often find themselves on a slippery path of making value judgments of materials in the selection phase of collection development. Yet schools and school librarians cannot remove items without justification. When items are challenged, policies typically state that these items cannot be removed without due process. Without the support of their colleagues, school librarians are less likely to resist challenges and will often circumvent them by the act of nonselection.

Self-Censorship

As professionals, school libraries are subject to several forms of censorship: legal or governmental, individual or group, and self-censorship (Evans 1995). Those who challenge curricular media collection materials in an attempt to censor access tend to belong to one of these three groups: (1) parent or guardian, (2) community members, or (3) organizations (Gottlieb 1990). Reasons for challenges include language, illustrations, or specific titles. Other reasons for challenges appear when patrons or community members perceive a threat to their family values, religion, political views, or in dealing with minority rights (ALA 2010b). Often reactions are based upon the adverse publicity the materials have received.

Self-censorship has been identified as the "subtle censorship of 'selection'" (NCTE 1978, 3). McKee (1977) compared self-censorship to external censorship, which is equally damaging to a collection. The external censor may attempt "to get a teacher fired, to demean the professionalism of a librarian, [or] to burn a book" to protect the reader (Peck 1997, 28). Dillon

and Williams (1994) found school librarians often choose censorship as a response to societal threats presented in literature. The school librarian, as an internal censor, may choose to act through the nonselection of realistic fiction to protect the reader from the content or to protect content from being questioned. That an educated and trained professional would partake in the act of denying information access has been viewed as ominous: LaRue (1994) foretells a future of ideal libraries with no books because "removing [or not purchasing] a book makes a library better" (1994, 45). Self-censorship historically has also been seen as a "concept of social control" (Geller 1976, 1255). The Boston Public Library's 1881 selection policy reflected this sense of control by stating that "no public library should furnish books to young readers or to those of any age, which will influence their passions or pervert their moral sense" (Geller 1976, 1257).

Studies have noted self-censorship as a common practice (e.g., Coley 2002; Dillon and Williams 1994; Harmeyer 1995; Jenkinson 1994; Kerns and Bly 1987, McClure 1995; McMillan 1987; Vrabel 1997; Woods and Salvatore 1981). Evans (1995) identified self-censorship as the greatest problem faced by librarians. Researchers have noted it as a "secret practice [that is] the least obvious but arguably most powerful and pervasive form of censorship which is informal, private, and originates with the decision maker" (Dillon and Williams 1994, 11) or "a personally imposed limitation designed to avoid confrontations" (McKee 1977, 210).

Initial studies of self-censorship attempted to determine the effects of the practice on circulation (Coley 2002). The modern school librarian receives extensive training and development regarding the value and right of information access as well as instruction in appropriate procedure and policy development. Ignoring professional training raises serious issues. Researchers have stated several theories for this lapse. First, a conflict between a personal belief system and book content has been touted by many as a reason for self-censorship decisions (Bump 1981; Callison 1990; Jenkins and Odean 1988; White 1988). Second, community opinion often contributes to this behavior (Callison 1990; Hopkins 1998). Hopkins (1992) posits that school librarians suffer from low self-esteem, which affects professional practice. Often the behavior occurs at the hand of extreme school administration mandates (Dillon and Williams 1994). This practice does not exist in all schools (Tyler-Porter 1997), but has been documented in at least one state (Vrabel 1997). The most popular explanation of self-censorship is that of fear of challenge to a book (Bump 1980; Donelson 1981, 1987; Jenkins and Odean 1988; Woods and Salvatore 1981).

School librarians have offered various reasons for their acts of self-censorship. Many of the more common reasons include limited budgets; lack of interest; limited shelf space; community values; the author's integrity; material content; and poor, unfavorable, or unenthusiastic reviews (Asheim 1953; Coley 2002; Donelson 1981; Moon 1962). Legitimate reasons do exist for the nonselection of titles from the collection, including legal, financial, or policy issues. The difficulty lies in the determination of the use of guise or the practice of legitimate nonselection. When the practice of self-censorship occurs, the reading patrons are not the only party affected. Since the 1880s, authors have continually expressed concern about censorship practices by the public and the federal government.

An example of an often challenged and censored genre is realistic young adult (YA) fiction, which emerged during the 1960s (MacRae 1998; Rochelle 1991). Realistic YA fiction is told through the young adult viewpoint of the "real world, with all its troubles . . . [without] taking into account [the] lack of the adult's range of perspective and experience" (Rochelle 1991, 10).

Previously, fiction offered the viewpoint of a mature individual rather than a young adult. YA stories began to deal with issues significant to the young adult's life. Jenkins (1998) noted the genre was "characterized by candor . . . and plots that portrayed realistic problems that did not necessarily find resolution in a happy ending" (299).

Fuchs (1984) noted that YA fiction allowed issues to be approached that were normally not discussed with parents. Realistic YA fiction provides a place to rehearse aspects of the reality of life in a safe environment and model strategies for problem solving (Baggett 1985). MacRae (1998) claimed that the attraction to the genre was its truthfulness and real-life qualities. The stories allowed young adults to "see themselves or people like themselves" (Rochelle 1991, 9).

Simmons and Dresang (2001), however, noted the evolution of this genre has led to questionable appropriateness. Author Norma Klein (1985) stated that at least one reason for this label of inappropriateness is that adult reviewers are often bothered by the books' contents. Hielsberg (1994) stated that this is true because realistic YA fiction challenges the perceptions created by society.

A nationwide survey by Kamhi in 1981, which was supported by the Association of American Publishers, ALA, and the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), focused on selection procedures and challenges to curricula and library materials. It was conducted using a large-scale mail survey. Kamhi surveyed elementary and secondary public school administrators as well as school librarians in all 50 states. Additionally Kamhi conducted a mail and phone survey of state administrators in 22 states. The study noted significant connection between selection policies and challenges.

Kamhi's 1981 study found that three items were susceptible to censorship: media collection materials, upper-level curricular materials, and contemporary fiction and nonfiction titles. The larger the school, the more likely a formal written policy for both selection and reconsideration was available.

The Office of Educational Research and Improvement funded a 1989 study to examine factors that motivated the decisions of challenges (Hopkins 1991). The study looked at challenges to the presence or appropriateness of library materials. No questions were asked about curricular materials. The study also attempted to identify other factors that influenced the retention, restriction, or removal of materials. A positive relationship was found between the presence of a materials selection policy and the retention of materials; however, materials were more likely to be removed if the complaint originated within the school.

The American Association of School Librarians (AASL) recommends that all school libraries have both an established, school-board-approved selection policy and a reconsideration policy of due process (the guidelines by which decisions are made on book choices and a recommended course of action to deal with books challenged for their appropriateness) in place for the protection of the school and the school librarian. Because of increased pressures on Arkansas school districts, administrators, and school librarians, legislation was passed in 2003 that required school libraries to have written policies establishing "guidelines for the selection, removal, and retention of materials" (The Public School Library Media Services and Technology Act 2003, Section 5a). The act also requires that written policy be provided when materials are challenged. North Carolina's Department of Education also recommends each district to have a

materials selection policy that includes a section on reconsideration of challenged materials (Public Schools of North Carolina 2005, 220).

Organized efforts to censor, whether by an individual or a group, have been constant throughout the history of the United States. As a democracy, the nation has established the right to challenge ideas as a freedom afforded its citizenry. By the same token, this freedom also allows for freedom of expression. The conflict between the two arises often in the forum of the public school as it provides access to information to educate a democratic citizenry. The act of self-censorship removes the supportive voice of both author and reader of the ideas found within the book from public. Self-censorship further removes any chance of a fair discussion between a community, the author, and the reader to defend or promote the vessel of ideas bound in a book.

In an effort to counter censorship efforts, ALA has historically made it a mission to further the cause of information access and intellectual freedom. Several pieces of literature published by ALA promote the position of the organization on information access, such as the "Library Bill of Rights" (ALA 1996) and the "Freedom to ReadStatement" published by ALA and the American Book Publisher's Council (ALA 2004).

Although the "Library Bill of Rights" was adopted in 1939 it has been amended several times. It states:

The American Library Association affirms that all libraries are forums for information and ideas, and that the following basic policies should guide their services.

- Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.
- ii. Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.
- iii. Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.
- iv. Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgement of free expression and free access to ideas.
- v. A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.
- vi. Libraries that make exhibit spaces and meeting rooms available to the public they serve should make such facilities available on an equitable basis, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting their use.

The "Freedom to Read Statement," adopted in 1953 and last revised in 2004 by ALA, states:

The freedom to read is essential to our democracy. It is continuously under attack. Private groups and public authorities in various parts of the country are working to remove or limit access to reading materials, to censor content in schools, to label "controversial" views, to distribute lists of "objectionable" books or authors, and to purge libraries.

Most attempts at suppression rest on a denial of the fundamental premise of democracy: that the ordinary individual, by exercising critical judgment, will select the good and reject the bad. We trust Americans to recognize propaganda and misinformation, and to make their own decisions about what they read and believe.

These efforts at suppression are related to a larger pattern of pressures being brought against education, the press, art and images, films, broadcast media, and the Internet. The problem is not only one of actual censorship. The shadow of fear cast by these pressures leads, we suspect, to an even larger voluntary curtailment of expression by those who seek to avoid controversy or unwelcome scrutiny by government officials.

Now as always in our history, reading is among our greatest freedoms...It is essential to the extended discussion that serious thought requires, and to the accumulation of knowledge and ideas into organized collections.

We believe that every American community must jealously guard the freedom to publish and to circulate, to preserve its own freedom to read. We believe that publishers and librarians have a profound responsibility to give validity to that freedom to read by making it possible for the readers to choose freely from a variety of offerings.

Design of the Study

The study was designed to determine the extent to which school librarians chose not to select certain materials because of internal or external reasons. The study relied on the results of a questionnaire available online to a sample of public school librarians K–12 within the states of Arkansas, Delaware, and North Carolina, all three of which require master's degrees of their school librarians.

The questionnaire surveyed the process by which school librarians select titles for their collections. It was also designed to determine whether school librarians engage in self-censorship. In addition, the questionnaire identified the impact of challenges to curricular or library materials on the school librarian's decision-making process.

Research Questions

Objective 1: To determine the effort of access limitation for students within the school library collection in relation to the school librarian's self-censoring practices, specifically,

- Is self-censorship being practiced by the school librarian?
- At which level—elementary, middle, or secondary—is self-censorship by the school librarian more prevalent?
- Does the extent of self-censorship change in relation to the size of the school's population?
- Does the extent of self-censorship change in relation to the gender of the school librarian?
- Does the extent of self-censorship change in relation to the age of the school librarian?



- Does the extent of self-censorship change in relation to the level of education and licensure or certification of the school librarian?
- Does the extent of self-censorship change in relation to the years of experience in education of the school librarian?

Objective 2: To determine if the factors that cause a school librarian to self-censor are (1) internal—self (individual belief system), (2) external—school (from within the school system), or (3) external—community (from the community), specifically,

- What role does the belief system of a school librarian play in relation to materials a school library's selection?
- What external factors within the school system affect the school librarian's materials selection?
- What external factors outside the school system affect the school librarian's materials selection?

Population and Sample

The population for the study consisted of school librarians at 2,145 school campuses within the states of Arkansas, Delaware, and North Carolina. These three states were chosen because they are among five states nationally that require school librarians to have graduate degrees. Also, all five of the states requiring a graduate degree, currently has NCATE and AASL accredited school library graduate programs. The sample (1,069) was approximately 50 percent of the school librarian population.

Once the study's population size was ascertained, the number of school campuses in each state was divided by the study's population size to establish the percentage each state represented in number of school campuses. While Arkansas had a large number of school districts (245), the state represented only 42 percent of the school campuses in the study. North Carolina represented 50 percent of the school campus population, while Delaware represented only 8 percent.

Instrumentation

I created the online survey instrument, "Survey of School Library Media Specialists' Collection Development Practices," using the program WebSurveyor. The survey consisted of 12 questions divided into 3 sections. Section 1 gathered information about school librarians' gender, age, level of education and licensure or certification, and years of experience. Section 2 collected information dealing with the size of the school district, campus, and grade level of the collection. Section 3 determined the internal and external pressures placed on school librarians and contained 34 statements, 17 based on internal pressures and 17 based on external pressures. See the appendix for the survey instrument.

The survey asked participants to rate their selection decisions on the basis of possible concerns regarding the author, the school community, the community at large, and themselves using a Likert scale: Never = 1, Sometimes = 2, Frequently = 3, and Always = 4. A raw score was calculated for each participant by adding the number checked for each statement, thus creating a score between 34 and 136 (34 x 4 = 136). Scores were then grouped by internal statements (17) and external statements (17).

The survey instrument was checked for reliability through completion of the survey by a group of 20 graduate students enrolled in the Library Media and Information Technologies graduate program at the University of Central Arkansas. Each graduate student completed the survey and submitted comments concerning the clarity of directions, statements, and format. The researcher reviewed all comments and addressed any needed changes in the survey instrument. Internal consistency was determined by split-half reliability. Based on data collected from the 20 participants, each of the 34 statements in Section 3 of the survey instrument had a moderately high internal consistency (internal statements r = .56; external statements r = .53).

Data Analysis

All surveys were scored on completion. Raw scores were calculated for self-censoring, with the score ranging from 34 to 136. If an overall mean score was less than 85 (340/4 = 85), it was least likely the school librarian was self-censoring. When the mean score was greater than 85, it was more likely self-censoring was taking place.

Raw scores also were calculated for the internal-statements group and external-statements group. Internal statements contained three subgroups: (1) internal pressures because of media content (IPMC), (2) internal pressures because of author perceptions (IPAP), and (3) internal pressures because of self-reflection (IPS). IPMC scores ranged from 8 to 32, with a score 20 or greater indicative of self-censorship. IPAP scores ranged from 6 to 24, with a score of 15 or greater indicative of self-censorship. IPS scores ranged from 3 to 12, with a score of 7.5 or greater indicative of self-censorship.

External statements contained two subgroups: (1) external pressures that are community-based (EPCB) and (2) external pressures that are school-based (EPSB). EPCB scores ranged from 10 to 40, with a score of 25 or greater indicative of self-censorship. EPSB scores ranged from 7 to 28, with a score of 17.5 or greater indicative of self-censorship.

The data were then grouped by categories, such as gender, age, years of experience, educational level, and so on, after the initial raw scores were calculated. Data were then analyzed to ascertain if a correlation existed between any of the categories and the level of reported self-censoring. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was run to determine whether significant differences existed within variables. Once the data analysis was complete, tables were generated to demonstrate the analysis process and report findings. The analysis of the data provided the basis for summary, findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

Participating in the study were 412 school librarians from 1,069 school campuses surveyed in Arkansas, Delaware, and North Carolina. The return rate was 40 percent. Of the 412 participants, 17 failed to complete the survey (abandoned the survey). Three hundred and ninety-five (37 percent) completed surveys were used in the data analysis, as demonstrated in table 1.

Responses to Research Questions

The ten research questions by two objectives: (1) determining individual traits that enable self-censoring practices and (2) determining the factors causing acts of self-censorship, both internally and externally. The following analysis is presented in the order of the research questions.

Question 1.1

Is self-censorship being practiced by the school librarian? The survey contained 34 statements, each rated on a Likert score from 1 to 4. A participant could have earned a maximum score of 136 (34 x 4 = 136). An average score was determined by adding all of the possible totals of maximum scores ([34 x 4 = 136, 34 x 3 = 102, 34 x 2 = 68, 34 x 1 = 34] = 340) and then dividing that total by the number of possible responses (340/4 = 85). Self-censorship would be indicative of a score of 85 (340/4 = 85) or higher. The mean score (51.36) of the entire sample (N = 395) indicated that taken as a group, self-censorship was not being practiced. There was a collective, however, of 4.8 percent (19/395 = 4.8 percent) of the sample with a score of 85 or greater.

Question 1.2

At which level—elementary, middle, or secondary—is self-censorship by the school librarian more prevalent? The highest mean score represented secondary-level school librarians ($X^* = 72.11$). This higher score indicated at least some school librarians practiced self-censorship. Twenty-three (16 percent) of the 141 secondary school librarians had scores greater than the score of 85 necessary to indicate self-censorship.

The mean score for elementary-level school librarians was 35.75. Middle-level school librarians' mean score was 43.38. Neither of these scores indicated self-censorship, and neither group had participants with scores equal to or greater than 85. See table 2.

Additionally, a one-way ANOVA on mean scores with grade-level groups (elementary, middle, and secondary) as the independent variable yielded a significant effect, F (2, 392) = 364.436, p < .05. A Tukey post hoc test indicated significant differences between elementary, middle, and secondary groups at the p < .05 level.

Ouestion 1.3

Does the extent of self-censorship change in relation to the size of the school's population? The survey asked participants the size of both their district and campus. The participants appeared to be confused as to how to answer. Thus I felt this question was invalid and could not be analyzed from the responses given.

Question 1.4

Does the extent of self-censorship change in relation to the gender of the school librarian? This question also could not be answered from the survey data. Of the 395 participants, only 6 indicated they were male. This minimal response did not provide enough data for comparison.

Question 1.5

Does the extent of self-censorship change in relation to the age of the school librarian? The resulting analysis of the data indicated that the prevalence of self-censorship increased according to age group. The 60–69 age level topped all others with a mean score of 96.54, which is indicative of self-censorship. More than half (53 percent) of the participants in this level had a mean score greater than 85. See table 3.

Further analysis was done in a one-way ANOVA with age groups (20–29, 30–39, 40–49, 50–59, and 60–69 years) as the independent variable, which yielded a significant effect of

F (4, 394) = 436.572, p < .05. As age increased, so to did the likelihood to self-censor. A Tukey post hoc test indicated significant differences between both the 50-59 age group and the 60-69 age group and the other 3 age groups at the p < .05 level.

Question 1.6

Does the extent of self-censorship change in relation to the level of education and licensure or certification of the school librarian? The mean scores were lower for those with a specific degree-level education and certification or licensure than without. Those with a bachelor of science in education (BSE) and certification or licensure reported a 34.21 mean score. The mean score increased marginally with the master's degree and certification or licensure to 43.62.

The mean score of those reporting to be currently enrolled in a library graduate program (n = 48) increased significantly to 90.00. Twenty-one (43 percent) of the individuals marking this category had mean scores greater than 85. Those indicating belonging to the "other" group recorded a mean score of 68.65. Only 2 of the 49 individuals (4 percent) marking "other" had a score greater than 85. Thus self-censorship was indicative of those not currently holding a degree and certification or licensure as school library media specialists. See table 4.

Additionally, a one-way ANOVA on level of education (BSE with licensure/certification, master of science or master of science in education with licensure or certification, enrolled in a library graduate program, and other) as the independent variable yielded a significant effect, F(3, 391) = 402.918, p < .05. A Tukey post hoc test indicated a significant difference between each of the four levels of education (BSE and licensure or certification, MS or MSE and licensure or certification, enrolled in library graduate program, and other) at the p < .05 level.

Question 1.7

Does the extent of self-censorship change in relation to the years of experience in education of the school librarian? This analysis demonstrated that mean scores decreased with an increase educational experience. Those indicating 0–5 years of experience had an average mean score of 57.90, which rose incrementally with the 6–10 years grouping. This fell, however, with each succeeding age group. Again, this analysis demonstrated that self-censorship was indicative of school library media specialists with few years of overall educational experience. See table 5.

Further, a one-way ANOVA on years of experience in education (0-5, 6-10, 11-15, 16-20, 21-25, and 26+ years) as the independent variable yielded a significant effect, F (5, 389) = 21.392, p < .05. A Tukey post hoc test indicated significant difference between the 0-5 and 6-10 age groups and the other four groups at the p < .05 level.

Question 2.1

What role does the belief system of a school librarian play in relation to materials selection? The survey instrument contained 17 statements regarding an internal belief system. These 17 statements were divided into three subgroups: (1) internal pressures from media content (IPMC), (2) internal pressures from author perceptions (IPAP), and (3) internal pressures from self-reflection (IPS).



The IPMC subgroup contained 8 statements. A maximum score of 32 (8 x 4 = 32) was possible for this group. An averaged score of 20 (80/4 = 20) indicated self-censorship in the subgroup. This averaged score was determined by adding up all of the possible totals ([8 x 4 = 32, 8 x 3 = 24, 8 x 2 = 16, 8 x 1 = 8] = 80) and then dividing that total by the number of possible responses (80/4 = 20). The IPAP subgroup contained 6 statements with a maximum possible score of 24 (6 x 4 = 24). Self-censorship would be indicated with a score of 15 (60/4 = 15). Again, this averaged score was determined by adding all of the possible totals ([6 x 4 = 24, 6 x 3 = 18, 6 x 2 = 12, 6 x 1 = 6] = 60) and then dividing that total by the number of possible responses (60/4 = 15). The IPS subgroup contained 3 statements. A maximum score of 12 (3 x 4 = 12) was possible, with a score of 7.5 (30/4 = 7.5) demonstrating self-censorship. Once more this averaged score was determined by adding all of the possible totals ([3 x 4 = 12, 3 x 3 = 9, 3 x 2 = 6, 3 x 1 = 3] = 30) and then dividing that total by the number of possible responses (30/4 = 7.5).

Internal beliefs did not appear to govern participants in the practice of self-censorship. The analysis indicated that the mean for each of the 3 subgroups never exceeded that subgroup respective score ceiling. Self-censorship was demonstrated by 80 participants (20 percent) of the IPMC subgroup. Only 8 (2 percent) of the IPAP subgroup indicated self-censorship. The IPS subgroup showed 50 (12.6 percent) demonstrating this practice. If anything, the data did show media content presenting the largest internal governor of school librarians.

Question 2.2

What external factors within the school system affect the school librarian's materials selection? The survey contained seventeen statements regarding an external belief system. These 17 were divided into 2 subgroups: (1) external pressures from community (EPCB) and (2) external pressures from school (EPSB). The EPSB subgroup contained 7 statements with a maximum score of 28 (7 x 4 = 28). Self-censorship would be indicated by a score of at least 17.5 (70/4 = 17.5). This averaged score was determined by adding all of the possible totals ([7 x 4 = 28, 7 x 3 = 21, 7 x 2 = 14, 7 x 1 = 7] = 70) and then dividing that total by the number of possible responses (70/4 = 17.5).

External beliefs that were school-based did not appear to govern participants in the practice of self-censorship. The descriptive analysis indicated that the mean for the subgroup never exceeded the 17.5 score indicating self-censorship. Only 50 (12.6 percent) of the EPSB subgroup indicated self-censorship.

In looking at the analysis of the means for each of the statements regarding external school-based pressures, 3 demonstrated increased mean scores. These statements were (1) an administrator might not approve a potential collection item, (2) an administrator might request avoidance of a potential purchase, and (3) the school board might request the avoidance of a potential purchase.

Ouestion 2.3

What external factors outside the school system affect the school librarian's materials selection? The survey contained 17 statements regarding an external belief system. These



17 were divided into 2 subgroups: (1) external pressures based on community (EPCB) and (2) external pressures based on school (EPSB).

The EPCB subgroup contained 10 statements. A maximum score of 40 (10 x 4 = 40) was possible for this group. A score of 25 (100/4 = 25) indicated self-censorship within the subgroup. This averaged score was determined by adding up all of the possible totals ([10 x 4 = 40, 10 x 3 = 30, 10 x 2 = 20, 10 x 1 = 10] = 100) and then dividing that total by the number of possible responses (100/4 = 25).

EPCB did not appear to govern participants in the practice of self-censorship. The analysis indicated that the mean for the subgroup never exceeded 25. Self-censorship was demonstrated by 22 (5.5 percent) of the EPCB subgroup. The data did show external pressures from the community presented a small external barrier of school librarians.

Three factors demonstrated increased mean scores: (a) parents might not approve a potential collection item, (b) community member might not approve, or (c) the possibility of a potential challenge might be avoided.

Comments Made by Participants

Many participants were motivated to provide additional comments in response to many of the survey instrument's questions. Several followed up their survey participation with e-mail and phone communications with the researcher. Six specific questions provided substantial openended responses.

In response to what level of education was held by each school librarian, participants added additional comments. Several specified that their bachelor's degrees were in library science. Several of the master's degree—holding school librarians indicated that they were National Board Certified.

When asked about avoiding the purchase of titles because of themes; language; religious, social, and political views; and possible theft, many participants commented that purchases were based on curricular needs. Purchases stemming from age and grade level recommendations were consistently mentioned, for example, "I try to keep the collection age-appropriate for middle school students and relevant to the curriculum."

Participants readily commented when asked if titles were avoided based on external groups' or individuals' disapproval. Again, great faith in the selection policy and support of the curriculum in making purchasing decisions was obvious, as evidenced in this statement: "I follow the selection policy of my school district so I feel I have done my job and I don't worry about what everyone else thinks." However, a few comments indicated a different attitude: "Avoiding a possible challenge is actually implied by the fact that I sometimes let my perception of community values determine purchase of materials. When I do think about these groups before purchasing, it is in balance with the worth of the book." Or this one: "I will follow the advise(sic) of my administration. I may not agree but I will do as they say."

When asked about avoiding the purchase of a title because of personal views, participants were quick to respond. A number of individuals pointed out that they strove to provide equal coverage to all sides of issues. The following comments are representative of many participants:

- "I want my student(s) to read both sides and become educated to the world around them."
- "I try very hard to leave my personal opinions out. If I feel I am overreacting to a book/author then I get other opinions from our English teachers and the other media specialists. I have also asked parents' opinions."
- "The collection is not about me it is about what my student's need(s) (are) to make them better readers. I do use numerous reviewers and awards to make decision(s) but I will go outside of these to fulfill an interest that will get reluctant readers reading."

The majority of comments regarding the avoidance of purchases at the request of groups or individuals stated that none of those parties had ever made such a request. Instead, many made mentioned requests to purchase items and referred to their collection development policies with comments of this nature: "I have never had any of the above individuals ask me NOT to purchase a book or books."

Conclusions

The findings in this studyprovided a picture of the traits of a school librarian who is more apt to self-censor during the selection process. As a whole, the responding school librarians (mean score = 51.36) were not inclined to self-censoring of materials for selection. Nor was the population subjectively influenced to self-censor during the selection process by internal beliefs (mean score = 25.50) or by either the external school-based pressures or the external community (mean score = 25.86).

This is not to say that self-censorship does not exist in the population. While the overall picture gave a positive indication that the practice is not common, self-censorship tendencies were evident in specific portions of the sample. Four factors were associated with self-censoring practices: (1) being of the age 60–69, (2) holding no formal collegiate education degree (BSE or MS/MSE) with library media certification or licensure, (3) being at the secondary level school library, and (4) having 15 or fewer years of educational experience.

Just over half of respondents who were 60–69 had a mean score greater than 85. It does not indicate that most school librarians over the age of 60 practice self-censorship during the selection process.

The propensity to self-censor during the selection process was apparent with a segment of the practicing population not in possession of certification or licensure and a formal degree. The overall mean score of those reporting to be currently enrolled in a library graduate program increased significantly to 90.00. Forty-three percent of the individuals marking this category totaled overall mean scores higher than the threshold score of 85.

Of the three levels of educators—elementary, middle, and secondary—one level demonstrated an inclination toward self-censorship. Secondary-level school librarians had a mean score of 72.11. Sixteen percent of this group incurred scores of 85 or greater, indicating a tendency to self-censor.

Not unexpectedly, school librarians in their early years of their careers indicated a predisposition to self-censor during the selection process. Elevated mean scores existed with those with 15 or fewer years of education experience. Educators fresh to the profession need time to adjust to the demands of time, organizational cultures, community mores, and professional standards. While they are trained professionals, they need time to grow into their positions as educators and professionals.

Recommendations

The factors lending themselves to the practice of self-censorship of materials selection could be addressed in many ways throughout the professional career of school librarians. One initiative would be to require all school librarians to hold a formal degree in education along with the appropriate certification or licensure in school library media. With increasing national standards for student learning, this would be an opportune action to strengthen the mission and capabilities of school districts. Further, to require a master's degree in school library media would provide school districts with master-level teachers capable of integrating and co-teaching as information resource leaders in the twenty-first century.

Professional development also may be indicated by these findings. Specifically, a course or inservice focusing on reconnecting with patrons and their needs is one possibility. Another option is to create a series of courses or inservice sessions available for school librarians at specific years of experience that would provide updated information and best-practices for collection development and management, intellectual freedom, and censorship. These options would provide an avenue for the practicing professional to reconnect with other school librarians and revitalize their knowledge and professional practices.

Several recommendations for further study became apparent at the end of the study. At the forefront is the recommendation that the study be replicated nationally and disaggregated by state or region. This would provide a well-rounded picture of the profession and allow for regional comparison. This information would allow for further study of professional practices and could be reflected in professional preparation programs nationally.

Another recommendation is to replicate the study qualitatively. This recommendation is based on the number of responses to open-ended response areas in the survey instrument and the number of personal communications received by the researcher from study participants. The participants stated many times that they found themselves responding verbally to the survey instrument as it was being completed.

Lastly, a recommendation could be made to replicate the study looking at the entire collectionmanagement process, which includes selection, purchase, weeding, and reconsideration of challenged collection items.

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