MULTICULTURALISM IN SCHOOL LIBRARIES

by

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ABSTRACT

by

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Multicultural education is at the forefront of American education due to the influx of minority students in primary and secondary schools. Librarians can use a multicultural library collection to help students develop cultural sensitivity. The librarian and library collection can represent the culturally diverse society that is present in their school district. The research presented in this literature review provides information about teaching students to become culturally sensitive and tolerant to a variety of cultures, how to develop a multicultural library collection, and activities that librarians can do with students to promote cultural sensitivity.
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CHAPTER 1:
INTRODUCTION

Statement of Problem

Students who are entering American schools are from a variety of cultural backgrounds. All students come into classrooms with customs, beliefs, and traditions that are different from their peers and educators. It is the responsibility of educators to help students learn how to get along with one another and understand the backgrounds of their peers. Librarians can use a multicultural library collection to help students develop cultural sensitivity. Librarians are able to be the voice for the minority students in schools by providing materials that represent all cultures.

Multicultural education is coming to a forefront in American schools, and educators are transitioning towards a curriculum that meets the needs of all the students in their classrooms. Students come into classrooms with developed prejudices and preconceived ideas of the world that surrounds them. Educators can provide many opportunities for students to learn about the different cultures around them. The teachers are able to work with librarians to teach students to appreciate and accept the differences in the school population (Hoss and Wylie 227).

A collection that focuses on different cultures is able to teach students about cultural sensitivity and tolerance by providing positive experiences with the materials. Librarians who focus on the movement toward multicultural education believe that students learn tolerance through the use of books (Desai 41). By having a multicultural collection students are able to become educated about the wide variety of cultures around them and develop a better understanding of their peers.
Educators can work with librarians to teach students the importance of cultural sensitivity and tolerance. Librarians are able to introduce multicultural materials by using a variety of teaching experiences such as book talks and literature circles. These teaching experiences allow librarians to introduce culturally diverse literature to students who would not regularly read it. Picture books are also resources to use with students to teach about cultural sensitivity because students are able to see as well as read the stories.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this research was to understand how a multicultural library collection helps students learn about cultural sensitivity and tolerance. The study is a review of literature focusing on the importance of teaching tolerance and cultural sensitivity, developing a multicultural collection, and designing learning experiences for students that teach cultural sensitivity. The research also focuses on how the library collection supports multicultural students. The results of the research show that librarians are an integral part of teaching students about cultural sensitivity and tolerance by using a multicultural library collection.

The learning environment in a school depends on the relationships between the students. Students who respect and understand one another will participate in learning experiences willingly. The librarian is able to teach students about each other by using the library collection and providing different learning experiences. Librarians are able to work with the entire student body and support the cultures that are not dominant in the school. A multicultural collection focuses on quality literature that truly represents the cultures of the world. Librarians can use a multicultural library collection to help students develop cultural sensitivity.
understand the cultures that surround them they are apt to have better relationships in school and throughout their lives.

**Research Questions**

The school population is made up of students with diverse backgrounds. Multicultural education and literature is important because students to understand the cultures in their learning environment. The librarian is able to represent the multitude of cultures that are represented in the school through books and the environment (Summers 13). The research questions below guided the study:

1. What is the importance of teaching multicultural sensitivity in American schools?
2. Why is a multicultural collection important in teaching students about cultural sensitivity and tolerance?
3. What type of learning experiences can the librarian provide to educate students about cultural sensitivity and tolerance?

**Limitations of Study**

One of the main limitations of the study was the lack of peer reviewed literature, professional literature, and updated research. The scope of materials that were used in the research were peer reviewed articles, professional literature, and Web resources. Due to the paper being a literature review the amount of peer reviewed articles limited the number of resources available. This study is based on a review of literature rather than original research. The reliability of the findings is based on the characteristics of the research available.
Delimitations of Study

There are additional variables that possibly affected the research outcome. Most of the research was dated prior to 2010, so statistics might be altered due to the continual growth in the minority population in America. Also, student growth in cultural sensitivity was not researched or observed. So if students were successful in changing their prejudices over a period of time, this was not a focus of the research. The discussion about growth in this literature review offers only a small insight into the long-lasting effects of teaching cultural sensitivity and tolerance.

Another aspect that could have been researched was the effect of teaching cultural sensitivity and tolerance on classroom management. When the students respect one another there are fewer classroom problems. Since cultural sensitivity and tolerance for one another can lead to a peaceful learning environment, it could be a focus for multiculturalism, but this was not a focus of this literature review. One other aspect that could have been a focus for the study is the effects of a multicultural library collection in a rural community. The aspect of how a monoculture community connects to the world through a multicultural library collection, and the long term outcome for the patrons of the community, was not focused on in this study.

Definition of Terms

In this section terms present in the study are defined. The focus is on school and library terms.

Bilingual materials: materials that are written in multiple languages

Book talks: an event that is often scheduled in a library setting, at which a librarian, author, or interested reader discusses excerpts from a book in order to have the audience become interested in reading the material (Reitz).
Cultural sensitivity: being aware that cultural differences and similarities exist and have an effect on values, learning, and behavior (Mavropoulos).

Literature circles: a version of a classroom book club with the goal of encouraging students to choose books and develop a love for reading (Wikipedia).

Multicultural Library Collection: culturally diverse books, magazines, resources, and Web materials in the library.

Picture books: books that are mainly made up chiefly of pictures.

Selection aids: online and print materials that review new books.

Selection criteria: a group of standards that focus on picking high quality materials; such as, accuracy, quality, respect, expertise, and purpose (Agosto, “Building Multicultural Libraries” 28).

Tolerance: accepting and valuing differences.

**Research Design**

The study conducted to answer the research questions was a review of literature. There was no new research conducted during this time. Since it was a literature review, the focus was to find research-based, peer reviewed literature, professional literature, and other materials that provided quality information. Articles were retrieved from the following databases: *Academic Search Complete*, *Library Literature and Information Full Text*, and *Education Research Complete*. The texts were located on the James C. Kirkpatrick Library Website, the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), and Google Scholar. Search terms that were used in library catalogs and search engines included: “cultural diversity AND school libraries,” “multiculturalism,” “multiculturalism AND k-12 libraries,” “multiculturalism AND k-12”

**Conclusion**

This study includes three chapters that focus on developing cultural sensitivity within the student body by using a multicultural library collection. The first chapter focuses on the introduction, the second chapter is the literature review, and the third chapter focuses on answering the questions that were posed in chapter one and concluding the paper. Librarians can use a multicultural library collection to help students develop cultural sensitivity.
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The school population in the United States is growing more culturally diverse each year. Educators are transitioning to meet the needs of all of the students who are entering their classrooms and providing materials that will support their learning. Librarians use a multicultural library collection to help students develop cultural sensitivity. To be able to reach this goal the librarian collaborates with other educators, plans activities that provide students with learning experiences, and has diverse materials in the school library that represent the multicultural society both in schools and in its community.

Research states that by the year 2020, eighteen states in America will have schools that have the majority of their students from diverse backgrounds, such as Hispanic, African American, and Asian (Alexander, “Multicultural Cinderella” 32). Students who are entering school have a variety of issues related to their diverse cultures, such as family history, stereotypes, bullying between cultural groups, and a lack of pride. So the teachers’ and librarians’ responsibility is to make sure that the students are getting lessons that teach them that it is okay to be different and to come from a background that is not similar to their peers’. The section “Developing Multicultural Sensitivity” focuses on how to make sure that students are getting lessons that educate them about different cultures so they learn about tolerance. This section discusses the importance of tolerance in society today, as students are going to be involved in the global community the rest of their life.

The librarian is able to represent the multitude of cultures that are a part of the school through books and the environment (Summers 13). The library is the one place that can provide
a culturally sound environment for students to go and feel accepted among their peers. The section on “Creating a Multicultural Library Collection” focuses on the importance of a culturally diverse library collection and the steps to build a multicultural collection. This section includes selection aids that can be used to find and order materials. A criteria list provides key points to look for when selecting multicultural literature.

When teaching, educators are able to combine the curriculum with multicultural materials. For example, by participating in book talks, teachers model oral language and comprehension skills for students (Hughes-Hassell, Koehler, and Berkley). Educators are able to ensure student success when they reach out to students in ways that they understand and with materials that they can comprehend. In the section “Promoting Multicultural Activities,” the focus is on using literature-based activities to help students understand the cultures that surround them. This section discusses book talks that get the students interested in the multicultural materials that are available in the library collection. This section also describes the use of literature circles and the use of picture books to introduce the cultures of the world. This section also talks about how librarians focused on developing a multicultural library collection after September 11, 2010 and the importance of Arab literature to prevent biases.

**Developing Multicultural Sensitivity**

Educators who work in a culturally diverse school want to ensure that all students are treated equally. The first topic in this section is the importance of having multicultural sensitivity. It addresses how to teach multicultural sensitivity to the students within school districts. Next the focus is on teaching tolerance. The key components in the process are
described. The last topic describes how teaching cultural sensitivity to students can develop a better community environment in the school.

**Importance of Multicultural Sensitivity**

The students who come to the classrooms in American schools bring their cultural traditions with them as well as their emotional, cognitive, and physical differences (Al-Hazza and Bucher 7). Librarians and other educators have a responsibility to make sure that they reach students with different backgrounds. Teaching about other cultures by discussing the beliefs, behaviors, customs, and traditions is a key component of moving towards a peaceful community environment (Wan 140). When educators teach topics related to different cultures, students are better able to understand one another.

The lack of knowledge that society and students have on cultural backgrounds leads to discrimination and to lower self esteem for students discriminated against (Al-Hazza and Bucher 6). On the other hand students who feel part of the school community are going to be involved in activities that allow them to be successful throughout their school career as well as their future career. A curriculum that focuses on using multicultural materials helps students to understand multiple perspectives and cultural backgrounds (Agosto, “Building a Multicultural School Library” 27).

**Teaching Tolerance**

The cause of most prejudice and discrimination is the lack of education on topics of prejudice and exposure to diverse populations (Lintner 34). Educators lead by example when teaching about tolerance and cultural sensitivity to students. Tolerance is not taught by the reading one book and cannot be related to one specific topic, but is meaningful when integrated
into the curriculum so that it is a routine and technical part of daily classroom instruction (Lintner 36).

Higher numbers of multicultural students are enrolling in schools, and there is often little representation of their culture within the buildings. Tolerance and acceptance of many cultures can be represented using a variety of media (Lintner 36). Photographs can be an integral part of displays so that a variety of cultures are represented visually in the school environment. A way that librarians are able to help multicultural students feel welcome is to have the books about their native countries displayed. This can also reduce their anxiety (Ferlazzo 24). Librarians who have displays that represent multiple cultures are at the forefront of the transition to including multicultural students in schools.

The teaching of tolerance is much more than just showing pictures though; it requires educators to teach tolerance to individual students and student groups (Hoss and Wylie 228). One-on-one conversation allows students to open their minds and express their true emotions without the judgment that might come from peers. Student assemblies that focus on the multicultural studies that are taking place in a school setting are another way to provide students with hands on experiences and knowledge. To create a rich experience, for example, school administrators could occasionally employ a speaker from a minority culture rather than the teacher to speak at assemblies (Carter and Vuong).

The Southern Poverty Law Center’s Teaching Tolerance Project offers free online resources educators can use when working on tolerance with students. Teaching Tolerance is the group’s magazine that comes out twice a year. It is free to education professionals and has tips on how to work on tolerance in their schools. There are documentary films that provide
information about the civil rights movement to teach students about how equality came about and continues to develop. The mission of the organization is to view tolerance as a way of thinking, feeling, and acting that gives peace in individuality, respect for those who are different, the wisdom to discern humane values, and the courage to act upon them (adapted from Southern Poverty Law Center).

**Teaching Multicultural Sensitivity and Tolerance**

Neito defines multicultural education as, “an anti-racist education that is firmly related to student learning and permeates all areas of schooling” (7). Educators are in a profession to ensure that all students are getting an equal education and to provide multiple resources to ensure that the education is anti-racist. Thus, by incorporating multicultural materials into the curriculum, teachers and librarians are able to ensure that students are getting a quality education (Agosto, “Bridging the Culture Gap” 38). When students develop ideas based on a mono-culture, it is hard to break them away from their negative or inaccurate beliefs. Educators who provide culturally-based learning experiences can help students develop new or more positive beliefs and ideas.

Throughout the last few years there has been a rise in prejudice, intolerance, and cultural misunderstanding in the United States of America (Lintner 34). Problems arise in a school setting when students are not educated about the cultures that surround them within the school walls and the community they live in. Educators who focus on social equality in their teaching help solve these problems within school environments (Summers 10). Students can be taught that it is not okay to base knowledge on preconceived notions from the society that surrounds them, but to also focus on knowledge that is gained through their reading experiences and
classroom activities. Educators and librarians ensure tolerance when they teach students that hatred, prejudice, and stereotyping are not acceptable and will not be tolerated in the classroom and school setting (Hoss and Wylie 227). The goal of educators in teaching tolerance and cultural sensitivity is that the students understand that differences are only skin deep and everyone is created equally (Wan 142).

**Creating a Multicultural Library Collection**

Librarians are able to collaborate with classroom teachers to provide books that teach tolerance and cultural sensitivity to students. Through collaboration in a school setting, the librarian and teachers help solve major school problems intolerance and cultural insensitivity (Agosto, “Bridging the Cultural Gap” 38). Having a multicultural collection is a growing need. The collection lowers the gap that multicultural students face when they enter a learning environment (Agosto, “Bridging the Cultural Gap” 38). This section focuses on how the librarian incorporates multicultural materials in the collection to represent all students in the school population. “Developing a Multicultural Library” focuses on the selection aids and criteria that librarians use when looking for new materials to add to the library. The last section focuses on the importance of including a variety of materials.

**Multicultural Library Collection**

The library collection is the key component in making sure that the students are able to access materials that represent the entire school population. The collection needs resources that students use to create a positive image of their culturally diverse peers. “A school library collection that represents the perspectives of a range of cultures can serve as a form of advocacy
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on behalf of students from minority backgrounds by making them feel included in the classroom and school environment” (Agosto, “Building a Multicultural School Library” 27).

“Children’s literature is a transparent window on the future – a way to glimpse how the literary imagination constructs cultural value (Desai 42).” The use of folk tales and fairy tales is an example of one way to help students develop a deeper understanding of cultures around the world (Alexander, “Multicultural Cinderella” 34). A wide variety of folk and fairy tales are available from different cultures. Teachers and librarians could incorporate these materials in their daily read aloud to students or into a unit of study. For example, Cinderella is a book that has many cultural versions and provides information about the various customs and knowledge of those cultures (Alexander, “Multicultural Cinderella” 35). The students are able to connect with the original Cinderella because it is a story that they have been told over time. Librarians and teachers are able to incorporate activities that students can use when studying a certain country and version of Cinderella. Educators are also able to encourage students to compare and contrast the different versions of the fairy tale to identify the differences between cultures. By incorporating these materials and other materials in the library collection, educators are able to have students better understand the world that surrounds them and develop multicultural sensitivity and tolerance (Veltze 24). Creating a multicultural library that is current is a way to make sure that students are getting accurate information about the cultures throughout the nation (Arsenault and Brown 20).

Developing a Multicultural Library

To ensure that the library materials are appropriate to teach cultural sensitivity and tolerance, librarians look at many factors that pertain to selecting appropriate materials. First
there are multiple selection aids available to use when selecting multicultural materials for a library collection. As with other materials in the collection there is a criterion of quality and accuracy for multicultural resources (Agosto, “Building Multicultural” 28). Librarians work to have materials in the library that do not stereotype students in the school population. Rather, the materials have the power to create a deeper understanding and sensitivity to the school’s diverse population. This way the multicultural materials added to the collection have a purpose for all students (Agosto, “Building Multicultural” 28).

Librarians might have trouble choosing different books for different cultures because it can be hard to find accurate information (Vardell, Hadaway, and Young 736). Several selection aids are available to librarians choosing books to add to the collection. One selection aid is the American Library Association’s magazine, Booklist (Woolls 135). Booklist provides reviews of a variety of published books. Another selection aid is School Library Journal (Woolls 135). School Library Journal provides reviews of a variety of books. The following is a list of additional selection aids for locating multicultural materials: Bulletin for the Center of Children’s Books, Children’s Catalog, Titlewave, Children’s Literature Comprehensive Database and Senior High Core Collection (Woolls 135).

Along with the above selection aids, several others focus specifically on multicultural materials. Multicultural Review (www.mcreview.com) is a resource that is published quarterly by Goldman Group (Patton 23). It is a resource that focuses foreign published materials (23). A review source that focuses only on Spanish materials is Criticas (www.criticasmagazine.com), an online monthly review (23). Criticas also publishes two print versions each year in June and
November (23). Also the American Library Association Web site (www.ala.org) has a bibliography of multicultural books that up to date.

“High quality multicultural resources share five major characteristics: accuracy, expertise, respect, purpose, and quality” (Agosto, “Building Multicultural School Library” 28). Each of the characteristics focuses on providing beneficial literature materials to the school library collection. The first way to look for multicultural materials that are high quality is to look at the accuracy of the materials. An example of inaccuracy might be stereotypes present in the writing, such as characters portrayed in the illustrations who look all the same (Agosto, “Building Multicultural School Library” 29). Another way to see that the material is accurate is that non-English words are spelled correctly and used in the proper context (Agosto, “Building Multicultural School Library” 28). Library professionals also want to make sure that the history presented in the books is accurate and that there is knowledge about the cultures’ history (Agosto, “Building Multicultural School Library” 29).

The next criterion focus is on expertise of the author and illustrator. The main point is that the responsible party is credible in the information that they have presented (Agosto, “Building Multicultural School Library” 29). The author and illustrator need to have background knowledge about the culture that they are writing about and illustrating (29). When the author and illustrator seek out the knowledge or have personal experience with the culture, this can be seen throughout the writing and illustrations. Within the material the author and illustrator will have an area where they have included source notes to explain where they have retrieved the information (Agosto, “Building Multicultural School Library” 29).
The third criterion is to show an overall respect for the culture that is portrayed (Agosto, “Building Multicultural School Library” 29). When the librarian is looking for respect in the materials, he or she will look for stereotyping of characters with the speech, appearance, and the behaviors (29). The characters need to look different and not all appear to be the same. Another key point is to avoid authors and illustrators who use a tone that is negative toward a culture (Agosto, “Building Multicultural School Library” 29). The last focus is making sure that the minority culture is perceived as equal in the book and not of lower class (Agosto, “Building Multicultural School Library” 29).

The fourth criterion is purpose (Agosto, “Building Multicultural School Library” 29). In this instance purpose refers to the significance of the cultural connections throughout the material (29). The other aspect of purpose is to make sure that there is enough detail represented to make a unique setting throughout the book (29). The last criteria aspect is quality, to make sure that the material has a good storyline with well-developed plots, characters, and settings. High quality illustrations that focus on the perspective and are colorful in appearance are also a plus (29). The most important part of quality is that everything should ring true in the materials that are being selected (29).

Another way the librarian can create a multicultural collection is to make sure that the materials are on a variety of reading levels as well as in multiple languages so that students are successful in their learning (Blair, Brasfield, Crenshaw, and Mosedale 34). Bilingual materials in the library collection can help students feel that their home cultures are valued within the school (Blair, Brasfield, Crenshaw, Mosedale 35). When the students feel valued this allows them to feel like they are a member of the school they attend.
Promoting Multicultural Activities

“Multicultural materials can bridge the cultural gap that minority students face when learning to read and write (Agosto, “Bridging the Culture Gap” 38).” When educators plan well, the students will have meaningful experiences with the diverse cultural materials available to them. Literature is an effective way to introduce students to cultures (Livingston and Kurkjian 696). When librarians choose fiction and nonfiction about different cultures, students might be better able to have a sense of connection to the characters in the stories (Vardell, Hadaway, and Young 736). As the students are learning about the different cultures, they gain an insight into what their peers are going through, and they learn how to communicate with them. Through the shared literature students are able to communicate in unique ways; and they are able to share with classmates elements of their culture such as religion, traditions, and the region that they originated from (Wan 141). Three effective ways to do this in the library is with book talks, literature circles, and use of picture books.

Book Talks

A book talk is an event that takes place in a library setting, in which a librarian, author, or interested reader discusses excerpts from a book to have the audience become interested in reading the material (Reitz). Librarians are able to use book talks to discuss themes, authors, or different genres they are studying (Norton and Anfin 29). When librarians use this technique, the book talk serves as a guide to promote multicultural literature. The process of a book talk with multicultural materials from the library is a positive way to incorporate and encourage students to read multicultural materials (York 16). The discussions generated by book talks
excite students to read those materials and give them the opportunity to find materials that represent their personal background.

A librarian who is culturally sensitive will incorporate library books with multicultural themes and characters (Hinton-Johnson and Dickinson 43). Book talks promote books that represent cultures that are of interest to students. Book talks are able to present reading materials that are of interest to students reading at a lower level by building curiosity (Norton and Anfin 29). When the librarians are able to interest students reading at the lower level, these students are more likely to become readers and continue to check out a variety of materials. This helps them improve their reading skills. Research has found that it is critical for students reading at a lower level to read multicultural texts to improve reading performance (Hughes-Hassell, Barkley, and Koehler). When students are reading materials that represent their lives they are more likely to be interested in the reading process.

There are several ways to do book talks that focus on a variety of cultures (York 16). For example the book talk could include cliff hangers. The suspense excites the students and motivates them to discover what happens next in the books (Norton and Anfin 32). Another way to do a book talk is to include other multicultural materials during the presentation. To supplement the library’s collection of materials, students from the culture depicted in the book could be invited to bring in pictures so that their peers have a better visual connection to the culture they are learning about (Norton and Anfin 30).

Another key factor when choosing materials for book talks is to choose from a variety of authors (York 17). Library professionals focus on a wide range of ethnic materials rather than the materials of one author. Students are able to experience a wide variety of experiences when
they are introduced to a range of authors. Another reason that students need a variety of books by different authors is because not all students are interested in one topic (Norton and Anfin 29). The library is full of different books, so book talks can be a time to promote diverse literature and qualified authors.

**Literature Circles**

Literature circles are a version of classroom book clubs with the goal of encouraging students to choose books and develop a love for reading (Wikipedia). Literature circles provide opportunities to discuss reading material in a group (Clark and Holwadel 21). Students participating in literature circles are able to choose the literature they will be reading. By using literature circles with students, educators create reading and writing activities that allow students to gain a deeper perspective of a different culture. The process of literature circles also allows teachers to have students interact with one another and communicate with a wide variety of students (Clark and Holwadel 21). All librarians and teachers need when doing literature circles is a variety of books to help the students connect with the materials.

Literature circles also allow librarians to teach students different roles of connecting with reading materials (McCall 153). For example, the ‘connector’ job in the literature circle requires the students to connect with the reading by making meaningful connections to real life situations (153). The ‘questioner’ has the job of listing important questions that have to do with the literature being discussed (153). Another job that takes place during a literature circle is the ‘illustrator’ who draws pictures, diagrams, or graphs that represent the literature (153).

Studying multicultural literature in a literature circle allows students to gain empathy and sensitivity to a cultural group represented in the readings (McCall 153). Librarians are able to
have students focus at a deeper level on what they are learning through their reading because they are picking reading materials they are interested in (Cox and Parrish 43). Students are able to use literature circles to share their ideas with their classmates and determine what the materials they pick have in common and what the differences are. When students are able to connect to the materials others are reading, it allows them to better understand the world. Literature circles allow students to become more connected to the books they are reading too, because they are looking at the book in a new light. They are dissecting the different parts of the book and looking at how the author has developed the different ideas and topics presented (Cox and Parish 44).

    Literature circles allow librarians to collaborate with classroom teachers by having students work in groups using diverse materials. The librarian is able to provide ideas and books for the classroom teachers to use in their literature circles. When the librarian and teacher are working together, they are able to teach students about the reading process and the different cultures represented in the literature circle. Literature circles connect the goals of building a healthy classroom community, something librarians and teachers are working toward daily. Literature circles have a variety of benefits that include independent reading, collaboration among students and educators, and discussions between groups of students (Cox and Parrish 43).

Using Picture Books

    Picture books are a form of literature that provide a way for educators to incorporate multicultural materials into the classroom and library setting. A picture book is defined in the Merriam-Webster dictionary as “a book that consist wholly or chiefly of pictures”. Picture books cover a wide range of topics and can take students to another place and time. They are
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fiction or nonfiction. When educators incorporate the use of multicultural picture books into their lessons, they are able to broaden students’ ideas and increase their understanding of the global society (Alexander, “Using Children’s Folktales to explore Multiculturalism” 22).

Picture books provide engaging knowledge about the cultures that surround students. Students are able to get information from the illustrations in picture books by just looking at the pages (Linder 4). The students who have prior knowledge of the pictures are able to better connect to the story and the purpose of the book. The pictures available in picture books can be from photography, collages, drawings, and watercolor paintings (Linder 4). They allow students to better understand what different cultures are like by connecting to the emotions and actions seen in the books.

Librarians can provide picture books to teachers to incorporate into their classroom teachings. Teachers use picture books to discuss different cultures. Picture books allow students to see cultures through their own eyes and not through the eyes of historians or geographers (Bowen 4). Teachers use picture books with students to engage them in what they are reading and learning (Bowen 4). For example, when teachers use the book *Brothers in Hope: The Story of the Lost Boys in Sudan*, their students are able to understand what effects war has on children in Sudan (Bowen 6). When introduced to material like this through picture books, the students are able to better understand what is going on around the world and also what other classmates have gone through.

**Summary**

After September 11, 2001, educators and librarians were searching for information and literature on Arab culture so that students and educators alike did not develop hatred toward a
Multicultural literature in the classroom and library provides children with opportunities to gain a larger perspective and learn about how behavior affects others in a multicultural society (Alexander, “Multicultural Cinderella” 32). The role of the teacher and teacher librarian is to make sure that students are not reading these books about the different cultures only during holidays, special months, or when there is a crisis. Providing the selection of diverse books all year long will encourage students to explore other cultures. The variety of materials in the library is important because students see cultures in a wide array of books, so they are able to gain positive experiences vicariously from the materials. Having multicultural resources is especially beneficial for young students because this is when they are beginning to form their cultural viewpoints and their prejudices (Mosely 1). Multicultural books allow students to explore different cultures without leaving the country (Arsenault and Brown 20).

Another positive aspect to using multicultural resources is that students from different ethnic backgrounds are able to view different characters that represent their culture. This leads those students to have higher self esteem (Alexander, “Multicultural Cinderella” 32). The use of multicultural literature also tends to help students gain a positive self identity and a positive view of school (Wan 142). A positive perspective can yield benefits later in life (Wan 142). When
the students are able to view their culture through the different reading materials in the library, they are more apt to develop a desire to read. Students from minority cultures tend to prefer materials that reflect their own cultural background, and they are likely to become highly engaged in their reading when they are introduced to these materials (Hughes-Hassell, Barkley, and Koehler). Students tend to be disengaged from reading materials at school when there is no cultural influence or reflection of their own culture in the materials. The use of multicultural materials provides a lifelong influence on students since they are developing multicultural views in a positive learning environment.

Students are able to embrace the learning that is taking place when they have experiences with a variety of reading materials. Picture books, fairy tales, and folk tales provide students with background knowledge while helping them make connections to the stories. Librarians develop their library collections around these materials so that teachers have diverse literature to work and teach with.
CHAPTER 3: CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research was to examine the ways that multicultural library collections enhance cultural sensitivity and tolerance in schools. Librarians use the multicultural library collection to help students develop cultural sensitivity. The importance of multiculturalism in school libraries inspired the following research questions:

1. What is the importance of teaching multicultural sensitivity in American schools?
2. Why is a multicultural collection important in teaching students about cultural sensitivity and tolerance?
3. What type of learning experiences can the librarian provide to educate students about cultural sensitivity and tolerance?

Teaching Multicultural Sensitivity

The American school population is becoming more culturally diverse each year. Students entering school have different issues related to their diverse cultures; their family, stereotypes, and the lack of pride can interfere with their educational experiences. Librarians and teachers have a responsibility to teach students that it is okay to be different and come from a different background. When students get an education that incorporates multicultural lessons over a period of time, they are able to practice what they have learned in everyday situations. These students are able to develop a deeper understanding of the cultures that surround them.

When students have a lack of knowledge of cultural backgrounds this can lead to discrimination and lower self esteem for the students who are discriminated against. Educators ensure that all the students are getting an equal education by providing materials that are anti-
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racist. The students that have developed mono-cultural ideas have a hard time breaking away from negative thoughts. So when educators provide culturally-based learning opportunities, then students may develop new or more positive beliefs and ideas about others. The most important goal educators work toward when teaching cultural sensitivity is that students understand that differences are only skin deep and that everyone is created equally.

**Importance of the Multicultural Library Collection**

A library collection that is culturally diverse provides books that teach tolerance and cultural sensitivity. Providing a multicultural library collection is a growing need, because the school population is becoming more culturally diverse. Multicultural collections lower the gap that culturally diverse students face when they enter a learning environment. Librarians are able to create a diverse collection of resources students use to create a positive image of themselves and their culturally diverse peers. When a range of perspectives are represented in a library collection, the library serves as an advocate for students who come from minority backgrounds. The librarian has a hand in making sure that all students feel included in the classroom and school environment.

A library collection that represents a variety of cultures provides students with a better understanding of the world that surrounds them and develops cultural sensitivity and tolerance. When educators are working to have students become sensitive to different cultures it is important that the information that is presented in the library collection is accurate. The literature in a multicultural library collection allows students to read about biases, prejudice, and traditions. These experiences allow students to better understand their classmates, and learn
what the past and present hold for the different cultures. Students who relate to classmates’ backgrounds are more likely to be cultural sensitivity to and tolerant of one another.

**Learning Experiences for Cultural Sensitivity and Tolerance**

Librarians incorporate multiple activities into the curriculum to introduce materials that promote cultural sensitivity and tolerance. Literature is one of the most effective ways to introduce students to different cultures. One way to incorporate multicultural literature is with book talks. A book talk is an event that takes place in a library setting, in which a librarian, author, or interested reader discuss excerpts from a book to raise interest in the material (Reitz). Book talks provide a way to promote and share literature within a learning group. Librarians use book talks as a guide to promote multicultural literature. The book talks also provide students with opportunities to find materials that represent their personal background.

Literature circles are another way librarians introduce multicultural materials to students. Literature circles are a version of classroom book clubs with the goal of encouraging students to choose books and develop a love for reading. Through literature circles students discuss different points of view and ideas obtained from the literature. When the librarian incorporates multicultural literature in literature circles, students gain a sense of empathy and sensitivity to the cultural groups that the books represent. The process of literature circles can be something that librarians help teachers incorporate into their classrooms. Librarians are also able to provide multicultural literature ideas for the teachers to use in classroom literature circles. The teacher and librarian can work together to provide positive multicultural educational experiences.

Picture books are another way for librarians to incorporate multicultural literature. Picture books provide students with engaging information about the cultures that surround them.
When picture books are used, a wide range of information can be incorporated, and students are able to travel vicariously all over the world. Students connect with the pictures in picture books by understanding the emotions and actions portrayed. Librarians are able to include picture books at any reading level of a library collection. Picture books provide students with opportunities to see different cultures through their own eyes and not the eyes of historians.

**Conclusion**

The use of a multicultural library collection can truly help students better understand the different cultures around them. Librarians are at the forefront of the transition to meeting the needs of the diverse students in American schools. When the library collection represents all cultures, then students are more likely to be introduced to a variety of traditions, customs, and beliefs of the world that surrounds them. By using these materials librarians and teachers are going to be able to teach cultural sensitivity and tolerance at all grade levels. Students who are introduced to these materials at an early age will be better able to work and live in a diverse community throughout their lives.
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Works Cited


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