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Worth Fighting For: Factors Influencing Selection Decisions in School Libraries

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WORTH FIGHTING FOR: FACTORS INFLUENCING SELECTION DECISIONS IN SCHOOL
LIBRARIES

by

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, John and Carolyn Dawkins, without whose unwavering support, I would have never undertaken such a daunting endeavor. They are two of the kindest, most hard-working people I know, and have provided me with wonderful opportunities to grow even when it has taken me far away from them.

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ABSTRACT

Intellectual freedom is one of the basic tenets of the library profession. However, most librarians will face attempts to censor or control access to information at some point in their careers. School librarians might choose to self-censor because they fear facing a challenge that calls into question not only their professionalism but also their personal values and ethics. While there have been numerous studies on censorship in other types of libraries, there is little research in the area of censorship and intellectual freedom as it pertains to the school library field. The purpose of this study is to understand the decisions being made by school librarians when choosing or not choosing materials for addition to the collection. To that end, the following research questions were the focus of this study:

- How do school librarians describe their own selection process?

- To what extent do school librarians engage in self-censorship as part of the collection development process?

- When school librarians engage in self-censorship, what are the ways they do it and the factors that influence their decision making?

This study used a mixed methods design composed of two phases: an initial survey distributed to school librarians in North and South Carolina and follow-up interviews with school librarians who volunteered to be interviewed. Four hundred seventy-one responses were collected as part of the initial survey. Out of this sample, one

hundred thirty of the responders volunteered to participate in the interview portion of the research. Using purposeful sampling in order to obtain representation from both states and the different types of school settings, forty-nine school librarians were interviewed. The survey instrument was designed to collect demographic data, as well as to test the usefulness of a scale to measure the likelihood of self-censorship. The interview questions included nine questions designed to elicit descriptions of the selection process and censorship experiences of school librarians.

The following themes emerged through analysis of the survey and interview responses:

1) Communication with those who presented concerns to materials in collections was key in allaying concerns and avoiding a full, written challenge;

2) Support of administration for school libraries and during the challenge process varied widely and influenced the decisions school librarians made when choosing materials and when choosing whether or not to defend them;

3) The grade levels of a school greatly impacted the decision making of school librarians when choosing to add materials, with middle school librarians finding the issue of age appropriateness especially difficult;

4) The awareness of and implementation of both materials selection policies and reconsideration policies influenced both the selection of materials and the successful defense of challenged materials;

5) School librarians sometimes chose to voluntarily remove or restrict access to materials when they thought they might face a full, formal challenge;

6) The funding of school libraries varies widely both within districts and across

states;

7) LGBTQ content was particularly troubling for school librarians when undergoing the selection process;

8) Librarians at combination schools (elementary/middle, middle/high) faced unique challenges when making selections and providing access to materials;

9) School librarians' perceptions of the community environment, particularly those located in rural communities, impacted their decision-making process.

The findings of this research suggest that school librarians are influenced by multiple factors when making selection decision and better preparation on dealing with controversial materials may assist them in avoiding self-censoring or censoring behaviors.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

When Susan Patron's children's book, *The Higher Power of Lucky*, won the prestigious Newbery Medal for Children's Literature in 2007, an immediate controversy arose. A huge discussion ensued on multiple blogs and listservs among elementary librarians discussing whether or not it was appropriate to include the book in their collections because it contained the word "scrotum" with many vowing to exclude it from their collections (Johnson, 2007). Why would school librarians choose not to add a book to their collection because of one word? Fear. *School Library Journal* conducted an anonymous survey in 2008 with 654 respondents. The survey results showed that 70% of school librarians would choose not to purchase controversial materials because they were afraid of how parents might react (Whelan, 2009b). School librarians are supposed to select materials for libraries based on curriculum and the reading needs of students. However, Pat Scales, formerly president of the Association of Library Services to Children says, "But if you reject a book just because of its subject matter or if you think that it would cause you some problems, then that's self-censorship. And that's going against professional ethics" (Whelan, 2009a, 28).

The defense of intellectual freedom is one of the basic tenets of the library profession. However, most librarians will face attempts to censor or control access to information at some point in their career. Challenges happen most often in schools and libraries and are usually begun by parents (American Library Association, 2015).

Because school librarians serve children and young adults almost exclusively, more attempts to censor or control access to information occur in this setting than in other types of libraries. One-third of schools have experienced at least one challenge (Hopkins, 1991). Although this number might seem low, it is estimated that only 20-25% of all challenges are reported (International Reading Association, 2001). In addition, ALA's Office of Intellectual Freedom only reports written challenges which means that many oral complaints and unwritten removals of materials are unaccounted for. *School Library Journal*'s self-censorship survey conducted in 2008 found that nearly half (49%) of the respondents had dealt with a challenge (Whelan, 2009b).

In this research study, school librarians from two states in the South were studied to determine the factors involved when they are choosing or not choosing materials for addition to their library collections. The purpose of this study was to learn more about how school librarians make collection development decisions and to what extent self-censorship plays a role in their decision making process. Using a mixed methods approach, I surveyed the school librarians and then conducted follow-up interviews.

1.1 STUDY CONTEXT

One of the most difficult experiences a school librarian can undergo as a professional is facing a challenge to an item in his/her library collection. Every time a school librarian faces a challenge, this causes a rise in stress (Hopkins, 1991, 1998). A school librarian's ability to successfully manage a challenge is influenced by his/her knowledge of the legal protections of the First Amendment, the case law surrounding student rights, and the support or training he/she has received.

When faced with the almost inevitable challenge, school librarians must decide if they wish to become selectors or censors themselves. As previously mentioned, handling challenges to the collection is stressful for school librarians. As a result, some may choose to self-censor or not purchase materials that have the potential for challenges. Self-censorship can be defined 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 & Williams, 1994, p. 11). In an article for the *UMKC Law Review*, Huston (2004) referred to self-censorship as "silent censorship" and saw this as more harmful than a challenge because "when a book is challenged for removal it often opens a discourse about the book and its themes. If a book never makes it to the shelves, discussion about its content never happens, and its themes are preemptively struck from the minds of children and their parents" (p. 242). It is extremely important to understand the decisions school librarians make in selecting materials, since they often serve as the conduit by which students learn about reading materials and information that can be used in their own information search processes. Information behavior studies of school librarians could explain the process by which school librarians make decisions about what to add to their collections. However, no such studies have been conducted. Peripheral studies of students discuss the role that school librarians play as mediators of information for their patrons (Meyers, Nathan, & Saxton, 2007). Therefore, when school librarians choose to select or reject materials they are also choosing to select or reject materials for their students.

A study by Meyers, Nathan, and Saxton examined the barriers to information seeking by adolescents in high school libraries. They studied this by framing their study

in Kuhlthau's Information Search Process model. They postulated that they could use Kuhthau's model of intermediation to "understand how the practice of teacher-librarians may conflict with the purpose of creating an information seeking and learning environment" (Meyers, Nathan, & Saxton, 2007).

Kuhlthau's model of the Information Search Process (1991, 2004) includes two stages which make the role of the school librarian significant for students: selection and exploration. During both of these stages, students are seeking information and often consult others in that process. School librarians are natural intermediaries for students when they seek information. Therefore, it is essential to understand how and why school librarians are making decisions about what information they are providing for their students. A study of the selection process of school librarians would provide insight into their information behavior and possible self-censoring behaviors.

As the researcher, I have a personal interest in this work. I became a high school librarian in 1999, and served in three different school systems from 1999 to 2014. Over the course of those fifteen years, I actually never had a challenge take place in a library where I worked, but I was very familiar with challenges around North Carolina and in the last school system where I worked. Although I never had a formal challenge, I certainly had people (primarily teachers) who questioned the presence of some of the materials I had chosen to add to the library collections. The conversation usually started with "Why would you choose to put this in the library?" Usually this was said in a very accusatory tone that called into question my professionalism and ethics. Fortunately, I was prepared for questions. I knew that I might get asked why I had materials that some community members might find

questionable especially since I was working at the time in a rural, conservative community. Because I was prepared to respond, I never faced a full, written complaint or request for reconsideration. However, school librarians are not always prepared when this happens, or they face entrenched, organized opposition to what some people consider "inappropriate" or "dirty" books. I want to understand what factors influence school librarians when they make selections and how they can overcome their fear of a challenge in order to make the best decisions they can when selecting materials for their students.

1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The purpose of this study is to understand the decisions being made by school librarians when choosing or not choosing materials for addition to the collection. To that end, the following research questions are the focus of this study:

- How do school librarians describe their own selection process?

- To what extent do school librarians engage in self-censorship as part of the collection development process?

- When school librarians engage in self-censorship, what are the ways they do it and the factors that influence their decision making?

1.3 SIGNIFICANCE

It is extremely important to understand the decisions school librarians make in selecting materials as they often serve as the conduit by which students learn about reading materials and information that can be used in their own information search processes. While there have been numerous studies on censorship in libraries, the world of school library research has little theory surrounding the area of censorship and

intellectual freedom. Previous censorship studies have either been simple surveys, checklist-based analysis of collections, or limited interviews with small samples. This study has the potential to identify factors that influence selection as well as provide insight into ways school librarians might become more self-aware about self-censoring behaviors. Finally, this study has the potential to assist educators of school librarians better prepare their students to become champions of intellectual freedom.

1.4 DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this study, the following terms are defined;

1. *School librarian(s)* – a librarian that serves in a school with a student population in any combination of grades from kindergarten to twelfth grade. They may serve in different types of schools: public, private, or charter.

2. *Collection development* – the systematic process by which librarians add to the materials in their collection in multiple formats.

3. *Selection* – the choosing of materials for addition to a library's collection based on their merits, content, usefulness, or other factors

4. *Censorship* – the removal of materials from a collection based on an intent to protect the reader from objectionable material. In the context of a library, this term is most often used when referring to attempts to remove or exclude materials by an outside entity.

5. *Self-censorship* – the decision to exclude materials from a collection prior to purchase due to either external or internal factors.

1.5 CONCLUSION

        In this chapter, I provided the background for my study. I introduced the problem underlying my study how school librarians make decisions when choosing or not choosing materials for addition to the collection. I followed with an overview of the research problem. Next, I stated the research questions. Finally, I described the significance of the study and defined relevant terms. The following chapter, Chapter II, presents an overview of the literature pertinent to the study, and Chapter III outlines the method.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

It is impossible to place this research into context without an examination of the rights of students and the relevant case law. In addition, the professional ethics and beliefs of school librarians about the right of students to access information must be understood. This literature review will examine the legal basis for intellectual freedom, the American Library Association's policies associated with intellectual freedom, previous studies on censorship and school libraries, and a theoretical perspective on self-censorship.

For the purposes of this literature review, Sections 2.1 and 2.2 will examine the first amendment of the U.S. Constitution and its application in the right to receive and the Supreme Court decisions that impact censorship and school libraries. Those sections are followed by Section 2.3, 2.4, and 2.5 which will examine the American Library Association's (ALA) statements that pertain to intellectual freedom. Section 2.6 will examine previous censorship studies that involve school libraries or school librarians. The final two sections, Sections 2.7 and 2.8 will examine the Spiral of Silence theory and the Willingness to Self-Censor Scale.

2.1 THE FIRST AMENDMENT AND THE RIGHT TO RECEIVE

The First Amendment is applied to public education through the application of three basic rights "(a) freedom of expression, (b) the right to receive information, and (c)

the absence of an established religion within governmental institutions" (Burns, 2001, p. 2).

The First Amendment includes the right to free speech which has been expanded to include the right to receive information. Bezanson (1987) explains that the court has problems applying First Amendment rights when the persons involved are minors. The Supreme Court refers to the right to access information as the right to receive (access to library materials that board members and parents question). However, there has been "no systematic attempt by any court to provide a fully reasoned basis for the decision rendered" in court cases that uphold the right to receive (p. 339). Right to receive is an extension of First Amendment protection given to speakers and messages to those who receive the information. The Supreme Court protects the right to receive through four forms of communication: mail, mass media, personal distribution of literature, and public speaking. The courts have also extended the freedom to learn and the right of inquiry through its defense of the right of expression in *Tinker v Des Moines*. *Tinker* is the foundation for extending protections to minors within public schools. Bezanson argues that the Supreme Court has implicitly extended the rights of free expression to include the right to have free access to other viewpoints even when school boards object. Objections to this interpretation question the function of school libraries and the extent of the authority of the school board.

2.2 THE PICO CASE (1982)

The only Supreme Court case to directly address censorship and school libraries is *Board of Education, Island Trees Union Free School District v Pico* (1982). This case was initiated because a conservative activist group – Parents of New York United

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(PONY-U) compiled a list of nine books that they wished to have removed from school libraries. The local school board chose to remove the books from the high school and junior high libraries referring to them as "anti-American, anti-Christian, anti-Semitic, and just plain filthy" (*Pico*, 1982 at 857), despite the recommendation of a committee of parent and faculty. After the board members removed titles without a formal review process, a group of parents filed suit against the district claiming a violation of their First Amendment rights. *Pico* was remanded for trial and the school board voted to return the books to the shelves in order to avoid further litigation (Klinefelter, 2010).

Pico is the first and only Supreme Court decision to address a student's right to receive information; however, it does not provide a clear explanation of the breadth of the school board's right to restrict access. The fact that all nine of the Supreme Court justices wrote opinions with a wide range of views did not contribute to clarity (Burns, 2001). Justice Brennan's opinion in *Board of Education v Pico* emphasized the rights of students, saying the "special characteristics of the school library make that environment especially appropriate for the recognition of the First Amendment rights of students" (Burns, 2001, p. 15). In writing his concurring opinion about *Board of Education v Pico*, Justice Newman explained that the removal of a book from the school library sends the message to students that the book is unacceptable (Bezanson, 1987).

Pico has been interpreted to allow school boards some latitude in choosing to remove a book. There are two standards that were discussed in the justices' opinions which might allow for removal: pervasive vulgarity or lack of educational suitability (DeMitchell & Carney, 2005). Unfortunately, the problem is associated with interpreting these two standards. In a review of First Amendment Rights and collection development,

Klinefelter (2010) explains that the use of those standards were supported by the opinions of four justices, and therefore, is a non-binding but persuasive authority for lower courts when reviewing censorship cases.

2.3 UNITED STATES V AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION (2003)

Although *United States v American Library Association* (2003) does not specifically address censorship in school libraries, it is seen as an example of the erosion of student rights since *Pico* (Peltz, 2005). In *US v ALA*, ALA challenged the constitutionality of filtering in public libraries. In its decision, the Supreme Court allowed federally mandated filtering of public library internet terminals. None of the opinions reference *Pico* even though the two decisions might come into conflict "suggesting an affection for new-federalist deference to local authorities vis-à-vis children's civil rights" (p. 104). ALA's case was only intended to challenge federal authority in public libraries, although the federal ruling has been applied to school libraries.

2.4 LIMITS ON THE RIGHT TO RECEIVE

In only two cases has the Supreme Court limited minors' rights to receive information when the adults' constitutional rights remained broader. In Pico's plurality decision, the court gave schools a good bit of latitude to restrict access to information if the school's decision is based on the fact that that information is "educationally unsuitable" rather than a subjective disagreement with or disapproval of the content. The decision to remove the material and declare it "educationally unsuitable" requires a fact-based inquiry and testimony from educational experts. If the decision to remove materials is based solely on the ideas the books expressed, then that decision was deemed unsuitable (Magi & Garnar, 2015). An additional restriction on minors' rights to receive

information came in *Ginsberg v New Yor*k. This decision allows states to decide that some materials are obscene for minors even if those materials are protected for adults. According to the decision, states can adopt a "distinct, broader definition of obscenity for minors (Magi & Garnar, 2015, p. 128). Despite this decision, the Supreme Court has made clear that school boards cannot simply ban access to a full category of speech and must not ban material as unsuitable for minors without considering the entire population of minors including older teens.

2.5 ALA'S POSITION ON INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM

The American Library Association (ALA) has adopted a number of policies that support intellectual freedom and oppose attempts to censor materials in all types of libraries. Interestingly, ALA has never officially defined intellectual freedom. Jones explains that the term has been used to mean "the right of every individual to both seek and receive information from all points of view without restrictions" (Magi & Garnar, 2015, p. 3). There are four core ALA statements that act as the foundation for intellectual freedom in libraries: *Libraries: An American Value, Library Bill of Rights, Code of Ethics of the American Library Association*, and the *Freedom to Read Statement* (American Library Association, 1999; American Library Association, 1996; American Library Association, 2008; American Library Association, 2004). These policies are endorsed by the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) and can often be found within selection or acquisition policies for school libraries. Censorship issues are more likely to occur when there is no policy to guide selection or reconsideration. Kamhi (1981) discusses this in her summary report on the survey "Book and Materials Selection for School Libraries and Classrooms: Procedures, Challenges, and Responses". She

concludes in her findings that "schools that do have written selection policies and reconsideration procedures appear to resolve conflicts with few restrictions on the instruction and library materials available to students" (p. 22). This lack of written policy can lead to arbitrary removal of books without any due process or consideration.

First adopted in 1939, and amended five times since, the *Library Bill of Rights* is a cornerstone document for intellectual freedom. Three of the six articles deal with intellectual freedom and censorship, with article II explaining the need to present all points of view in a collection. In addition, in 1993, the ALA Intellectual Freedom Committee adopted a statement that the use of the word "origin" in Article V, which refers to a person's right to use a library, includes the idea of "age." This statement emphasizes that a person's age should not limit their access to materials (Magi & Garnar, 2015). AASL takes it a step further by approving ALA's "Access to Resources and Services in the School Library Media Program: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights" (rev. 2005). This encourages school librarians to fight against censorship efforts from outside forces as well as avoid internal barriers – such as restricted shelving, age or grade level restrictions (ALA, 2014).

The *Code of Ethics of the American Library Association* was adopted in 1939 and subsequently amended three times, most recently in 2008. The purpose of the *Code of Ethics* is to make known to members of the library profession and the public the ethical guidelines for librarians and other professionals who provide information services. Article II of the *Code of Ethics* states that "We uphold the principles of intellectual freedom and resist all efforts to censor library resources" (Magi & Garnar, 2015, p. 17).

The Freedom to Read was first adopted in 1953 by the ALA Council and the Association of American Publishers Freedom to Read Committee. It has since been revised four times, most recently in 2004. This statement begins with an essay about the need for free access to information as a cornerstone of democracy. Following the essay, the statement includes seven propositions which are grounded in the Constitution. Included in explanatory text for proposition 4 is an explanation of one purpose of guaranteeing the freedom to read as a responsibility

> to prepare the young to meet the diversity of experience in life to which they will be exposed, as they have a responsibility to help them learn to think critically for themselves. These are affirmative responsibilities, not to be discharged simply by preventing them from reading works for which they are not yet prepared. (Magi & Garnar, 2015, p. 25)

This statement explains the importance of providing diverse and challenging materials for young people.

Adopted in 1999, *Libraries: An American Value* is the most recently developed and adopted statement that is part of the foundation for intellectual freedom. This statement is written as a contract between libraries and the communities that they serve. The statement explicitly mentions that one purpose of libraries is to defend the constitutional rights of all to use the materials, services, and resources of the library. This statement specifically mentions including children and teens as individuals whose rights will be defended (Magi & Garnar, 2015).

Despite the protections afforded by the first amendment, Supreme Court decisions, and the intellectual freedom statements provided by ALA, censorship still

occurs in all types of libraries. External pressures often attempt to censor what is available in libraries, but internal factors can also play a part. Previous censorship studies have attempted to understand the internal and external factors that lead to censorship and self-censorship.

2.6 PREVIOUS CENSORSHIP STUDIES

One of the earliest guides for librarians who serve children was published in 1930, *Library Service for Children*. Although the author devotes three chapters to book selection, there is no mention of the inclusion of controversial materials or censorship (Power, 1930). First published by the American Library Association in 1930 and then in subsequent editions, *The Library in the School* also discusses book selection. However, in its fourth edition from 1947, this discussion does include a brief discussion of controversial materials referring to them as "Books of opinion." Fargo explains that "Because the school library serves the immature reader the school library has always recognized an obligation of censorship" (Fargo, 1947, p. 156). This implies that censorship in school libraries was an accepted practice. However, Fargo does explain further that in certain fields such as politics, economics, and society, students need to be prepared by being exposed to opposing viewpoints but only when that exposure is guided by classroom instruction.

The earliest discussions of the issue of self-censorship came from an article by Lester Asheim (1953) in the *Wilson Library Bulletin*. In this article, he discussed the idea that when librarians are involved in creating library collections, they are going through a process of selection as no single collection can contain everything that is published. As a result, librarians must be careful to select but not censor. While some might argue that the

practice of selecting books for inclusion in a collection is in itself an act of censorship, Asheim refuted this, saying:

> Selection…begins with a presumption in favor of liberty of thought; censorship, with a presumption in favor of thought control. Selection's approach to the book is positive, seeking its value in the book as a book and in the book as a whole. Censorship's approach is negative, seeking for vulnerable characteristics wherever they can be found – anywhere within the book, or even outside it. Selection seeks to protect the right of the reader to read; censorship seeks to protect - not the right – but the reader himself from the fancied effects of his reading. The selector has faith in the intelligence of the reader; the censor has faith only in his own. (Asheim, 1953, p. 67)

Thirty years later, Asheim revisited this issue pointing out the gatekeeping role that librarians play in access to information (1983). Asheim further discusses why librarians choose to defend materials:

> So what we are saying, when we resist the removal of materials that have been selected for the library's collection or take exception to the restriction of materials that have already passed the test of relevance for a particular library, is not that questions may not be raised about the librarian's choices. It is that one segment of the library's total constituency should not be permitted to interfere with another segment's rights and that it is part of our responsibility to protect the rights of all. (p. 181)

Asheim continues by discussing the positive and negative connotations of creating a "balanced" collection and the impact that organized censorship efforts can have on selection.

The earliest landmark study of censorship of libraries took place in California. Fiske and a team of researchers interviewed 204 participants in twenty-six communities in California. For each community, they interviewed the head librarian in the city library, a head librarian in a county library system (if there was one), the school superintendent or his/her designee, senior high school principals, and school librarians (Fiske, 1960, 2). She found that librarians in school and public libraries engaged in a degree of self-censorship in the selection process. In her conclusion, she stated that "beliefs in the concepts of intellectual freedom did not always translate into actual ... practices" (Fiske, 1960, 110). Fiske felt that the censorship behaviors of librarians could be divided into "conscious" and "subconscious" acts during the selection process. Conscious censorship happens when a librarian rejects a book based on the content of the book or the personal background of its author. Nearly two-thirds of the Fiske participants said that the controversial nature of the author or the book itself could result in it not being purchased. Subconscious censorship occurs when a librarian states a different, more legitimate reason for the rejection of a controversial book; therefore, its content is not necessarily the main reason given for rejection. For example, the librarian may say that the decision to not purchase an item was due to its content being too mature for young children, when in reality the true reason is because the content included a non-traditional family that had two mothers. Fiske found 40 percent of the librarians who stated strong intellectual freedom beliefs practiced subconscious acts of censorship (Fiske, 1960, p. 64-65). Her

study also revealed that librarians do not "feel strongly enough about themselves as professionals to uphold intellectual freedom values when the community voices censure towards library materials" (Niosi, 1998).

Additionally, Fiske found several other factors that lead to greater self-censorship or awareness of the controversial nature of books. Fiske found that school librarians in larger municipalities were less likely to purchase controversial materials than those from smaller cities. However, Fiske attributed this to the size of the bureaucracies involved rather than to a rural versus urban divide. Fiske also noted that librarians with professional training were less likely to avoid controversial materials than those with no professional training. One of the biggest factors was the length of work experience held by the librarian. Fiske reported that 56 percent of people who had worked less than ten years did not take the controversial nature of a book into account when making selections, while 24 per cent of those with twenty years of experience or more avoided controversial materials in their selections (Fiske, 1960, p. 66-68).

Another early study into censorship and school libraries was conducted by Farley (1964) as his dissertation research. Farley sought to discover what book censorship was taking place in senior high libraries in Nassau County, New York. He examined both voluntary and involuntary censorship. For this study, Farley used qualitative methods including detailed, structured interviews with the head librarian in 54 high school libraries. These interviews took place during the 1961-1962 school year. The interviews focused on principles and practices in selection including why certain books were rejected and what internal and external pressures were involved in the selection process. In the interviews, Farley focused on three topics that were controversial and asked

participants to talk about specific titles. At the time of the interview, Farley also

examined each library's holdings, card-catalog, and closed-shelf/restricted circulation. He

also obtained and analyzed the district's official book selection policy. He held four

follow-up interviews to clarify initial responses. A strength of this study is the wealth of

information that Farley had to analyze. He had gathered rich data and responses from

many participants. However, Farley only interviews high school librarians. By only

including this group of participants, his conclusions might not be applicable in other

grade levels. Additionally, Farley conducted his research in a single county in New York.

One questions whether his findings would hold true in other locations in New York or

elsewhere in the country. Finally, this study was conducted in 1961. Because of this,

newer research would need to be conducted to determine if the training of school

librarians in intellectual freedom matters has changed, or if self-censorship has become

less or more prevalent.

More recently, Coley (2002) examined the collections of Texas high school

libraries to determine if self-censorship might be occurring. Coley defines self-censorship

as "the process by which a librarian chooses not to purchase a given book because of the

item's potential for being challenged" (p. 6). Coley examined the online patron access

catalogs of one hundred high school libraries to determine if they included any of a list of

fifty titles that contained controversial content. Based on previous studies, he concluded

that the school librarian engaged in self-censoring behaviors if their collections did not

have at least half of the titles. This study found that self-censorship was more likely to

occur in small, rather than large, schools, but this may be due to smaller budgets and

student enrollment. Coley also explained that librarians in smaller schools may not have a support structure in place to assist with controversial selections.

Several additional dissertation research projects that focus on censorship in school libraries were conducted by Bump (1980), Cordell (2008), Rickman (2007), and Franklin (2006). Bump's study (1980) was an attempt to determine if high school librarians were influenced by previous censorship attempts when making selections about what to add to their own collections. Bump surveyed 608 public high school librarians in Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, and Oklahoma and had a 70% response rate. The questionnaire provided the librarians with a list of 25 books that had a high degree of censorship and asked them to reveal if those books were in their collections. They were then asked to rank the books 1 – 25 in order of choice if they were to purchase all 25, assuming they did not already have them in the collection. Additional questions were used to determine if the librarians had any restricted shelves, books they found personally offensive, and additional censorship questions. Bump found that previous censorship attempts did not impact selection by the librarians; however, books that personally offended the librarian were usually not included in the collection. Bump suggested that this finding could mean that these librarians needed to reexamine their attitudes about reading and access to materials.

Cordell (2008) conducted interviews with twelve high school librarians to determine the extent to which they participated in self-censoring behaviors. This study found that they did self-censor, primarily books with homosexual themes. Cordell explains that self-censorship can take place both pre- and post-selection. Pre-selection is described as "avoiding the purchase of materials that are known to be controversial or

that are distasteful in some regard to the person(s) selecting" (p. 18). Post-selection often involves the "surreptitious" removal of titles from classrooms, lists, libraries or schools when there is a threat of a challenge (p. 19). Post-selection censorship occurs most often when the school librarian or the school itself has already had to deal with previous challenges. Cordell concluded that "Despite the fact that almost all of the policies specifically mentioned First Amendment rights and the importance of the Library Bill of Rights, many of the librarians violated those principles in their collection development procedures" (p. 135-136). Cordell found that community pressure was the strongest factor influencing self-censorship while school building administrators typically supported the professional judgment of the school librarian.

Rickman (2007) examined self-censorship by school librarians in Arkansas, Delaware, and North Carolina to determine if the factors influencing self-censorship were internal based on an individual's belief system, external resulting from pressures within the school system or external resulting from pressures from the community. Rickman used a questionnaire to examine the selection process used by school librarians as well as to determine what impact undergoing a challenge might have on their decision-making process. Unlike the previously discussed studies, Rickman determined that, overall, school librarians were not likely to self-censor. However, four factors led to self-censoring behaviors: being aged 60-69; not holding professional licensure as a school librarian, being at a high school, or having 15 or fewer years of experience as an educator. A study to examine if these results are generalizable is necessary.

Franklin's dissertation (2006) is different from the other dissertations previously mentioned because of its use of private school librarians as opposed to public school

librarians. Franklin conducted an exploratory two-phase study including a survey and follow-up phone interviews of private college preparatory school librarians in the southeast United States. The purpose of Franklin's study is also slightly different from the previously discussed dissertations: she wished to determine if private college preparatory school libraries experienced challenges and if they did, what factors influenced how the challenges might be resolved.

Similar to Bump's study, Woods and Salvatore (1981) created a survey to determine if high school librarians were self-censoring. The survey included a list of 52 titles which had previously had two or more censorship attempts between 1966 and 1977. The survey was used to determine how many libraries had these materials in their collection, if they might be on restricted access, and of those who did not own them, if they would be willing to purchase them. Woods and Salvatore came to the conclusion that librarians did seem to be practicing self-censorship either through the exclusion of the materials or through placing them on restricted access. A drawback of this checklist-based research is that it does not examine any additional factors to determine why these materials might not be in the collection.

Checklist studies are not always conducted using surveys or questionnaires. Fliger's study examined the online public access catalogs of elementary schools in Iowa to determine if the school librarians were choosing to add controversial books from the ALA Notable Children's Book Lists from 2002-2009 (2010). Fliger's study only takes into account the geographic location within the state of Iowa and does not consider other reasons for choosing or not choosing to add materials to a collection.

Serebnick (1982) conducted an analysis of this type of checklist-based research on self-censorship to discuss what the purposes of this type of study might be, how they define self-censorship, and how they determine what titles to include in their checklists. Serebnick examined more than 15 different studies going back to 1881. Serebnick found that the studies greatly varied in scope, with some simply analyzing the holdings and circulation of controversial books. Some of the studies have included insight into the reasoning behind the exclusion of titles. Several also included either limited or extensive demographic data about librarians, their communities, and other related items. Serebnick points out several potential drawbacks for the previous studies using this type of research, including a lack of explanation for why certain titles might be included, the labelling of librarians as self-censors with little or no definition of what that means, and little explanation of how many of the pre-determined list of titles should be included in the collections (if not all).

Additional research has been conducted to examine the factors that influence school librarians when they are making selections. Another significant study of censorship was conducted by Hopkins (1991). Hopkins implemented a national survey of censorship in school libraries in 1989-1990. This study examined whether the school had a selection policy, how many media specialists were in each school, whether school librarians felt pressure when selecting materials, and if they fielded either oral or written complaints from 1986-1989. Hopkins found that most school librarians felt little or no pressure in selecting materials; however, where challenges had occurred, the percentage who felt under pressure was double the number of librarians who had not reported challenges. In a subsequent study, Hopkins (1998) examined the support needed by

school librarians when facing a challenge. Her previous studies in 1991 and 1993 showed that when school librarians sought assistance, the challenged material was more likely to be kept in the library. She identified possible forms of support that could benefit school librarians who were facing a challenge.

The only attempt to place the study of censorship within the context of a theory located by this researcher was undertaken by Frances McDonald in 1993. She based her study design on Kohlberg's theory of moral development. McDonald surveyed school librarians in Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. McDonald designed her study to examine the relationship among the attitudes of school librarians toward intellectual freedom and censorship. The survey actually included two instruments: a survey on intellectual freedom and censorship attitudes and another to measure the level of moral reasoning. McDonald's research was intended to explain the gap between what librarians might believe as professionals and their actual practices. Her study validated previous studies where researchers found that the level of education was a variable indicating a tendency to censor materials. McDonald went on to propose that there might be a gap between what is being taught in terms of ethical beliefs of the profession and training in how to implement those beliefs (McDonald, 1993, p. xiii).

Little research has been conducted to examine the role that administrators, particularly principals might play in censoring materials in library collections. Hopkins (1995) noted that when a challenge was initiated by principal the result was usually the removal or restriction of the challenged item. Her study also explained that in those situations the relationships between the school librarians and principals was not seen as one of partnership. In reporting on a specific case of censorship in Kansas City in 1993,

Principal magazine discussed the parameters of the case and the role that school and district administrators played in violating the First Amendment. The article warns, "School principals and district officials must assiduously resist the temptation to quell controversy that occasionally arises concerning school library holdings by summarily removing the source of the controversy" (Zirkel & Gluckman, 1997, p. 62). In a Canadian study conducted in 1989 which surveyed 400 principals in two provinces, Rainey found that over half of the principals believe they should be able to remove materials from the school library. Additionally over half believed that it was acceptable to place restrictions on content instead of removing challenged materials (1989).

In 2016, *School Library Journal* chose to update its previous study on controversial books that had been conducted in 2008 (Whelan, 2009b). A random sample of school librarians was emailed the survey, and 574 U.S. school librarians responded. This study found that 9 out of 10 school librarians who served at the elementary or middle school level had chosen to not purchase material because of the potential for controversy. At the high school level that percentage was lower. One significant change from the previous study results was an increase in the use of content labels. Additionally, the results showed that previous challenges had an impact on the purchasing decisions by school librarians. This impact was increased when the challenge arose from an administrator as opposed to originating with a parent (School Library Journal, September 28, 2016).

School librarians might choose to self-censor because they fear facing a challenge that calls into question not only their professionalism but also their personal values and ethics. The library literature provides little theoretical basis for self-censoring behaviors.

However, an examination of communications and journalism literature does provide a possible explanation of why school librarians might choose to reject materials.

2.7 SPIRAL OF SILENCE THEORY

Elizabeth Noelle-Neumann proposed the Spiral of Silence Theory in 1974. Noelle-Neumann's research centered on the field of public opinion research, and it particularly focused on the formation of public opinion. Her study was designed to understand why people chose to censor themselves when their opinions were not those of the majority. In her work, she connected public opinion and the interaction of individuals with their social environments. She posited that "fear of isolating oneself (not only fear of separation but also doubt about one's own capacity for judgment) is an integral part of all processes of public opinion" (Noelle-Neumann, 1974, p. 43). Noelle-Neumann suggested that in order to avoid isolation, individuals used a "quasi-statistical organ" to observe and assess their social environment to determine if a viewpoint might be successful (1974, p. 44). Noelle-Neumann describes the spiraling process as following certain steps:

1. Witnessing a struggle between conflicting opinions or positions;

2. Determining where you stand as an individual;

3. If you agree with the prevailing opinion, self-confidence is enhanced and this personal opinion is more likely to be expressed without fear of isolation. If you disagree with the prevailing opinion, the less likely you are to express that opinion;

4. The more the individual perceives either widespread or less acceptance of his/her view, the more that person's opinion will adapt to fit the situation. (1974, p. 44).

The Spiral of Silence Theory has several key components including a fear of isolation, unwillingness to speak against perceived majority opinion, and the belief that public opinion tends to keep people in line (Weiss, 2009). The theory has fascinated researchers since its first publication and numerous studies have been published on the topic (Peterson, 2012). Peterson in an introduction to a Spiral of Silence Theory focused special issue of the *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, discusses its appeal as a theory rooted in reality and yet the difficulty that researchers have in conducting empirical studies to test the theory.

In her later work, Noelle-Neumann came to view public opinion as a force that needed to be studied in order to determine its effect on society (Noelle-Neumann, 1991, p. 257). In particular, an understanding of how individuals come to assess the climate of public opinion was needed. How do people develop a quasi-statistical sense, "the ability to estimate how strong opposing sides are in the public debate?" (Noelle-Neumann, 1991, p. 268). Noelle-Neumann's Spiral of Silence Theory suggests that understanding of the climate of public opinion comes from two sources: observations by individuals within their own environment and life experience and indirect observation that takes place through mass media (1991, p. 270). Noelle-Neumann claimed that the most important conclusion from the spiral of silence theory is "its potential for creating an understanding of our dual nature, subject to the polarity between individuality and social nature" (1991, p. 282). This might also explain the disparity between school librarians' professed belief in intellectual freedom and their practical application of it.

The Spiral of Silence Theory has been used extensively in mass communication and journalism research (Kennamer, 1990). However, this researcher only found one

instance when it has been used in the field of library and information science. Luarn & Hsieh (2014) used the theory to explore user anonymity in virtual online communities and the role anonymity plays in the willingness to express opinions. The field of school librarianship is not an anonymous one. In addition, the decision to select or reject materials is not a matter of opinion but of following selection policies. However, the study of self-censorship behaviors is still applicable to this field. In particular, the study of whether or not a person is more likely to self-censor could predict the behavior of school librarians in selecting materials, or it might be used to inform and enlighten school librarians in order to prevent that behavior.

2.8 THE WILLINGNESS TO SELF-CENSOR SCALE

In order to understand the personal characteristics that might lead to self-censoring behaviors, Hayes, Glynn, & Shanahan (2005) developed an 8-item self-reporting instrument to measure the individual difference of willingness to self-censor. The Willingness to Self-Censor Scale (WTSC) has been tested using students and non-students. They found evidence of the validity of the WTSC through findings that show that those who self-censor are more anxious about social interaction and communication, tend to be shy, are concerned about how others judge them, and less argumentative. The scale can be administered orally or in writing and includes the following statements which the respondents reply to by marking strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, or strongly agree:

1. It is difficult for me to express my opinion if I think others won't agree with what I say.

2. There have been many times when I have thought others around me were wrong but I didn't let them know.

3. When I disagree with others, I'd rather go along with them than argue about it.

4. It is easy for me to express my opinion around others who I think will disagree with me.

5. I'd feel uncomfortable if someone asked my opinion and I knew that he or she wouldn't agree with me.

6. I tend speak my opinion only around friends or other people I trust.

7. It is safer to keep quiet than publicly speak an opinion that you know most others don't share.

8. If I disagree with others, I have no problem letting them know it. (p. 306)

Two studies followed the initial study in working to validate the usefulness of the Willingness to Self-Censor Scale. The first was an experimental study that asked participants to take the scale and then followed-up with a hypothetical scenario which included interaction with a group with opinions different from the participants (Hayes, Glynn, & Shanahan, 2005b). The study found that those who scored high on the WTSC were more likely to avoid voicing their opinion publicly. The second study conducted the test in a conversational setting instead of a hypothetical situation (Hayes, Uldall, & Glynn, 2010). Once again, the scale was validated.

Three other studies have been conducted where the Willingness to Self-Censor Scale was used to examine behaviors of high school and college newspaper editors and advisors (Filak & Miller, 2008; Filak, Reinardy, & Maksl, 2009; Filak, 2012). These three studies provide a better link between this study and the behaviors of school

librarians. The Filak and Miller study (2008) gathered results from a nationwide survey of high school newspaper advisors. They concluded from their findings that

> self-censorship is most likely to occur when individuals are faced with situations that dictate they go against the grain, socially. To that end, advisers of high school newspapers who rate high in self-censorship will most likely demonstrate a lack of comfort in regard to controversial topics. The desire to please and the instinct to suppress are clearly components of this measurement (p. 22-23).

This suggests that similarly placed school personnel, such as school librarians might engage in the same behaviors.

It is beneficial to examine the first Filak and Miller study (2008) and the Filak, Reinardy, and Maksl study (2009) when examining school library censorship issues, since high school newspaper advisors share many characteristics with school librarians. Both, typically, are the only persons on their school campuses who hold their positions. They each make decisions about what information is made available to the student body. Often that information is controversial. Both school librarians and school newspaper advisors have a concern about a potential outcome for their decisions that is not shared by others in spiral of silence research: fear of losing their jobs (Filak, Reinardy, & Maksl, 2009, p. 371). The survey instruments used in these two studies were designed to test the Willingness to Self-Censor Scale and determine if self-censorship was situational or intrinsic. The researchers did this by including the scale as part of the survey. In addition, they included a section asking newspaper advisors to react to a list of controversial topics and how comfortable they would feel in including articles on these topics in their newspapers. In addition, the survey concluded with three brief questions to assess the risk

advisors feel associated with speaking out (Filak & Miller, 2008; Filak, Reinardy, & Maksl, 2009). One limitation of these studies is the lack of inclusion of other outside variables such as community pressure, parent organizations, or support from other advisors.

2.9 CONCLUSION

As seen in Chapter Two, the issue of censorship in school libraries and, specifically, self-censorship has been studied for more than fifty years. The study of the factors that lead to self-censoring behaviors is needed in order to better prepare school librarians in their work to create diverse collections that meet the needs of all of their students. Chapter Three discusses the proposed methodology for a study of school librarians in North and South Carolina.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

As the review of literature indicates, previous studies on censorship in libraries have used three different methodologies: quantitative with the use of surveys, qualitative with the use of interviews, or checklist-based collections analysis. This study used a mixed methods approach, in order to more completely determine the factors that influence school librarians when they make collection development decisions.

As stated in Chapter One, the purpose of this study was to understand the decisions being made by school librarians when choosing or not choosing materials for addition to the collection. To that end, the research was guided by the following questions:

- How do school librarians describe their own selection process?

- To what extent do school librarians engage in self-censorship as part of the collection development process?

- When school librarians engage in self-censorship, what are the ways they do it and the factors that influence their decision making?

This study used a mixed methods approach to examine the behaviors that school librarians use when making decisions about selecting materials for their school library collections. The researcher gathered data using both quantitative and qualitative methods, in order to determine the variables that lead to self-censoring behaviors. The first phase

of the study was a survey administered in two states, and the second phase consisted of forty-nine interviews with school librarians conducted virtually.

This methodology chapter is divided into subsections. First, an overview and explanation of the research design is provided. Then, I provide a description of the setting and research participants. The third section explains the methods of data collection. In the fourth section, I explain the anticipated methods used for analysis of the data that is collected from participants. The fifth section includes the anticipated limitations of the study. The final section includes an analysis of the demographics of those who chose to participate in this research and a brief conclusion.

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

Creswell defines the mixed methods approach to research as

> an approach to inquiry involving collecting both quantitative and qualitative data, integrating the two forms of data, and using distinct designs that may involve philosophical assumptions and theoretical frameworks. The core assumption of this form of inquiry is that the combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches provides a more complete understanding of a research problem than either approach alone. (2014, p.4)

The strength of using a mixed methods of approach is that it draws on the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative research, while avoiding the limitations of using these approaches in isolation. Practically, mixed methods is a more sophisticated way to conduct research that avoids oversimplification of complex issues such as self-censorship.

For the purpose of this study, I used the explanatory sequential mixed methods design:

Figure 3.1. Explanatory Sequential Mixed Methods Design

The intent of sequential mixed methods design allows for the collection and analysis of quantitative data with a follow-up collection of qualitative data from participants from the quantitative data results. The intent is to conduct follow up interviews to help explain survey responses. The quantitative data analysis can also be used to sharpen and focus interview questions.

3.2 SETTING AND PARTICIPANTS

The research was conducted with school librarians in North and South Carolina. These two states have strong school library associations and state level support for school library programs. The potential sample size for each state was quite large. Surveys were distributed electronically through each state association's listserv. Membership in the North Carolina School Library Media Association (NCSLMA) is over 1,000, and membership in the South Carolina Association of School Librarians (SCASL) is over 600. Because not all school librarians in these states are members of their state-level school library associations, the survey was also distributed in North Carolina through the Department of Instruction's listserv for district level school library supervisors. In South

Carolina, the survey was distributed through a SCASL listserv that serves district level

school library supervisors. The participants in the second qualitative phase of the research

were drawn from the survey participants. Survey participants were asked to include a

contact email address if they were willing to be interviewed. Interview participants were

selected based on purposeful sampling with the intent to include participants from a range

of grade levels and school settings. According to Creswell, purposeful sampling means

that "the inquirer selects individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully

inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study"

(2007, p. 125). In particular, I used stratified purposeful sampling because it "illustrates

subgroups and facilitates comparisons" (Creswell, 2007, p. 127). The sample size for

interviews was forty-nine.

3.3 DATA COLLECTION

The explanatory sequential mixed methods design calls for two distinct phases

including quantitative sampling in phase one, followed by purposeful sampling during the

qualitative phase. Creswell explains that "the quantitative results typically inform the

types of participants to be purposefully selected for the qualitative phase and the types of

questions that will be asked of the participants." The results can be used to "plan (or build

on to)" the qualitative phase (2014, p. 224).

The first stage in the research process gathered data through the use of a survey

(Appendix A). The survey is a self-reporting instrument, largely using Likert scales for

responses. Likert scales are often used in surveys where respondents are given a choice of

five or seven predetermined responses with a neutral point. These scales allow the

participants to express the extent to which they either agree or disagree with statements. The survey will have several sections:

1. Demographic data – age, gender, years in current school, total years as a school librarian, professional credentials – certification, National Board licensure; total years in education; grade level of current school; location of school (rural, urban, suburban), awareness of district selection policy

2. Administration of the Willingness to Self-Censor Scale (Hayes, Glynn & Shanahan, 2005a, 2005b)

3. Controversial topics inclusion - The survey will ask the respondents to rate a number of controversial topics based on how comfortable they would feel about purchasing materials. The topics will be drawn from the general topics that have been identified by ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom (American Library Association, 2015) as those that are most often challenged in libraries.

4. Perception of principal – Take the same list of controversial topics and have them rate how comfortable they feel that their principal would be about inclusion of materials on these topics in the library collection.

5. Perception of their job – How do they feel about their job?

The second stage in the research process included individual interviews with school librarians. These participants were purposefully selected from those who volunteered to be interviewed. They had the opportunity to volunteer by including contact information at the conclusion of the survey. Each interview lasted between twenty and forty minutes. Most of the interviews were conducted using a virtual video chat using Google Hangout, Skype, or FaceTime. Two interviews were phone interviews.

Interview participants were given the opportunity to read the transcript of their interviews and provide further clarifying comments. The interview questions were developed to fill in gaps in the survey in order to answer the research questions. In the initial, there were five questions to be asked of all participants and three additional questions to be asked of those participants who had experienced a full, formal challenge to materials. These questions were reviewed by the proposal committee and several practicing school librarians. After the first interview, it became clear that an additional question was needed to elicit information about the level of support that all participants felt they received from their school administrations. (See Appendix B for questions.)

3.4 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is in three parts: quantitative results discussed in Chapter Four, qualitative discussion in Chapter Five, and then synthesis in the final chapter. The quantitative data analysis includes descriptive and inferential statistics. The survey data is used to determine which variables would most likely predict a school librarian's comfort level with the purchase of library materials on controversial topics. The data is analyzed using hierarchical regressions to determine to what degree a school librarian's demographic variables, sense of the principal's comfort level regarding a topic, and willingness to self-censor will predict the school librarian's comfort levels when choosing to purchase materials. Hierarchical regression analysis is used to "investigate relationships within and between hierarchical levels of grouped data" (Woltman, Feldstain, MacKay, & Rocchi, 2012).

Qualitative analysis was undertaken by completing several rounds of coding cycles (Saldana, 2016). I used two coding cycles for each interview using the following coding methods:

1. Attribute coding – basic descriptive coding about the interview participant & interview itself (Saldana, 2016, p. 83).

2. Structural coding – links data from interviews to larger data set such as from survey data (Saldana, 2016, p. 98).

3. "In vivo" coding - allows for the use of the participants' voice (Saldana, 2016, p. 105-106).

4. Emotion coding – coding of emotions expressed by participants – both verbal and nonverbal - (Saldana, 2016, p. 124-125).

5. Values – beliefs and motivation (Saldana, 2016, p. 132).

6. Versus coding – allows the researcher to explore contrast between belief and action/practice (Saldana, 2016, p. 136-137).

The initial round of coding focused on attribute, structural, and in vivo coding seeking to focus on answering the research questions of this study and finding parallels between the interviews and survey data. The second round of coding employed emotions, values, and versus coding seeking to determine the participants' beliefs about the selection process and handling controversial material and the reality of responding to questions about content. Due to the large amount of data collected through the interview process, NVivo coding software was used to code the data and then conduct analysis examining frequency of responses for individual codes. Additionally, as coding was being conducted, I wrote analytic memos. The purpose of analytic memos is to provide a record

of my reflections on "coding processes and code choices; how the process of inquiry is taking shape; and the emergent patterns, categories and subcategories, themes, and concepts" (p. 44).

3.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

As this study was conducted in two states in the southeastern United States, there is a limit to the generalizability of the research. The conservative nature of the geographic region might also have skewed the results. To be generalizable, a similar study needs to be undertaken that includes a wider array of geographic regions of the United States. In addition, since this research focuses on censorship and controversial topics, people might have chosen not to participate.

An inherent limitation of survey research is the question of representation of the sample. Using the membership of two state-wide school librarian organizations provided access to a large sample of the population. In addition, an online survey has advantages over a paper, mailed survey. As most school librarians have access to email, online surveys are easy for the participant to take, and can allow for the direct downloading of data. Because the survey was distributed via email, one difficulty that might have occurred is that a school system's spam filter might have rejected an email with an attachment or link embedded in the email.

The qualitative portion of this study has limitations as well. I asked for volunteers to participate. These volunteers might have had a specific interest in my research topic and, therefore, my results might be less representative of the sample population. In addition, the issue of censorship is a difficult topic that might have lead some participants to say what they think I wanted to hear or what they might deem to be acceptable. The

promise of anonymity, hopefully, alleviated any concerns. I hope that the participants felt that having their voices heard outweighed any possible risks. I believe that the greatest area of risk was the potential feelings of frustration that might arise when discussing the difficulties in selecting materials and the fear of challenges to materials.

3.6 PARTICIPANTS

Over five hundred school librarians completed portions of the survey; however, as every question was voluntary, not all of the respondents answered sufficient questions to be included in the results. Four hundred seventy school librarians had mostly complete survey responses. Several specific actions were taken to protect the privacy and confidentiality of participants. Survey responses were confidential. Demographic information from the surveys was confidential. Interviews were conducted one-on-one in a private setting. Any names used in reporting results from interviews were anonymized to protect participant privacy. In addition, each participant could opt out at any point in the survey or interview process. This section discusses the demographics of the respondents from both states to provide an overview of the school librarians who chose to participate in this research study.

The number of respondents in North and South Carolina was relatively close in number. Table 3.1 below shows the breakdown of school librarians by state and geographic setting. The survey did not define rural, urban, or suburban for participants, but allowed them to self-identify the school setting. The breakdown by setting depicted in Table 3.1 shows that the number of school librarians in rural settings in both states were very similar, 102 in North Carolina and 105 in South Carolina.

Table 3.1

School location by state and setting

Setting	North Carolina		South Carolina		Totals
	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	
Rural	44.93%	102	43.39%	105	207
Urban	23.35%	53	16.94%	41	94
Suburban	31.72%	72	39.67%	96	168
Totals	100%	227	100%	242	469

More urban school librarians responded in North Carolina, while more suburban school librarians responded in South Carolina. The 2010 United States census provides data about rural versus urban population distribution but does not include suburban data. By combining the suburban and urban results from the survey, the percentages come close to the actual urban and rural results from the census. The 2010 census showed that North and South Carolina were extremely similar in terms of urban and rural population distribution with North Carolina being 66.09% urban and South Carolina being 66.33% urban. However, it is important to note that the total populations of the two states are quite different with North Carolina having over 9.5 million residents and South Carolina having 4.6 million residents (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015).

School librarians were also asked to provide information about their age at the time the survey was completed. Only two hundred seventy-one school librarians chose to answer this question. The boxplot below shows the range and concentrations of ages of those school librarians who chose to answer this question.
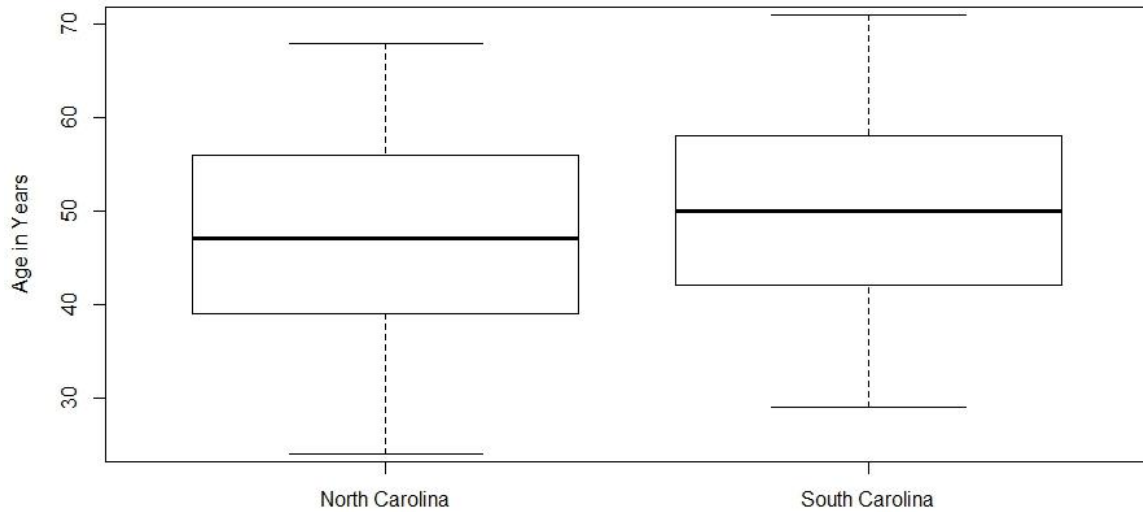
Figure 3.2 Boxplot of School Librarians' Age by State

The boxplot shows that the bulk of the respondents were quite similar in age for each state. The graph and data show that North Carolina's respondents were slightly younger than South Carolina's. Table 3.2 shows the five-number summary and averages for the ages of the school librarians.

Table 3.2

Five-number summary and averages of ages

	North Carolina	South Carolina
Minimum	24	29
1st Quartile	39	42
Media	47	50
3rd Quartile	56	58
Maximum	68	71
Mean	47.4	49.71

Additionally, it is important to note the gender of the respondents. School librarians are almost overwhelmingly female. The respondents to this survey followed this same pattern. Figure 3.3 below shows the gender breakdown of the respondents of this survey. Again, respondents had the option to skip this question, others chose to

respond in a third category "Other/Prefer not to answer." Four hundred sixty-nine school

librarians responded to this question. Table 3.3 shows the breakdown in terms of

percentages and total counts.

Table 3.3

Gender distribution of school librarians by state

	North Carolina		South Carolina	
	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count
I identify as female	95.63%	219	96.25%	231
I identify as male	3.06%	7	2.50%	6
Other/Prefer not to answer	1.31%	3	1.25%	3
Totals	100%	229	100%	240
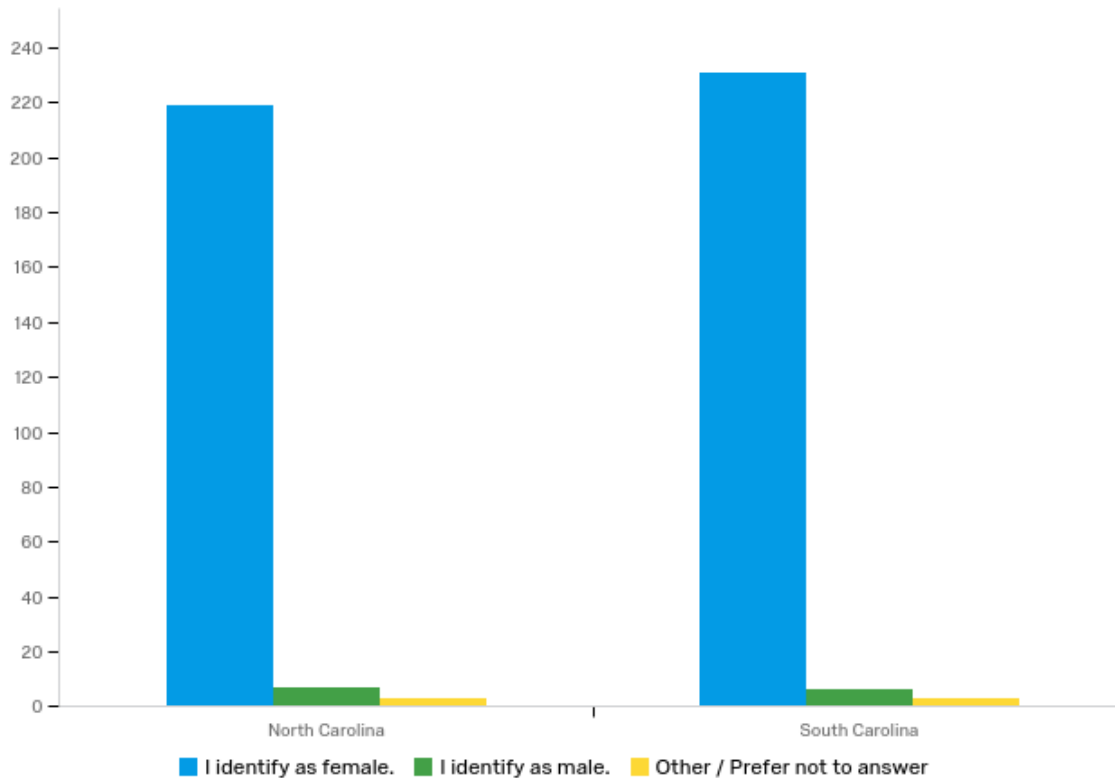
Figure 3.3 Gender of school librarians by state

      School librarians who responded to the survey were also overwhelmingly

Caucasian. Table 3.4 and Figure 3.4 illustrate these results.

Table 3.4

Race or ethnicity of school librarians by state

	North Carolina		South Carolina	
	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count
African American	4.37%	10	4.56%	11
Asian American	0%	0	0.41%	1
Caucasian	91.27%	209	92.95%	224
Hispanic	0%	0	0.41%	1
Multi-ethnic/Multi-racial	0.44%	1	0.41%	1
Native American	1.31%	3	0%	0
Other	0.44%	1	0.41%	1
Prefer not to answer	2.18%	5	0.83%	2
Totals	100%	229	100%	240
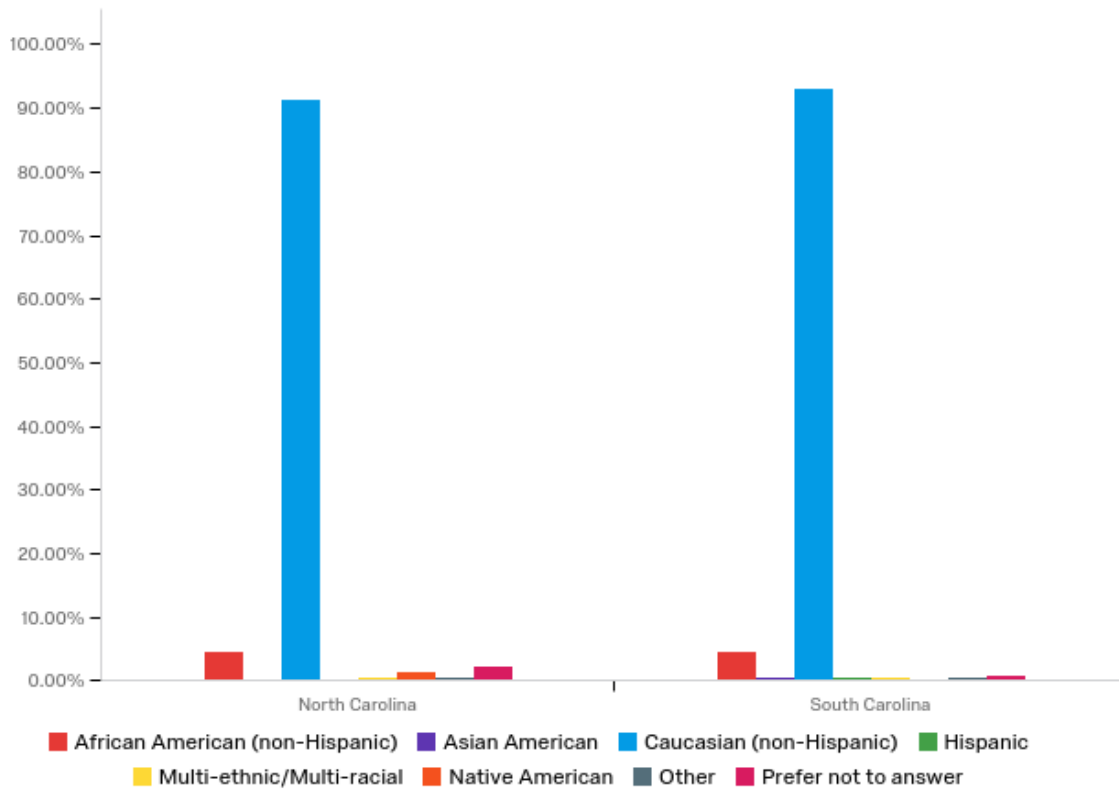
Figure 3.4 Race or ethnicity of school librarians by state

School librarians in North and South Carolina are required to hold a state license

in order to work in a public school. However, some school librarians begin working in

school libraries before completion of their coursework or licensure. The survey asked the

respondents if they currently hold a state license in school library media for K-12. Almost

all of the respondents in both states indicated that they currently hold that license. Table

3.5 and Figure 3.5 illustrate these responses.

Table 3.5

School librarians holding licensure by state

	North Carolina		South Carolina	
	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count
Yes	96.49%	220	95.42%	229
No	3.51%	8	4.58%	11
Totals	100%	228	100%	240
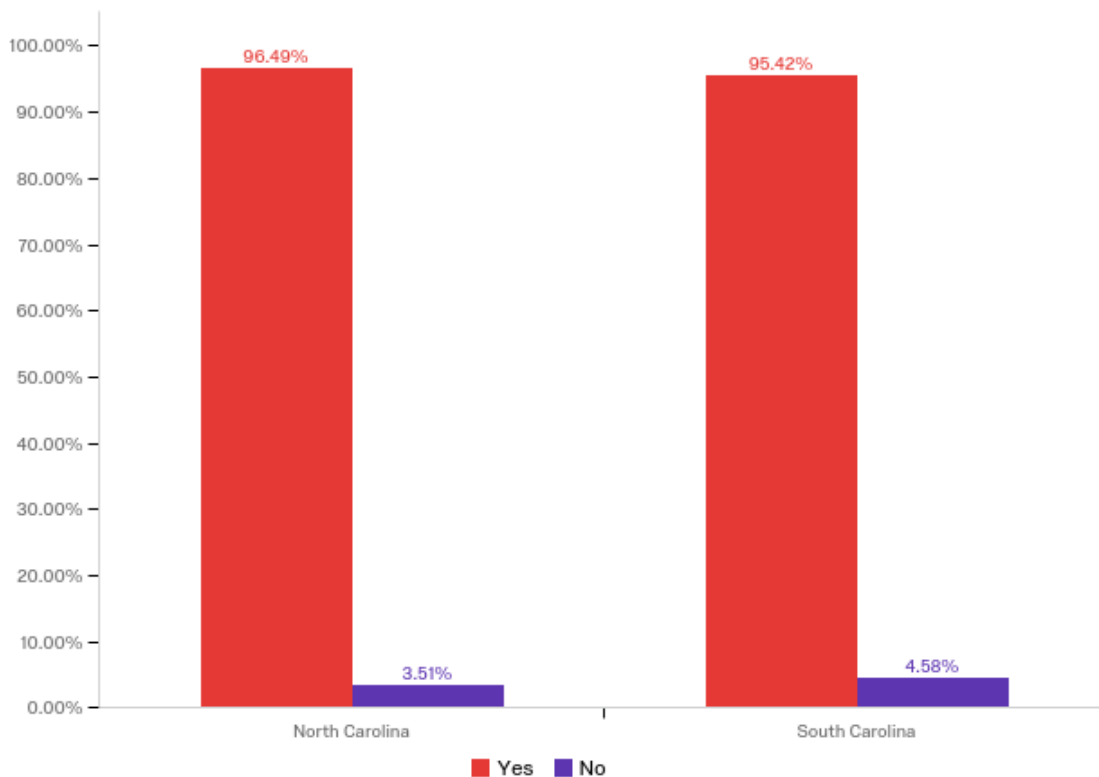
Figure 3.5 School librarians holding licensure by state

School librarians can also pursue National Board (NB) certification. The National

Board for Professional Teaching Standards is an advanced licensure program for

45

teachers, school librarians, and school counselors. The license is transferable across state lines and is considered to be a step above state level licensure. NB certification in school library media was first offered in 2002 and is renewable every ten years. There was some difference between the two states in the number of school librarians with NB licenses. This is likely caused by North Carolina's previous state-level financial support of those who wished to pursue licensure. Table and Figure 3.6 show the responses for this item.

Table 3.6

National Board Certification of school librarians by state

	North Carolina		South Carolina	
	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count
Yes, in Library Media	26.69%	68	21.16%	51
No	66.81%	153	76.35%	184
Yes, in area other than Library Media	3.49%	8	2.49%	6
Totals	100%	229	100%	241
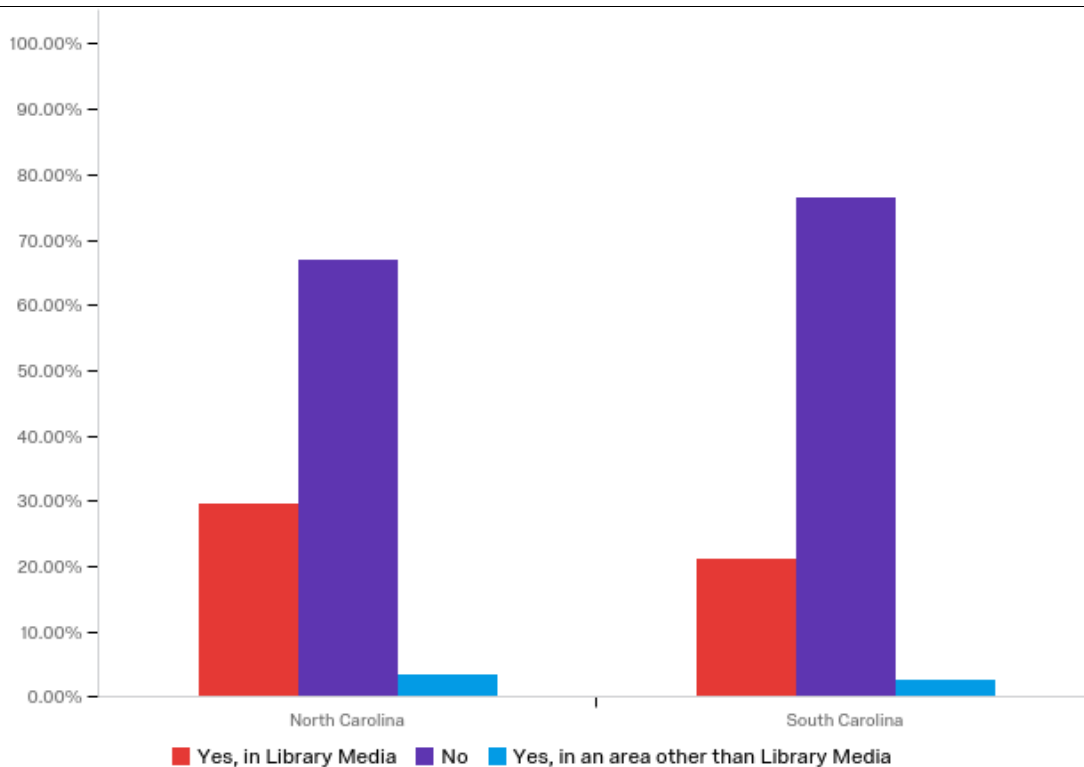
Figure 3.6 National Board Certification of school librarians by state

An additional consideration when examining the demographics of the respondents is determining how much experience they have had as a school librarian. Each school librarian was asked to indicate their level of experience. Figure 3.7 and Table 3.7 illustrate the responses to this question.
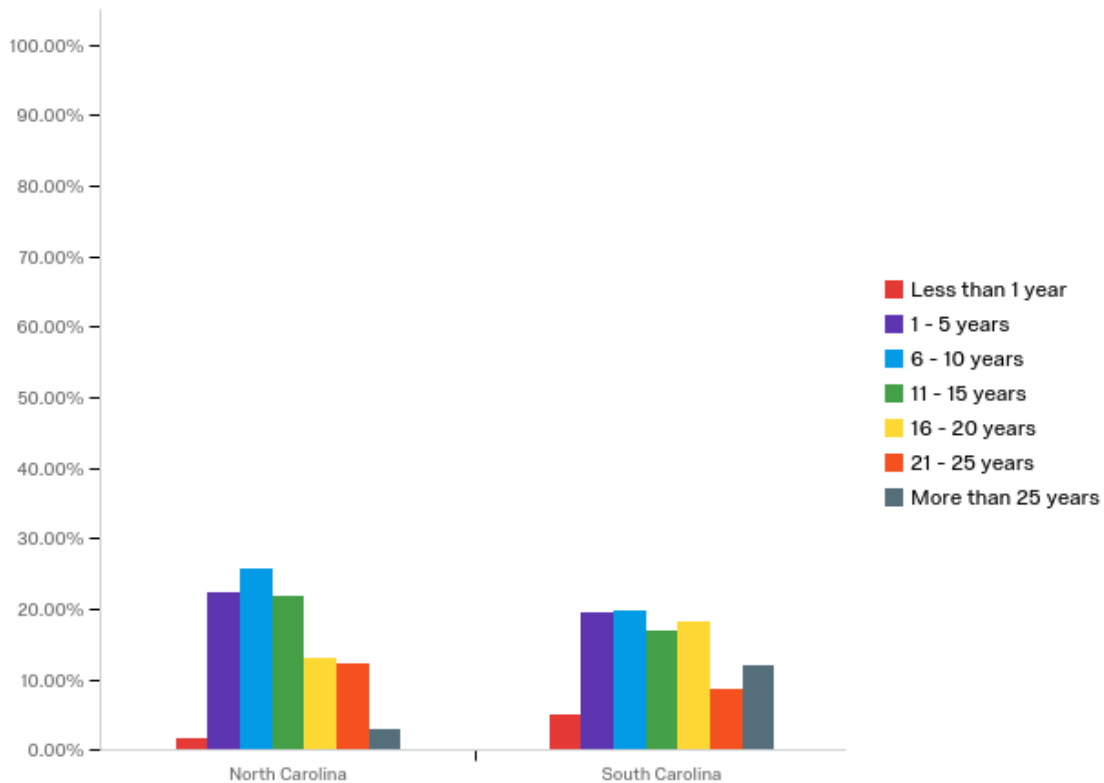
Figure 3.7 Years of experience as a school librarian by state

It is interesting to note that there are some differences between the two states when looking at the years of experience of the school librarians. South Carolina had more school librarians with less than one year of experience and more librarians with more than twenty-five years of experience. North Carolina's years of experience was more heavily represented in the one year to 20 years of experience. Perhaps an explanation for this difference is that North Carolina has five school library preparation programs in the state, while South Carolina only has one.

Table 3.7

Years of experience as a school librarian by state

| | North Carolina | | South Carolina | |
	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count
Less than 1 year	1.75%	4	4.96%	12
1 – 5 years	22.27%	51	19.42%	47
6 – 10 years	25.76%	59	19.83%	48
11 – 15 years	21.83%	50	16.94%	41
16 – 20 years	13.10%	30	18.18%	44
21 – 25 years	12.23%	28	8.68%	21
More than 25 years	3.06%	7	11.98%	29
Totals	100%	229	100%	242

I chose not to limit the respondents to the survey to public school librarians. However, the respondents to the survey were almost all public school librarians. Because of the very small sample size of non-public school librarians, I did not conduct analysis to determine the differences in selection behaviors between these groups. Table 3.8 and Figure 3.8 illustrate the types of schools represented by the respondents to the survey. Additionally the table provides a list of several kinds of schools not represented by the survey choices.

Table 3.8

School type by state

| | North Carolina | | South Carolina | |
	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count
Public	96.07%	220	96.69%	234
Private	1.75%	4	1.65%	4
Charter	0.87%	2	0.83%	2
Alternative	0.87%	2	0%	0
Other: School in incarceration facility; Parochial; Independent	0.44%	1	0.83%	2
Totals	100%	229	100%	242
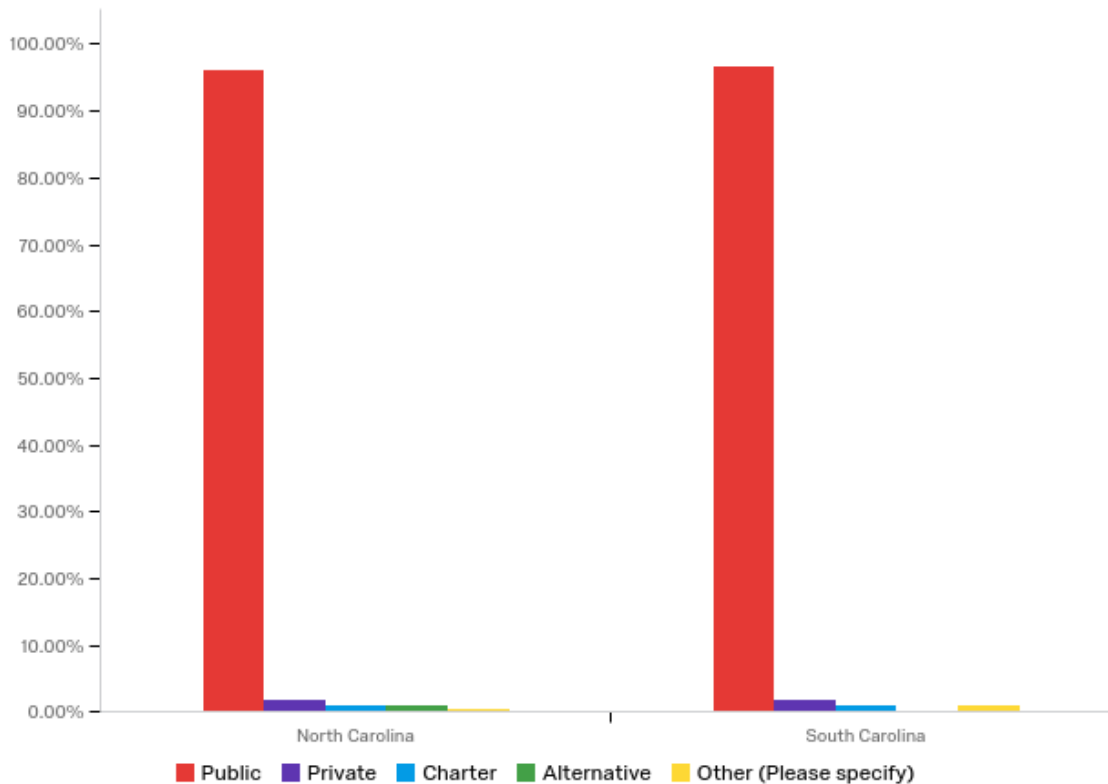
Figure 3.8 School type by state

Because any school librarian in North and South Carolina could choose to participate in this study, respondents worked in a variety of grade level settings. I asked school librarians to indicate the grades that their schools served. I then recoded the date to reflect that they served in an elementary, middle, or high school setting. Elementary grades included pre-K through 5th grade. A few of the schools were early elementary serving Pre-K through 2 which I chose to recode as elementary. Others were later elementary serving grades four through six, which I also chose to recode as elementary. Additionally, there were a number of schools who served all grades or other combinations of grades. Figures 3.9 and 3.10 separately illustrate the grade levels for each state while Table 3.9 show the breakdown of schools in terms of elementary, middle, high school, and other. I also created a table (3.10) with a breakdown of the other

types of grade levels.
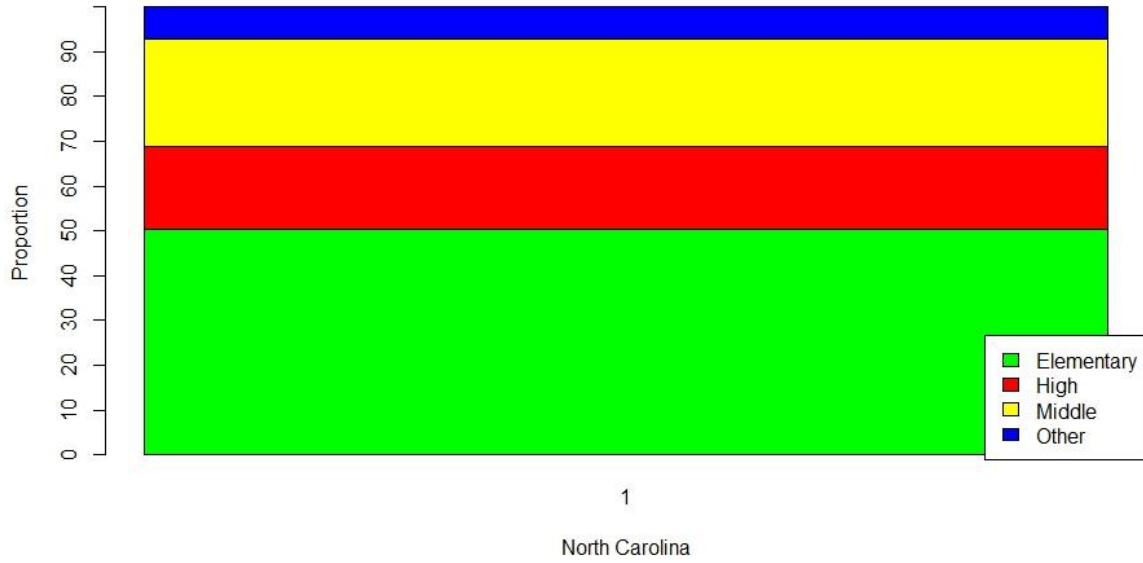
Figure 3.9 Proportion of school types by grade in North Carolina
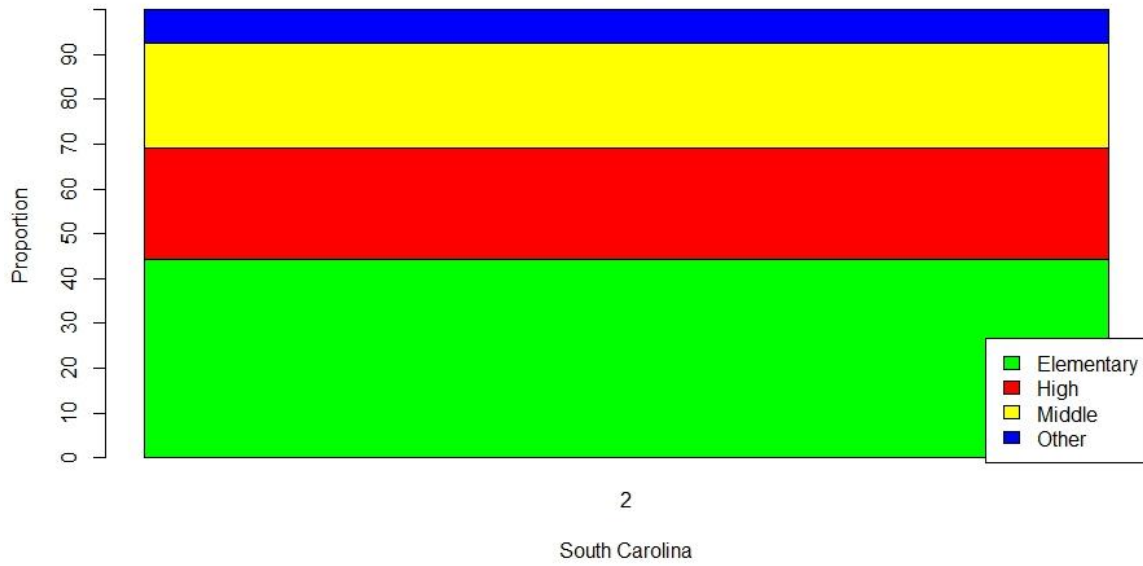
Figure 3.10 Proportion of school types by grade in South Carolina

Table 3.9

Proportion of school types by grade and state

	North Carolina		South Carolina	
	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count
Elementary	50.22%	114	44.17%	106
High	18.5%	42	25%	60
Middle	24.23%	55	23.33%	56
Other	7.05%	16	7.5%	18
Totals	100%	227	100%	240

Table 3.10

Breakdown of other school types by grade and state

	North Carolina	South Carolina
Middle/High School Combination	6	5
K12	6	2
Elementary/Middle School Combination	4	10
9th grade only	0	1
Totals	16	18

3.7 CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of the demographic data from the survey, the respondents

from the two states are quite similar in terms of age, school levels, state-level

certification, race/ethnicity, and gender. As a result, in the remaining analysis of the data,

I discuss the data gathered from the two states without distinguishing between them. In

this chapter, I have explained the methodology for my research study. I have outlined the

mixed methods design that I used to gather data. Then, I explained the choice of setting

and participants. In the next two sections, I discussed the survey and interviews I that

used for my data collection, as well as how I planned to analyze the data that was

collected. The next section examined the demographic characteristics of the participants

from both states. Finally, I concluded with the expected limitations of the study.

CHAPTER 4

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

For the purpose of this study, statistical analysis of the survey data was conducted to examine factors that could be used to predict self-censoring behaviors. This chapter examines the presence of policies that guide selection and reconsideration, materials selection budgets, and the application of the Willingness to Self-Censor Scale. Qualtrics Survey Software was used to administer the survey and collect responses from survey participants. Analysis was conducted using the embedded Qualtrics analytics as well as more advanced statistical analysis using the R statistical programming language and R Studio. R programming language is an open access program language used for statistics. R studio is a free, open-source user interface for using the R programming language.

This chapter is divided into several sections. Section 4.1 examines the level of awareness of school librarians about the presence of selection and reconsideration policies within their districts and schools. Section 4.2 of this chapter provides analysis of the materials selection budgets of the respondents to the survey. Section 4.3 includes analysis of the administration of the Willingness to Self-Censor Scale and its usefulness in predicting self-censoring tendencies. Section 4.4 reports on the level of job security that school librarians feel when they add controversial material to the collection.

4.1 SELECTION AND RECONSIDERATION POLICIES

Examination of the presence of selection and reconsideration policies is important when understanding how school librarians choose to add materials. A materials selection

policy (sometimes called a collection development policy) is intended to guide school

librarians in determining the types and qualities of materials that should be added to a

school library collection.

Within the survey, I asked school librarians if their district had a selection policy,

and if their district did not have one, if they had a school-level policy to guide their

selection. Table 4.1 corresponds to the question "Does your school district (local

education agency) have a selection policy for choosing library materials?"

Table 4.1

Presence of District Level Selection Policies

Response	Percentage	Count
Yes	63.05%	302
No	23.17%	111
I'm not sure	11.90%	57
My school is not part of a school district	1.88%	9
Totals	100%	479

The survey then asked school librarians, "If your school district does not have a selection

policy, does your school library have its own selection policy?" Table 4.2 indicates their

responses to that question.

Table 4.2

Presence of School Level Selection Policies

Response	Percentage	Count
Yes	59.76%	196
No	34.15%	112
I'm not sure	3.66%	12
My school is not part of a school district	2.44%	8
Totals	100%	328

The response seems inconsistent with the previous responses. I would expect to have responses from only the 111 who indicated that their districts did not have a policy. I believe this is a mis-reading of the question by the respondents. Another possibility is that specialized schools, such as magnet schools, in a district might have their own selection policy. Perhaps using skip-logic in the survey would have been better in order to have school librarians who indicated their districts have a selection policy skip over this question.

Table 4.3 corresponds to the question, "If you work at an independent school (not affiliated with a school district), does your school library a selection policy for choosing library materials?" The responses to this question are more in line with those who indicated they were from independent schools.

Table 4.3

Presence of School Level Selection Policies at Independent Schools

Response	Percentage	Count
Yes	2.79%	10
No	1.40%	5
I'm not sure	0.56%	2
My school is not an independent school	95.25%	341
Totals	100%	358

Reconsideration policies are used to guide the process when materials called into question are considered for removal from library collections. The presence of a reconsideration policy and process are needed to ensure that consistent procedures are followed when challenges to materials are placed.

Table 4.4 provides responses to the question, "Does your school district (local education agency) have a reconsideration policy (and form) for possible removal of library materials?"

Table 4.4

Presence of District Level Reconsideration Policies

Response	Percentage	Count
Yes	85.56%	409
No	6.07%	29
I'm not sure	6.49%	31
My school is not part of a school district	1.88%	9
Totals	1005	478

It is interesting to note that a higher percentage of school districts had reconsideration policies than selection policies, indicating a more reactive policy than proactive policy. The data from Table 4.5 has the same issue as Table 4.2 above. I would expect that only 29 people would respond to this question based on the responses to the question about district level reconsideration policies. The question this raises is whether or not schools have separate reconsideration policies that are different from their districts. The question was, "If your school district does not have a reconsideration policy, does your school library have its own reconsideration policy?"

Table 4.5

Presence of School Level Reconsideration Policies

Response	Percentage	Count
Yes	53.96%	150
No	37.77%	105
I'm not sure	5.04%	14
My school is not part of a school district	3.24%	9
Totals	100%	278

The survey again asked respondents who worked in independent schools to also indicate whether their individual schools had reconsideration policies: "If you work at an independent school (not affiliated with a school district), does your school library have a reconsideration policy (and form) for possible removal of library materials?"

Table 4.6

Presence of School Level Selection Policies at Independent Schools

Responses	Percentage	Count
Yes	3.40%	12
No	0.28 %	1
I'm not sure	0.28%	1
My school is not an independent school	96.03%	339
Totals	100%	353

The presence of a selection policy serves little purpose if school librarians do not have funds with which to purchase materials. The next section of analysis examines the level of funding that school librarians have.

4.2 BUDGETS

In examining funding for school librarians, the survey asked school librarians two specific questions: "Is your school a designated Title I school?" and "What do you estimate your current school year's budget to be for the purchase of school library materials (books, databases, other information resources)"? While these two questions can provide some insight, further analysis into how the funding translates into purchasing based on student population, school poverty, and setting is important.

Title I schools are assigned this status by the U. S. Department of Education. Title I (Part A) is part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Title I status indicates that the school has either high numbers of or high percentages of children from low-income homes (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Table 4.7 shows the

breakdown of school librarians serving in Title I schools. Often, these schools qualify for additional federal funding.

Table 4.7

Title I Schools

Response	Percentage	Count
Yes	46.79%	219
No	50.85%	238
I'm not sure	2.35%	11
Totals	100%	468

A little less than half of the school librarians who responded to the survey indicated that their schools held Title I status. To examine this further, I broke down the information based on geographic setting of the schools. Table 4.8 shows this analysis.

Table 4.8

Title I Schools Based on Geographic Setting

	Rural		Urban		Suburban	
Responses	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count
Yes	61.84%	128	55.91%	52	23.21%	39
No	34.78%	72	41.94%	39	75.60%	127
I'm not sure	3.38%	7	2.15%	2	1.19%	2
Totals	100%	207	100%	93	100%	168

This table indicates that Title I schools are largely located in rural settings. The graph on the next page (Figure 4.1) illustrates the table above.
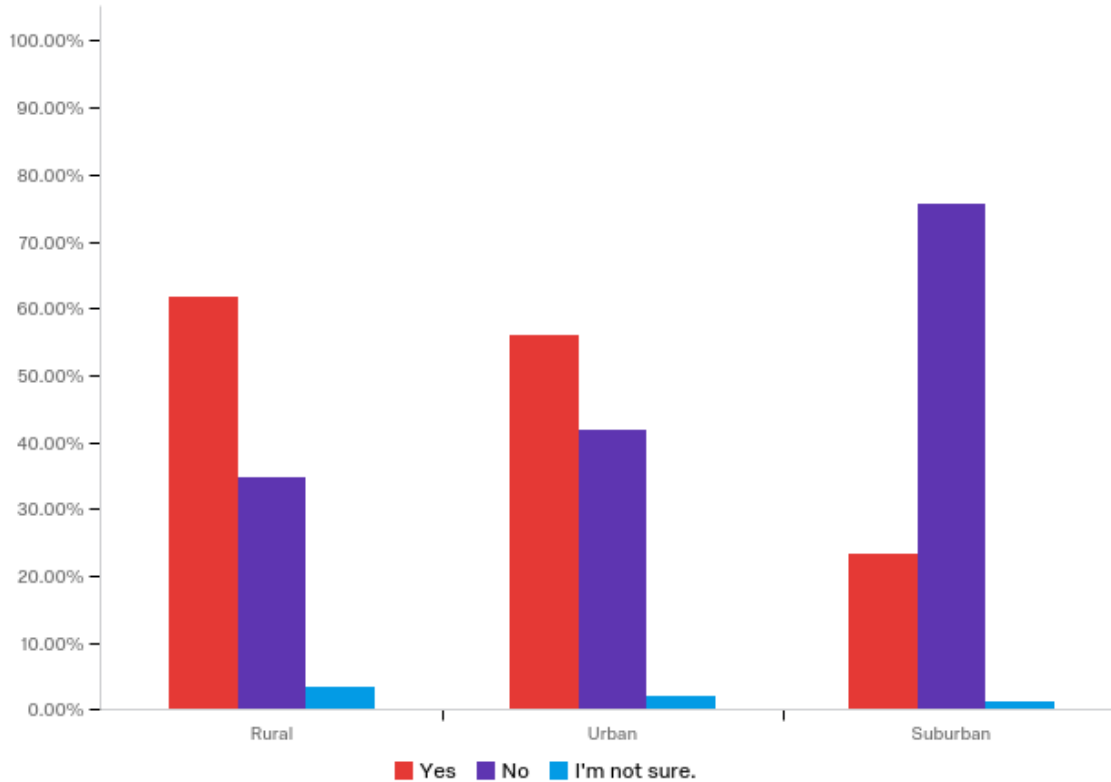
Figure 4.1 Title I Schools by Geographic Setting

An examination of funding for school library materials is important. If school libraries have no funds for materials, the selection policy and process serves little purpose. Each school librarian was asked to indicate his/her school library's level of funding for the 2015-2016 school year. They were not asked to indicate the source of the funds. Figure 4.2 below shows their responses.
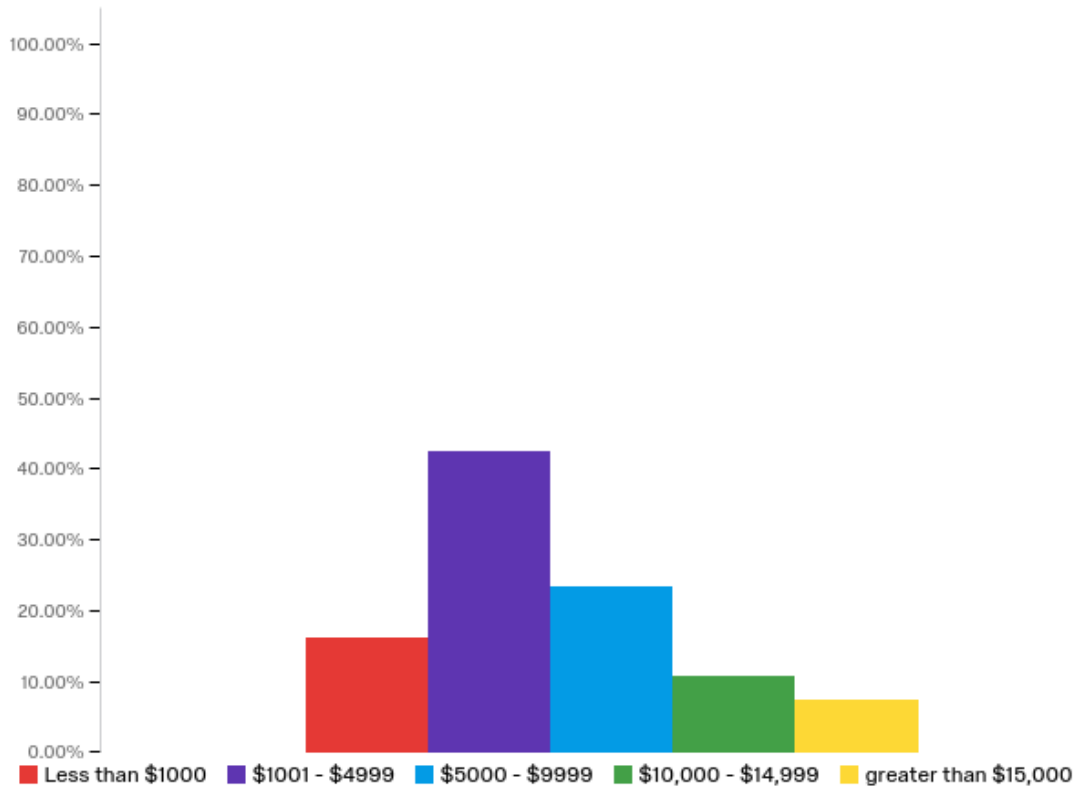
Figure 4.2 Estimated School Library Materials Budget for 2015-2016 School Year

Table 4.9 below shows the percentages and counts for the different levels of funding.

Table 4.9

Estimated School Library Materials Budget for 2015-2016 School Year

Responses	Percentage	Count
Less than $1000	16.24%	76
$1001-$4999	42.52%	199
$5000-$9999	23.29%	109
$10000-$14999	10.68%	50
Greater than $15000	7.26%	34
Totals	100	468

At this point, it is important to determine if Title I status had any impact on the budget levels for the school libraries. As these schools are already located in poverty-stricken areas, have the school libraries been provided with additional funding? Table 4.10 provides the overview of the budgets based on Title I status.

Table 4.10

Budget by Title I Status

Budget Level	Title I Schools		Non-Title I Schools		Uncertain of Status	
	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count
Less than $1000	19.27%	42	13.45%	32	18.18%	2
$1001 - $4999	55.50%	121	31.09%	74	36.36%	4
$5000 - $9999	17.89%	39	28.99%	69	9.09%	1
$10,000 - $14,999	5.05%	11	15.13%	36	18.18%	2
greater than $15,000	2.29%	5	11.34%	27	18.18%	2
Total	Total	218	Total	238	Total	11
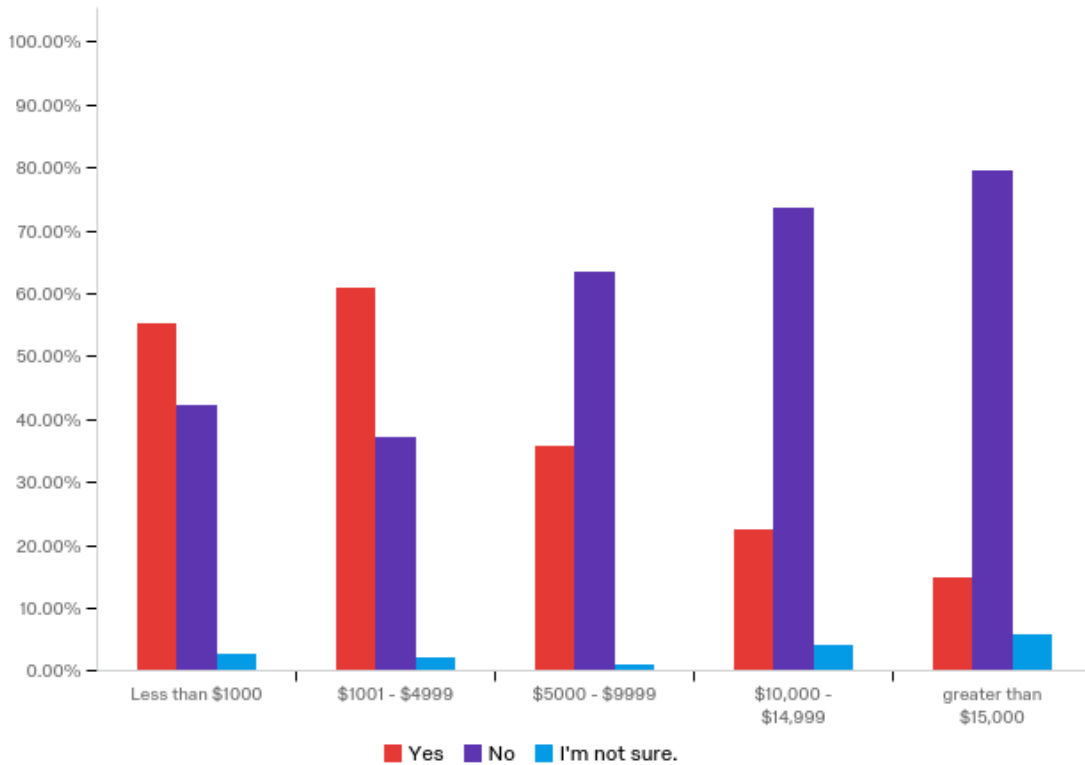
Figure 4.3 Budget by Title I Status

This finding is particularly troubling, since it indicates that high poverty schools are also receiving the smallest budgets for materials despite the additional funding provided through Title I status.

While the overall budget information is important, it is necessary to determine if those funding levels are on equal footing based on the student populations in each school. A school with 1,000 students needs to receive funding appropriate for that number of students. Each year, *School Library Journal* (SLJ) using data from Follett compiles a list of average book prices that have been sold in a specific time frame. Figure 4.4 (from SLJ) below shows the average prices for books in both public library and school library settings (School Library Journal, March 6, 2017). The average price for a hardcover book for children in 2016 (from January to March) was $18.01, and for young adults was $22.74. So, if a school library is allotted $500 for the purchase of materials they could purchase between 22 and 27 new books for the year. For many libraries, this would not cover replacements of damaged or lost titles.

SLJ's Average Book Prices 2017

	PUBLIC		SCHOOL		TOTAL	
	2016	2017 ytd	2016	2017 ytd	2016	2017 ytd
Children's Titles						
Hardcover (all titles)	$18.41	$17.85	$18.01	$17.46	$18.21	$17.65
Trade Paperback	$9.18	$12.02	$9.22	$12.89	$9.20	$12.45
Mass-Market Paperback	$6.64	$6.59	$6.77	$6.49	$6.70	$6.54
Young Adult (YA) Titles						
Hardcover (all titles)	$20.59	$21.47	$22.74	$23.54	$21.09	$22.50
Trade Paperback	$15.99	$16.15	$15.96	$16.78	$15.97	$16.46
Mass-Market Paperback	$7.93	$7.95	$7.95	$7.95	$7.94	$7.95
Adult Titles						
Trade Hardcover						
Fiction	$25.75	$25.84	$25.94	$26.10	$25.84	$25.97
Nonfiction*	$28.83	$28.03	$29.50	$28.30	$29.16	$28.16
Trade Paperback **						
Fiction	$15.85	$15.98	$15.10	$15.23	$15.48	$15.60
Nonfiction	$20.72	$20.23	$18.72	$19.21	$19.72	$19.72
Mass-Market Paperback	$9.18	$9.24	$9.84	$9.65	$9.51	$9.44

*Excludes Reference Books   **Excludes Mass-Market Paperbacks

Source: Total (public and school library markets) 2017 year to date, produced by *School Library Journal* in partnership with Follett.

Figure 4.4 SLJ Average Book Prices 2017 (Source: School Library Journal)

As part of the survey, school librarians were asked to estimate their school's student population. This data was then used to determine the funding level based on school size. Figure 4.5 illustrates this analysis. Table 4.11 provides the numerical information corresponding to the figure.
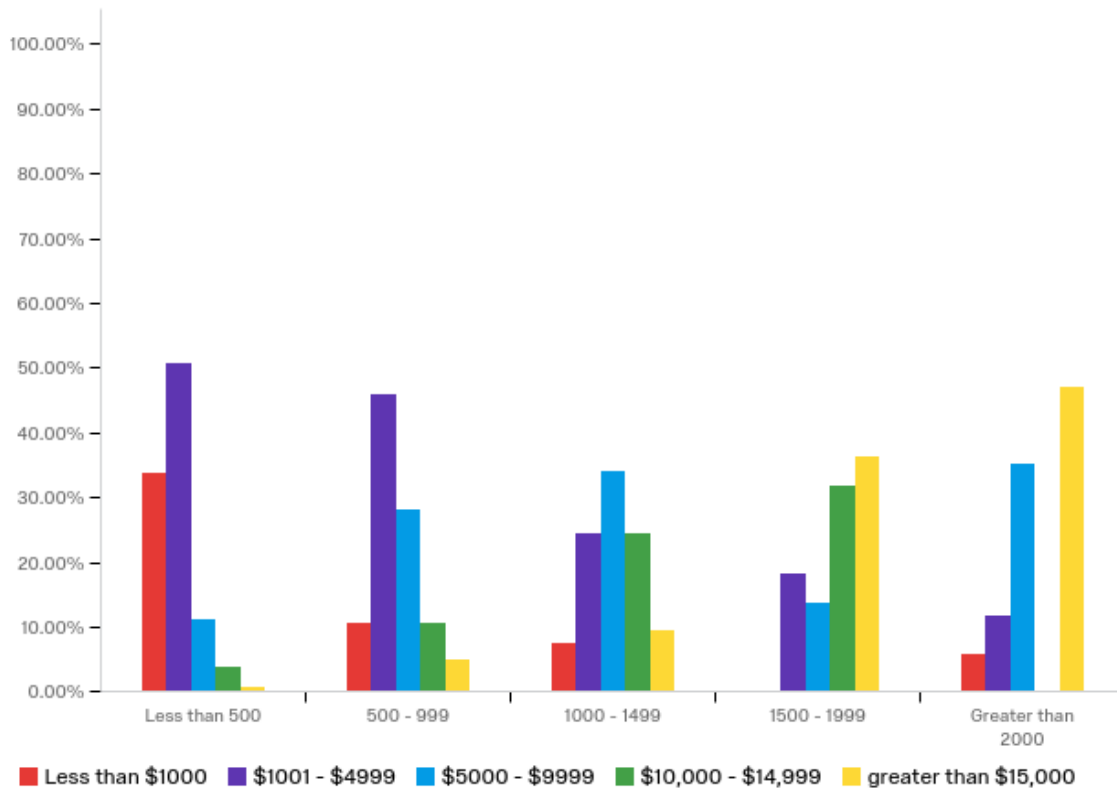

Figure 4.5 Estimated 2015-2016 Budget Based on School Size

While the smallest schools did receive the smallest budgets, it is troubling to note that schools larger than 500 pupils received budgets of less than $1000 indicating that the funding was less than $2 per student. One concern is that the category of less than $1000 also includes school libraries who receive no funding at all.

Table 4.11

Estimated 2015-2016 Budget Based on School Size

	Less than 500		500-999		1000-1499		1500-1999		Greater than 2000	
	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
Less than $1000	33.82%	46	10.59%	25	7.55%	5	0	0	5.88%	1
$1001-$4999	50.74%	69	45.76%	108	24.53%	13	18.18%	4	11.76%	2
$5000-$9999	11.03%	15	27.97%	66	33.96%	18	13.64%	3	35.29%	6
$10000-$14999	3.68%	5	10.59%	25	24.53%	13	31.82%	7	0%	0
Greater than $15000	0.74%	1	5.08%	12	9.43%	5	36.36%	8	47.06%	8
Totals	100%	136	100%	236	100%	53	100%	22	100%	17

4.3 WILLINGNESS TO SELF-CENSOR SCALE AND CONTROVERSIAL TOPICS

Funding is an important aspect of the selection process. However, school librarians are also personally making decisions about whether or not to add items to their collections largely based on selection policies. In order to understand the process more completely, the survey asked school librarians to examine their own tendencies to self-censor and their comfort with the inclusion of controversial topics.

School librarians were asked to respond to eight items to determine their reaction to perceived public opinion. For each statement, the respondents were asked to indicate their response on a Likert scale, saying if they strongly disagreed, disagreed, somewhat disagreed, neither agreed nor disagreed, somewhat agreed, agreed, or strongly agreed. Once again, participants had the option to not respond to this question. Four hundred and

sixty participants responded to all of the items. Table 4.12 on the next page shows the results of the scale.

Two items of the WTSC Scale were written to be reverse coded: It is easy for me to express my opinion around others who I think will disagree with me; and If I disagree with others, I have no problem letting them know it. I then was able to examine the average scores for each of the items on the scale. Table 4.13 below shows the average scores for each item in the scale. The higher the average, the more likely a person is to engage in self-censoring behaviors.

Table 4.13

Average scores for items on the WTSC scale

Item	Average Score
1. It is difficult for me to express my opinion if I think others wouldn't agree with what I say.	3.02
2. There have been many times when I have thought others around me were wrong but I didn't let them know.	3.76
3. When I disagree with others, I'd rather go along with them than argue about it.	3.13
4. It is easy for me to express my opinion around others who I think will disagree with me.	3.73
5. I'd feel uncomfortable if someone asked my opinion and I knew that he or she wouldn't agree with me.	3.31
6. I tend to speak my opinion only around friends or other people I trust.	3.90
7. It is safer to keep quiet than publicly speak an opinion that you know most others don't share.	3.80
8. If I disagree with others, I have no problem letting them know it.	3.75

Table 4.12

Willingness to Self-Censor Scale Responses

	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Somewhat disagree		Neither agree nor disagree		Somewhat agree		Agree		Strongly agree		Total
	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	
It is difficult for me to express my opinion if I think others wouldn't agree with what I say.															
	14.53	67	34.71	160	19.96	92	3.47	16	20.61	95	5.64	26	1.08	5	461
There have been many times when I have thought others around me were wrong but I didn't let them know.															
	6.09	28	22.61	104	20.22	93	6.96	32	30.22	139	11.96	55	1.96	9	460
When I disagree with others, I'd rather go along with them than argue about it.															
	6.51	30	29.72	137	34.92	161	9.54	44	13.88	64	3.69	17	1.74	8	461
It is easy for me to express my opinion around others who I think will disagree with me.															
	3.04	14	6.94	32	28.63	132	9.33	43	28.20	130	20.82	96	3.04	14	461
I'd feel uncomfortable if someone asked my opinion and I knew that he or she wouldn't agree with me.															
	7.38	34	30.15	139	24.73	114	7.81	36	22.99	106	5.64	26	1.30	6	461
I tend to speak my opinion only around friends or other people I trust.															
	4.56	21	21.48	99	20.17	93	9.54	44	26.03	120	13.67	63	4.56	21	461
It is safer to keep quiet than publicly speak an opinion that you know most others don't share.															
	7.38	34	21.04	97	18.66	86	11.06	51	25.38	117	12.36	57	4.12	19	461
If I disagree with others, I have no problem letting them know it.															
	2.83	13	8.26	38	25.65	118	12.39	57	30.65	141	16.09	74	4.13	19	460

After reversing the two items from the scale, I found Cronbach's alpha to be 0.863. Cronbach's alpha measures internal consistence or how closely related items are in a group. This is a measure of scale reliability. The coefficient of 0.863 suggests that the items in the scale have relatively high internal consistency. A reliability coefficient of 0.70 or higher is acceptable in social science research. This allowed me to combine the items into a single scale score that can be used to develop models to conduct hierarchical linear regressions to determine if the score is predictive of school librarians' comfort level with the addition to their collections of materials that contain controversial topics.

To examine this relationship, the survey asked school librarians to react to six different topics in terms of how comfortable they would be in adding materials to their collection that contain the topics. The question also said that the materials in question would be developmentally appropriate for their schools with positive reviews from respected review sources. Table 4.14 on the next page shows the responses.

It's important to note that approximately twenty fewer responses were recorded about the perceived principal's comfort level. This could be that the school librarian did not feel he or she had sufficient information to judge their principal's comfort level. Additionally, three areas showed the greatest differences between the school librarian's comfort and their perceptions of their principal's comfort level: LGBTQ content, drugs, alcohol, and smoking, and sexually explicit materials. In all three cases, the school librarians indicated a higher level of comfort with those materials. The differences between the comfort levels on all six topics can be seeing through the paired graphs beginning on page 69. Each graph depicts comfort levels to the left and discomfort to the right.

Table 4.14

School Librarian Comfort and Perceived Principal Comfort with Controversial Topics

	Extremely Comfortable		Moderately Comfortable		Slightly Comfortable		Neutral		Slightly Uncomfortable		Moderately Uncomfortable		Extremely Uncomfortable		Total
	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	
Religious Viewpoint – non-Christian															
SL	3.08	171	29.18	131	8.46	38	13.59	61	7.13	32	2.45	11	1.11	5	449
PP	10.33	87	22.2	95	11.92	51	22.2	95	10.28	44	7.71	33	5.37	23	428
Offensive language															
SL	7.35	33	19.38	87	12.92	58	9.35	42	19.38	87	17.15	77	14.5	65	449
PP	2.10	9	10.98	47	12.62	54	16.36	70	18.46	79	17.99	77	21.5	92	428
LGBTQ content (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer)															
SL	13.84	62	18.30	82	12.05	54	9.15	41	12.50	56	16.74	75	17.4	78	448
PP	5.85	25	10.54	45	9.37	40	15.69	67	13.82	59	17.33	74	27.4	117	427
Violence - weapons, fighting, domestic or dating violence, rape															
SL	10.02	45	17.59	79	11.58	52	6.68	30	16.70	75	16.48	74	20.9	94	449
PP	4.69	20	9.15	39	9.62	41	14.55	62	16.20	69	17.84	76	27.9	119	426
Drugs, alcohol, or smoking															
SL	16.04	72	19.15	86	14.25	64	10.91	49	16.04	72	13.14	59	10.5	47	449
PP	6.37	27	11.32	48	9.67	41	17.69	75	18.87	80	18.16	77	17.9	76	424
Sexually explicit (kissing in younger books)															
SL	7.59	34	19.87	89	13.62	61	10.49	47	18.75	84	15.40	69	14.3	64	448
PP	2.36	10	8.96	38	10.85	46	16.51	70	19.34	82	19.58	83	22.4	95	424

Note: SL indicates School Librarian; PP indicates Perception of Principal
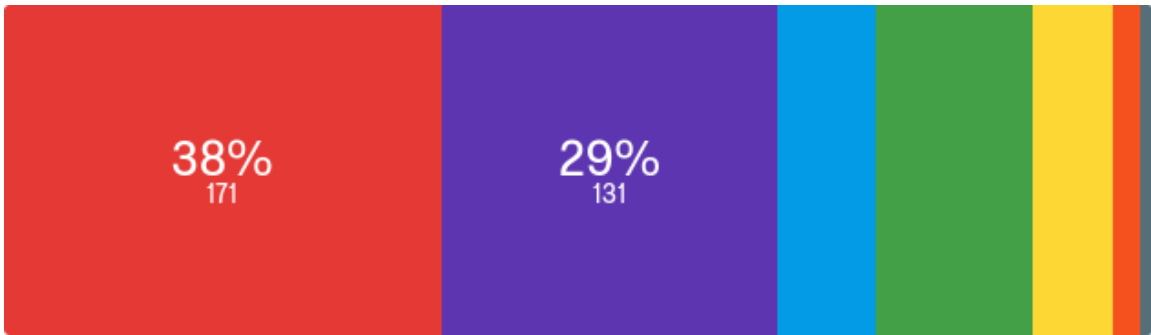
Figure 4.6 School Librarians' Comfort Level with Religious Topics

Figure 4.7 Perceived Principals' Comfort Level with Religious Topics

Figures 4.6 and 4.7 illustrate the differences between school librarian comfort and the perception of their principal's comfort with content including non-Christian perspectives. School librarians were more comfortable while they felt their school principals would be comfortable or neutral. Religion was the topic area where much fewer school librarians indicated that either their or their principal would be uncomfortable.

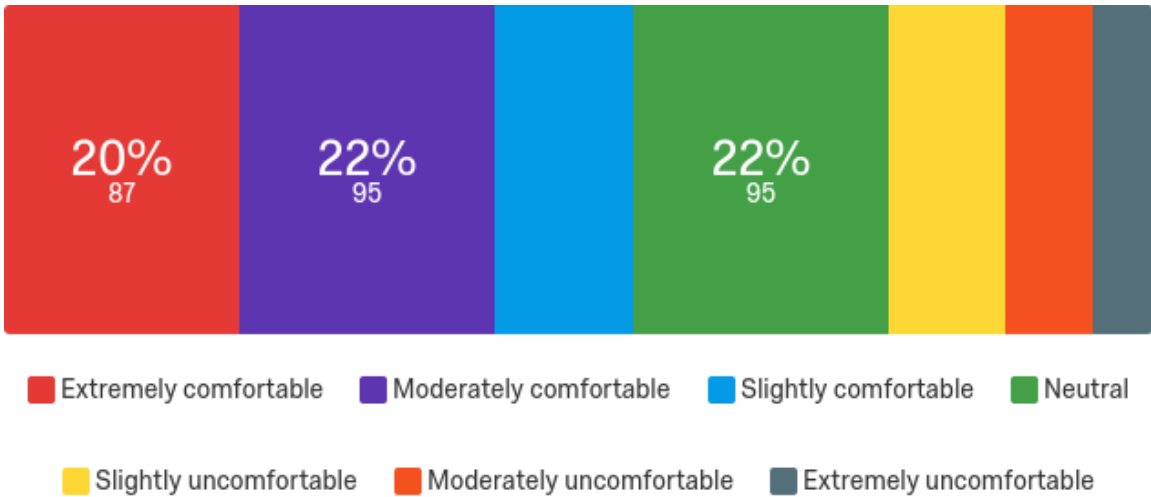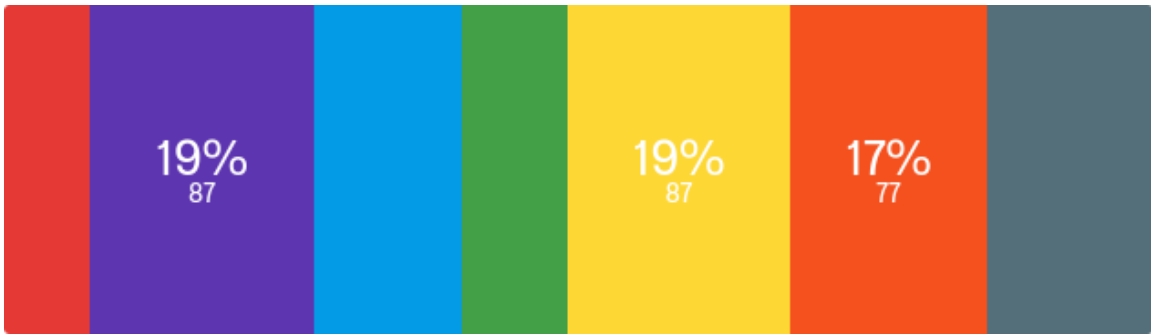*Figure* 4.8 School Librarians' Comfort Level with Offensive Language

Figure 4.9 Perceived Principals' Comfort Level with Offensive Language

Figures 4.8 and 4.9 illustrate the differences between school librarian comfort and the perception of their principal's comfort with content including offensive language. While some school librarians were uncomfortable with this topic, they perceived their principals would be much more uncomfortable.

Figure 4.10 School Librarians' Comfort Level with LGBTQ Content

Figure 4.11 Perceived Principals' Comfort Level with LGBTQ Content

Figures 4.10 and 4.11 illustrate the differences between school librarian comfort and the perception of their principal's comfort with LGBTQ content. School librarians indicated that their principals would be uncomfortable with the topic, while they were more comfortable. Forty seven percent of school librarians were uncomfortable adding LGBTQ content, but fifty-eight percent felt that their principals would be uncomfortable. The only other topic that generated similar levels of discomfort was the inclusion of violence as part of the content.
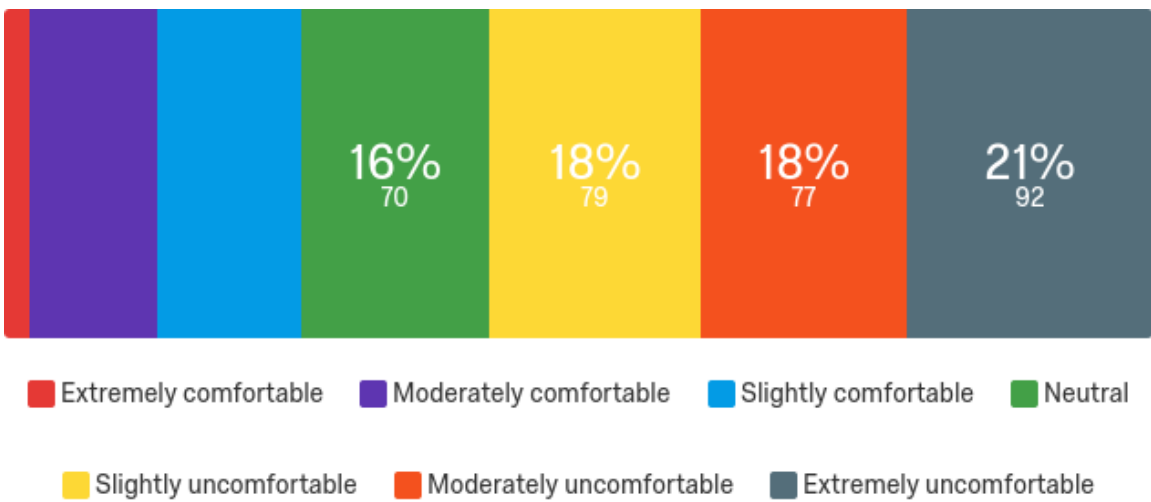
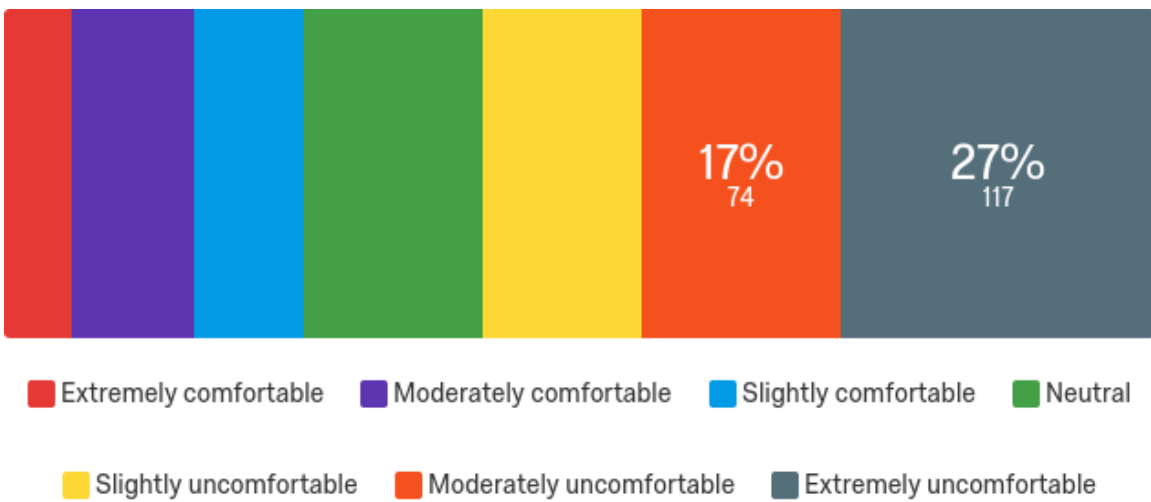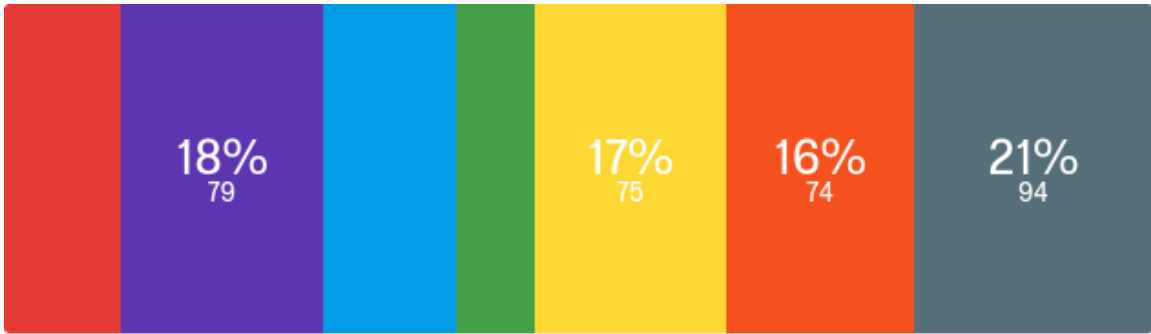*Figure* 4.12 School Librarians' Comfort Level with Violence
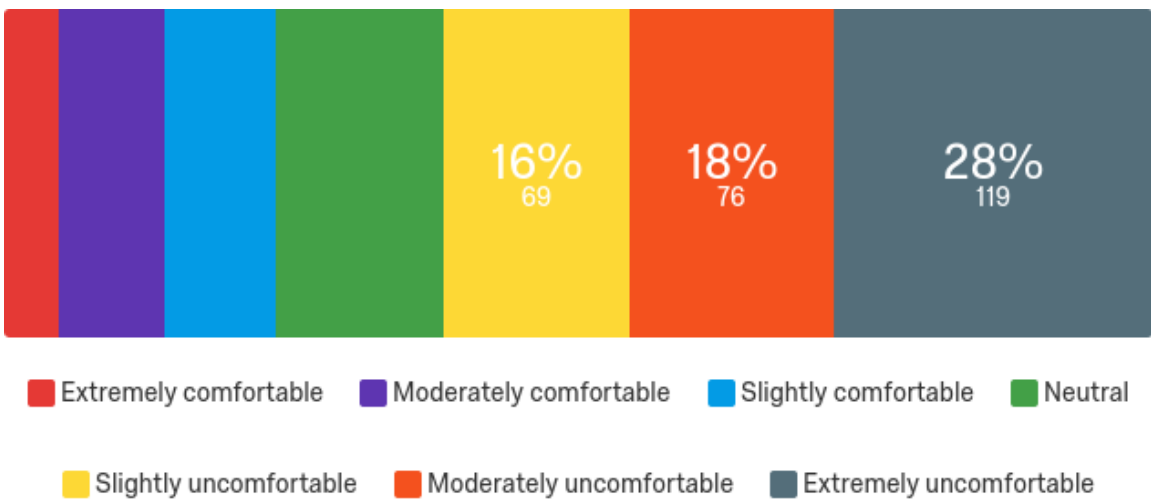
Figure 4.13 Perceived Principals' Comfort Level with Violence

Figures 4.12 and 4.13 illustrate the differences between school librarian comfort and the perception of their principal's comfort with material that contains violence. More than fifty percent of school librarians were uncomfortable with this topic. Additionally, more than sixty-five percent felt that their principals would also be uncomfortable with the topic. The only other area that school librarians felt their principals would be even more uncomfortable was sexually explicit material.
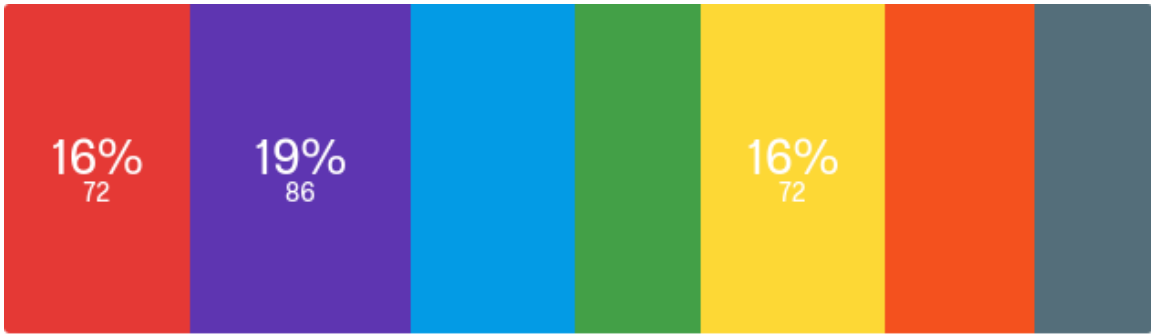
Figure 4.14 School Librarians' Comfort Level with Drugs, Alcohol, or Smoking
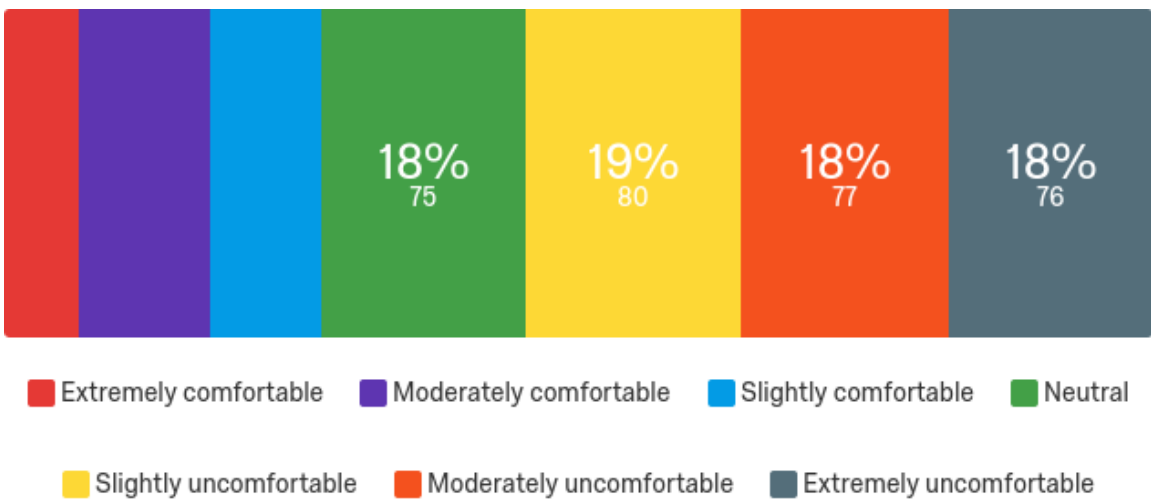
Figure 4.15 Perceived Principals' Comfort Level with Drugs, Alcohol, or Smoking

     Figures 4.14 and 4.15 illustrate the differences between school librarian comfort and the perception of their principal's comfort with material that contains drugs, alcohol, or smoking. Once again there are differences between the comfort of school librarians and their perceptions of their principals' comfort with controversial content.

     Figures 4.16 and 4.17 illustrate the differences between school librarian comfort and the perception of their principal's comfort with material that has sexually explicit content. The survey did specify that for school librarians serving younger children this topic could be the inclusion of kissing instead of truly sexually explicit content. For this

topic, sixty-one percent of school librarians felt that their principals would be quite uncomfortable.
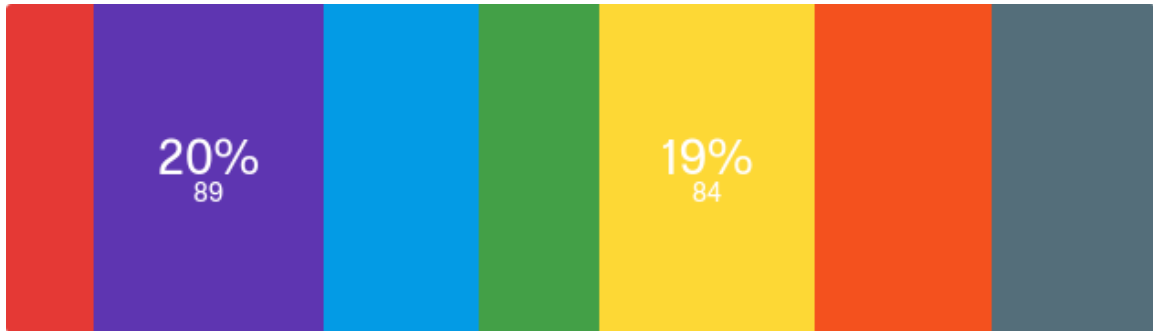
Figure 4.16 School Librarians' Comfort Level with Sexually Explicit Content
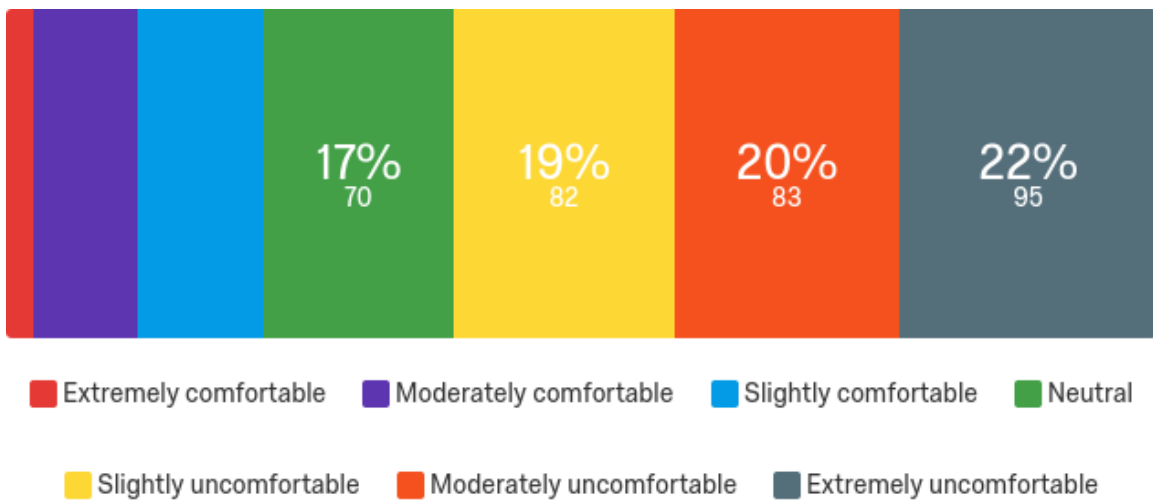
Figure 4.17 Perceived Principals' Comfort Level with Sexually Explicit Content

In order to test the Willingness to Self-Censor Scale, it was important to determine how school librarians perceived their principals' level of comfort with controversial topics. Then, I paired the scale score and the perception of principals' comfort to determine their impact on the school librarians' own comfort levels. Table 4.15 on the next page shows the full list of means for all of the variables.

Table 4.15 Descriptive statistics for all Topical and Self-Censorship Variables

	Mean	Standard Deviation
Willingness to Self-Censor		
School Librarian Rating	3.56	1.11
Principal prediction	N/A	
Religious Viewpoint – non-Christian		
School Librarian Rating	2.34	1.48
Principal prediction	3.25	1.78
Offensive language		
School Librarian Rating	4.23	1.92
Principal prediction	4.78	1.73
LGBTQ content (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer)		
School Librarian Rating	4.08	2.11
Principal prediction	4.83	1.91
Violence - weapons, fighting, domestic or dating violence, rape		
School Librarian Rating	4.36	2.07
Principal prediction	4.94	1.84
Drugs, alcohol, or smoking		
School Librarian Rating	3.73	1.98
Principal prediction	4.58	1.92
Sexually explicit (kissing in younger books)		
School Librarian Rating	4.16	1.92
Principal prediction	4.50	1.69

Note: n on all variables = 449

The means of the comfort levels are fairly consistent with the religious viewpoint averaging the lowest. More interesting are the standard deviations. Standard deviation tells me the variation in the answers. The higher the standard deviation the wider the range of responses. If the standard deviation is low for the principal prediction or the Willingness to Self-Censor, then that would tell me that these two variables would be unlikely to explain the variation in the school librarians' comfort level. It is important to note here that the standard deviations for the principal predictions are all higher than that of the Willingness to Self-Censor (WTSC) score. This result led me to believe that upon constructing my models, the principal predictions would have a greater impact on the variation in the school librarians' comfort level than the Willingness to Self-Censor

score. If the WTSC score's standard deviation had been even lower, I most likely would have dropped it as an explanatory variable.

I created a correlation matrix using the six dependent variables (School Librarians' Comfort with Controversial Topics) and seven of the demographic variables that the survey collected: experience, selection policy, reconsideration policy, job security, setting, grade levels served and budget. The purpose was to determine if any of these demographic variables would correlate with the dependent variables. Only one of the demographic variables showed some slight correlation: grade levels. However, review of the literature shows that two additional demographic variables also correlated in previous studies so I chose to also include them in the models I tested. Those variables were experience and budget. Therefore, I chose to use the grade level, experience, and budget as covariates in my models.

To determine if the explanatory variables, WTSC score and Perceived Principal's Comfort (PP) Level, provide an explanation for the variation in the school librarians' comfort level with controversial topics, I conducted a series of hierarchical linear regressions with the first block including the covariates of experience, budget, and grade levels. In the first six models, I included the WTSC score as the second block. In the next six models, I included the PP level. Finally, I created six models using both the WTSC score and the PP level. Each model represented one of the different topics representing school librarians' comfort level (SL) with controversial materials. Here is an example of a model from the third round of models:

Model 13 <- SL(religion) ~ experience + level+budget+WTSC+PP

When running the models I was looking for p values of less than <0.05 for the explanatory variables. This tells me that the explanatory variable is stable and a predictor for the response variable (the school librarians' comfort levels). If the p value was less than 0.05, I was then looking at the Coefficient of Determination (adjusted r-squared). The Coefficient of Determination tells me how well the model explains the variation in the response variable.

Table 4.16

Coefficients of Determination (Adjusted R-squared) for Models

	Models with WTSC only	Models with PP only	Models with both WTSC and PP
Religion	0.056	0.389	0.390
Offensive Language	0.269	0.586	0.589
LGBTQ	0.239	0.571	0.576
Violence	0.335	0.662	0.664
Drugs, Alcohol, & Smoking	0.318	0.633	0.637
Sexually Explicit	0.131	0.573	0.573

In the first six models, I used the WTSC score only. The p value of the WTSC score was below 0.05 in all six models; however, as seen in Table 4.16 the coefficients of determination were very low, particularly for religion. I then ran six additional model with the PP score only. Again, the p value for the PP score was below 0.05. In these models, the coefficients of determination increased significantly telling me that the addition of the PP score explained more of the variation in the school librarians' comfort level than the WTSC score alone. At this point, I decided to build six additional models using both the WTSC score and the PP score to see if by using both explanatory variables, the coefficients of determination would increase significantly. This was not the case. The coefficients of determination changed only slightly. This tells me that while the

WTSC score did have some impact on the school librarians' comfort level, the PP score was more important.

I tested six additional models using the covariates only. The coefficient of determination for that model was 0.046. The difference between these models and the PP only models was about 0.3. This difference shows how much more of the variation in the response variable is being explained by the PP score above and beyond the covariates. Finally, examination of the models shows that for every 1 point increase in the PP score, the school librarians' comfort level will increase on average by 0.7 after controlling for the covariates. This is true for all of the different topics, except religion. In the case of religious topics, the PP score had less effect. The impact of the PP score in the models tells me that external forces are having an impact on school librarians' comfort levels with controversial material.

4.4 JOB SECURITY

The final section of the survey asked school librarians to provide information on their perception of the support that they receive from their school level and district level administrations. The school librarians were also asked to state whether they felt their job might be on the line if they were to choose to add controversial materials to their school library collections. Interestingly, over ninety-four percent of the school librarians felt supported by their school level administrations when making decisions about their collection. That number was only slightly lower at eight-five percent feeling supported by district level administrations. Table 4.17 on page 79 provides the data. Figure 4.18 on the following page illustrates this information.
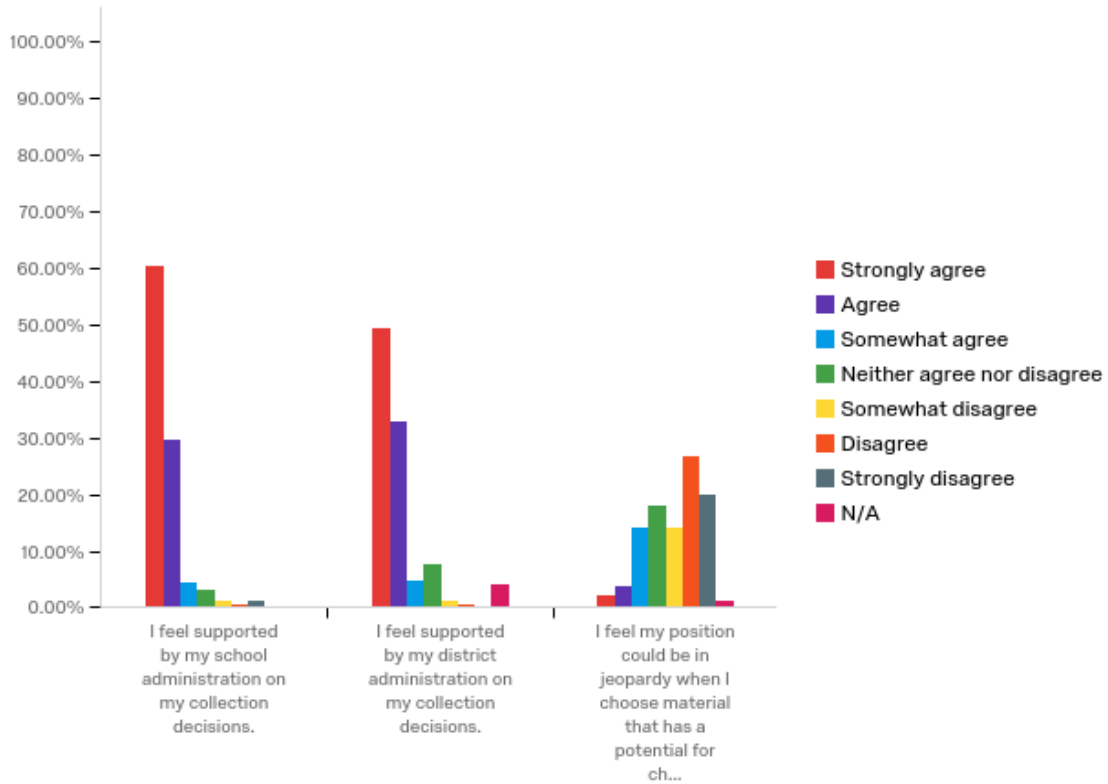
Figure 4.18 Job Security

I also examined this data by taking into account other factors such as experience and geographic setting and found that the other factors had no impact on the school librarians' feeling about job security. I expected that those with less experience might feel less secure in their positions. However, the data did not show this. Figure 4.19 on page 82 illustrates the responses to the statement, "I feel my position could be in jeopardy when I choose material that has a potential for challenges." While the pie charts show that the level of job security the school librarians felt increased the longer they held their positions, even the most inexperienced school librarians still felt relatively safe in their positions when they chose controversial materials. However, even the small chance of losing a position based on the decision to add controversial content to the collection might make a school librarian think twice about adding it.

Table 4.17

Job Security

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Somewhat Agree		Neither Agree nor Disagree		Somewhat Disagree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		N/A	Total
	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	#	#
I feel supported by my school administration on my collection decisions.																
	60.30	284	29.72	140	4.25	20	3.18	15	1.06	5	0.42	2	1.06	5	0	471
I feel supported by my district administration on my collection decisions.																
	49.26	232	32.70	154	4.67	22	7.64	36	1.06	5	0.42	2	0.21	1	19	471
I feel my position could be in jeopardy when I choose material that has a potential for challenges.																
	2.13	10	3.83	18	14.04	66	18.09	85	14.04	66	26.81	126	20.00	94	5	470

4.5 CONCLUSION

Quantitative analysis of the survey data shows that school librarians largely have access to district-level selection policies to guide their addition of materials to the collection. However, even more school librarians have district level reconsideration policies to guide the process when material is called into question. Funding of school libraries is an important part in the decision-making process for school librarians. The data collected by the survey showed a wide discrepancy between funding levels in school libraries, often with the most poverty-stricken schools receiving the least amount of funding. Additionally, the budgets did not always reflect the increased needs of larger student populations. After examining the impact of the WTSC score and the perception of principals' comfort score on school librarians' comfort levels, the perception of the principals' comfort was a better predictor of the school librarians' comfort. The analyses of the school librarians' comfort with the controversial topics and their perception of their principals' comfort showed some differences. Most importantly, school librarians believed they were more comfortable than their principals for all six of the controversial topics.
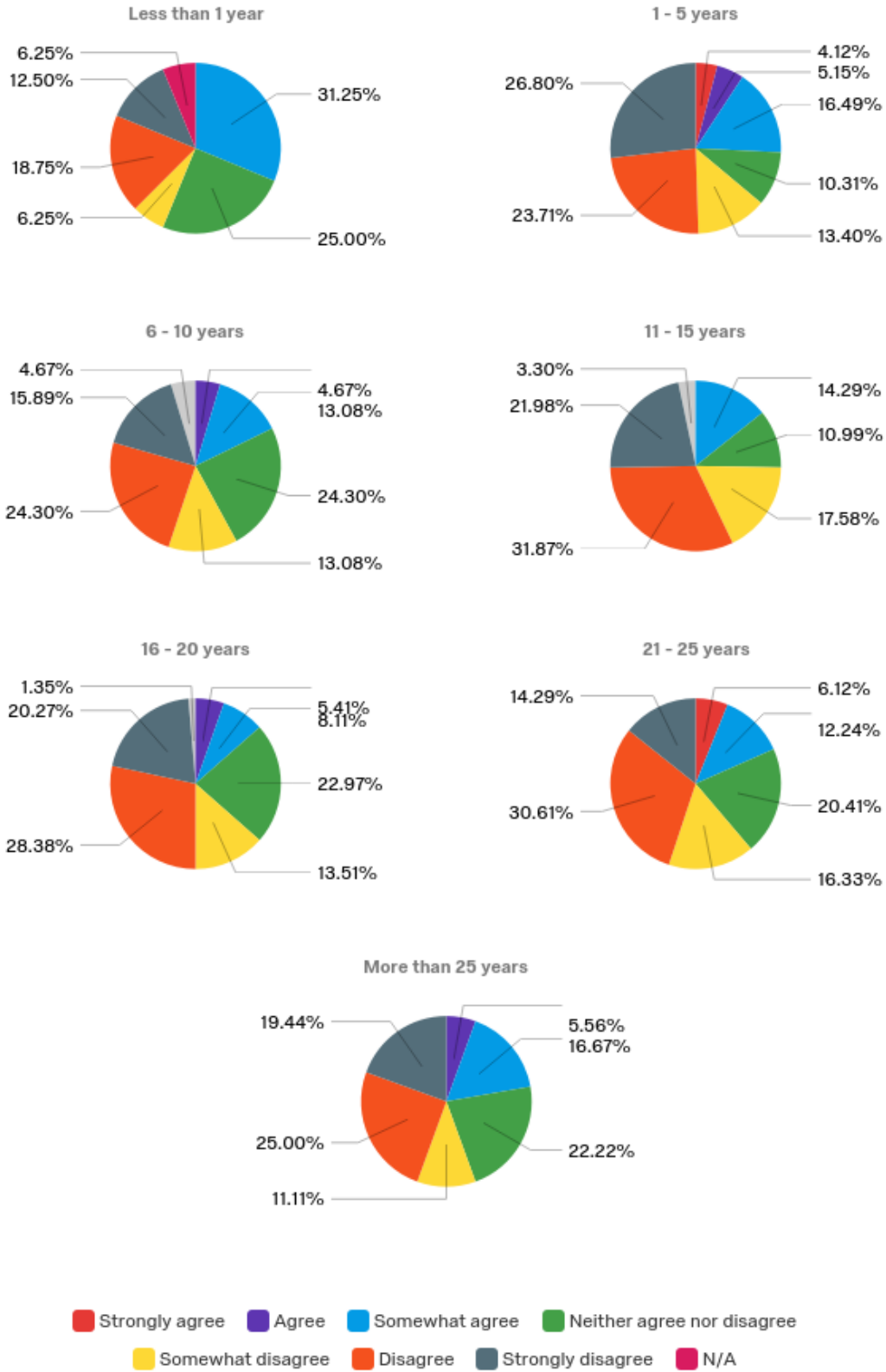
Figure 4.19 Pie Charts showing School Librarians Job Security and Level of Experience

CHAPTER 5

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

Interviews with thirty-nine school librarians were conducted from May 9 to June 11, 2016. Of the group, I was acquainted with nine of the school librarians prior to this study. The first section of this chapter explains the methodology used for analysis. Subsequent sections include the analysis of the interviews ordered by the interview question asked. After discussion of the interview responses, I outline the themes that emerged from the interviews and several interesting topics that emerged from the conversations.

5.1 INTERVIEW METHODOLOGY

Of the 471 survey respondents, one hundred thirty school librarians in North and South Carolina agreed to participate in a follow-up interview. Purposeful sampling was used to ensure collection or rich and meaningful data. There are several types of purposeful sampling types. I chose to use maximum variation sampling which Glesne describes as selection of "cases that cut across some range of variation" (2016, p. 51).

Table 5.1

Purposeful Sample of Interview Participants

Type of School	North Carolina	South Carolina
Elementary Rural	2	2
Elementary Urban	4**	1
Elementary Suburban	2	3
Middle Rural	3	1
Middle Urban	2	2*

Middle Suburban	2*	4
High Rural	3	3
High Urban	2	**3
High Suburban	2	2
Other	3 – MS/HS Rural, Alternative School, K12 Urban	3 – HS Suburban Charter, MS/HS Suburban **, ES/MS Rural*
Total	25	24

In the table above, a single asterisk represents that the number includes an interview with a non-Caucasian and a double asterisk represents the inclusion of an interview with a male librarian.

The interviews were conducted using a variety of virtual methods including Google Hangout, Skype, FaceTime, and phone conversations. All interviews were recorded with the permission of the participants. To preserve the anonymity of the interview participants, each participant was assigned a pseudonym: School Librarian (SL) followed by the number of their interview. For example, the fifth interview participant is denoted as SL5. To further ensure anonymity and confidentiality, no specific descriptions of schools or school locations or names will be used in the discussion of their responses.

Once the interviews were completed, verbatim transcripts of the interviews were created. These transcripts were shared with the participants who then had the opportunity to make corrections or additions to the content. The transcriptions were then analyzed using two rounds of coding including in the following types of codes: vivo, emotion, structural, attribute, and versus (Saldana, 2016). The coding rounds resulted in 162 unique codes.

5.2 INTERVIEW QUESTION RESPONSES

The first six questions were asked of all participants. The final three questions were only asked of the thirteen librarians who indicated they had experienced a formal challenge.

Question 1 Responses: Tell me how you go about the process of choosing what materials you add to your collection.

Several of the librarians interviewed indicated that they used a formal, planned process when choosing materials to add to their collection. Eight explained that they had a written long range plan for collection development for their individual school. Additionally, eight school librarians mentioned that they consulted their district's selection policy for guidelines in making decisions. Only one participant discussed tying her selections to the library's stated mission; however, two others tied their selection decisions to the school-wide plan for improvement.

Library management software was also part of the selection process for some of those interviewed. Thirteen of those interviewed conducted a routine, yearly collection analysis using their library management software, in order to decide areas of weakness in their collections. Five school librarians discussed the role that circulation statistics played in determining what interested their students, so they could determine future purchases.

A large number of those interviewed indicated that their selection process included providing materials based on either student requests (35) or teacher requests (25). Some of those interviewed had a formal process for taking requests, including surveys or suggestions boxes, while others, simply wrote down requests as they were presented.

Other school librarians explained their process as a more informal one where they used multiple methods to determine what to add to the collection. One participant stated:

> In my head I know what I'm doing. I don't sit down with paper and pencil and work this all out. I'm just constantly evaluating my collection and how it meets the needs of my kids. It's really more of an internal thing than a systematic forum or anything like that. (SL22)

Additionally, almost all (thirty-nine) of the school librarians discussed the importance of using reviews from professional sources such as the following as part of their selection process:

- *School Library Journal;*

- *Kirkus*;

- *Booklist;* or

- *Library Media Connection*.

Similarly, twenty-one of those interviewed indicated that they also used specific sources for purchasing materials for their collections and heavily used those sources for seeking reviews. Eleven school librarians specifically mentioned using Junior Library Guild's subscription services to assist in making selections for their collection.

Some of the participants used additional sources to discover and select new materials for their collections. Two school librarians cited specific blogs, such as Mr. Schu Reads (http://mrschureads.blogspot.com/) and Debbie Reese (https://americanindiansinchildrensliterature.blogspot.com/), as sources of reviews for new materials. Five school librarians visited bookstores in order to examine titles in person. Fourteen used published recommendation lists from either state or national

organizations to help in selection. Eight discussed using social media sources for reviews from non-professionals. Only two mentioned actually looking at catalogs from publishers.

Question 2 Responses: What are some of the factors that determine if you will add certain materials or not?

One of the first factors mentioned by many of the participants was that materials with positive reviews would more likely be added to the collection. Some participants mentioned that their selection policies required that an item have either two or three positive reviews before they could consider an item. After the use of reviews, many school librarians (21) indicated that if a book was a nominee for or winner of an award at either the state or national level, then it would be seriously considered for addition.

The findings revealed that the participants valued student interest when it came to selecting materials for their collection. In fact, student interest was the most influential factor in determining what materials were added to the librarians' collections. Two interviewees discussed the importance of student interest when deciding what was to be added to the collection. When discussing choosing materials based on student interest, one school librarian had this to say:

> I'm not one to really limit what they read. I want the kids reading, and so I'm not going to tell them, "Oh, you can't read that. That's not appropriate for you," whatever. If a kid wants to read it and I've got it, great. If they want to read it and I don't have it, then I'll find a way to get it. When I'm trying to acquire materials, I don't look at appropriateness for a school library and all that. I'll deal with challenges to materials as they come up. That's not something that I'm too

concerned about. As far as acquiring things, if it's something that I think would

meet our collection needs and that would appeal to the students, then I'm going to

get it. (SL24)

Several mentioned that they did not wish to waste funds on materials that would not be of

interest, and therefore would not be used. Often the discussion of student interest was tied

to the decision to continue purchasing series of books. Sixteen school librarians indicated

that continuation of a series was a major factor in deciding to purchase some titles.

Age appropriateness was discussed by thirty-one of those interviewed. The

discussion was not limited to any school level, but was discussed by elementary, middle,

and high school librarians. Many indicated that it was a factor in their decision-making;

however, that was not every participant. One high school librarian stated, "I don't really

go for looking at appropriateness, because I think everything's appropriate." (SL24)

Almost exclusively mentioned by elementary school librarians was the need for

books to have visual appeal for young students. Eight of the nine participants who

mentioned visual appeal were serving in elementary schools. The ninth served in a

middle school. No high school librarians discussed the need for visual appeal in their

selections. Another area that was discussed almost exclusively by elementary school

librarians was the physical sturdiness of the books being a factor in their decision to add

an item to their collections.

Seven of those interviewed explained that they wished to meet the needs of

special populations within their schools. One participant discussed the need to provide

materials for students with various cognitive and physical disabilities. Four school

librarians searched for high interest, low reading level books to help students who

struggled with reading on grade level. Additionally, ten school librarians mentioned the need to increase the diversity of their collections, either to better reflect the diversity of their school's student population or to bring awareness to their largely homogeneous school community.

Question 3 Responses: Describe a time when you chose not to add something. What influenced that decision?

School librarians also discussed factors that might lead to the decision to exclude items from their collections. The following controversial topics were most likely to lead to exclusion or serious consideration for exclusion:

- profanity (17);

- mature, sexual content (18);

- drugs and alcohol usage (6);

- violence (10);

- lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) content (17);

- religion (1).

While some school librarians indicated that they would avoid controversial content, others discussed how they would examine materials with controversial content more closely. For example:

I never want to censor in any way, but I do look for, what's the language? What's ... any sort of maturity, sexual content, anything like that. That's the kind of stuff that's red flags that I want to look more into and maybe look for additional reviews before I pull the trigger and purchase that. (SL25)

Additionally, several school librarians discussed their concern about titles that might upset members of their communities. One school librarian said, "I've been known to not select books that might challenge community standards" (SL33). LGBTQ content seemed to be an area that quite a few of the school librarians (17) had difficulty with, particularly those serving in elementary and middle schools. One school librarian discussed her difficulty in considering LGBTQ materials:

> What I'm really struggling with is like sexual orientation, those kind of books. I
> don't know what to do. I have not gone there. I think there are a few in my library,
> but I haven't sought that out. I can see some of my kids who are obviously gay
> looking for things that reflect them, so I know I've got to think about it. (SL28)

Additionally, several participants (4) discussed the need to maintain a balanced collection where multiple perspectives on topics were provided. Religion was one area where balance was discussed.

> I have to be really sensitive about what Muslim topics I choose, make sure that
> they're books that are very positive about Islam, more about working together
> than promoting Islam because we are a military community as well, so I guess it's
> kind of a sensitivity choosing the books that are going to be a positive addition on
> the topic instead of just slapping you in the face, here's a controversial issue.
> (SL21)

Several librarians mentioned the conservative nature of their communities when explaining the decision to exclude an item from their collection, one saying,

It's rural, very Baptist, very country and so I don't purchase books that I know will

spark ... That will cause people to object to what's in here. I look for books that

are going to be accepted. (SL42)

Often the discussion of community standards was used to explain the decision to not

acquire materials that dealt with LGBTQ topics, believing that "that is just like asking for

a challenge" (SL22).

When faced with controversial topics, school librarians rely heavily on reviews.

One of those interviewed said, "Typically I will err on the side of caution and not

purchase it unless it is so strongly, so well recommended, that I would feel like I would

be doing more of disservice by not getting it" (SL36).

Several school librarians explained that their decision to not add material to the

collection was largely based on the reaction that their principal or other school

administrators might have. One school librarian, not speaking of herself but of others

within her district, stated that "Some people just don't want to cause their principal any

heartburn, so they preempt it by not ordering it." (SL33).

Question 4 Responses: If you had an unlimited budget, what types of materials

would you choose to add to your collection that you are not adding now?

When asked what they would add to their collections, if given an unlimited

budget, the largest number of participants indicated they would add graphic novels or

manga to their collections. Seventeen school librarians discussed the impact that graphic

novels were having on students and on their circulation statistics. One librarian explained,

I would also expand my graphic novels greatly! We have a lot. We ended up with,

this year especially, I ordered in some sets and said, "Just let me see what

happens." They were heavily circulated. (SL30)

An additional type of material that those interviewed mentioned is formats other than

print books. Three school librarians discussed adding audiobooks to their collections.

Sixteen school librarians discussed including more eBooks in their collection; however,

only two mentioned a possible issue with technology or wireless access for their students.

One interesting topic that sixteen librarians mentioned is that with additional

funds they would engage in heavier weeding of their collections. Sixteen librarians

discussed weeding either to improve the copyright age of their collection or to discard

and replace items that were worn or in poor condition. One librarian explained what she

would do with an unlimited budget:

Well, one of things I would like to do is I would love to be able to weed more so

that I can add more recent materials. My science section is horrible as far as their

age. The average age of my collection is 1997. I need to replace things, a lot of

outdated materials. I don't really think I have anything specific and special that I

would do, but I would just like to get rid of some of the old stuff and get some

newer things in there. (SL13)

Several librarians indicated that if they weeded everything that really needed to be

weeded they would have empty shelves.

Six school librarians discussed their desire to add multiple copies of individual

titles to their collections indicating that they wished to meet student interests when books

were very popular. Citing the cost of the titles, one librarian said, "I would buy more

multiple copies, to be honest, because what's popular with our kids is really popular" (SL2).

Question 5 Responses: Tell me about a time when someone questioned items in your collection.

When discussing instances when a person questioned items into their collections, the participants identified three sources of concern: students, teachers, and parents. Eight school librarians mentioned a time when a student brought a book to them and asked about its inclusion, often pointing out content they thought might be questionable. Depending on the age of the students that they serve, school librarians find different types of material questionable. For example, an elementary librarian described a time a student pointed out a book she might like to remove, "I do have children come up sometimes like, 'Ms. [SL7], this is inappropriate. It's got the D word in it or the S word.' That's my favorite. It's the S word. I don't know what the S word is because usually for them it's shut-up" (SL7). At a high school, a student approached another school librarian saying "This is a great book. But I got to show you some stuff in here. It was like f this, and f that" (SL27). What might be controversial content for an elementary school librarian was not controversial at all for a high school librarian.

Many of those who were interviewed took this as an opportunity to have a conversation about student choice and censorship. A high school librarian explained how she handled this discussion:

> A student actually questioned me about a book called *Living Dead Girl*, which I
> love that book, and we had a conversation about it and decided that she felt
> uncomfortable with it, she just shouldn't check it out. But I do now, when the kids

check that book out, I will talk to them and make sure that they can handle the

content of that particular book. (SL39)

The ability to discuss questionable materials was also important when school librarians

had items questioned by members of their own faculty. Eight participants indicated they

had experienced a teacher raising concerns about an item in their collection. Objections

raised might be based on the teacher's own beliefs, rather than based on curriculum. One

librarian discussed a time when a teacher's beliefs contradicted collection content, "(a)

math teacher who was like super fundamentalist Christian who was just horrified and

appalled that I had gotten a copy of *An Inconvenient Truth* and she sent me this real

passionate email" (SL12)

Other objections from teachers occurred because they did not see the academic

merit of some materials, particularly graphic novels. One librarian explained her

objections by saying, "Mostly I think that the teachers just think that they're not worthy to

be read, that they're not the equal of the written word. They don't see the value in it"

(SL22). Other teachers raised concerns about content being inappropriate. In discussing

books classified as urban literature (meaning about inner-city teens of color), a school

librarian said:

I've had some of the sixth and seventh grade teachers return those books for their

students with concerns about content. It has always been a non-issue. I just sort

of, "Yeah, thank you very much. Remember, we serve lots of students." I knock

on wood have not had anything ever escalate beyond that (SL15).

As indicated in the quote above, the teacher concerns that were discussed by the school librarians did not result in full challenges to items. Again, the power of conversation was able to resolve the issue.

Using a conversation to diffuse parent concerns was sometimes successful. Twenty-two school librarians indicated they had experienced instances when parents questioned items in their collections. One librarian explained how she handled a parent concern:

> We tried to use those selection and censorship words. We really targeted those. When you say to a parent, "That's censorship," or, "You're a censor," that often shuts down a lot of what ... Not name calling, but just saying, "This is what you want for your child. We'll be glad to provide an assignment, but now you're talking about ... I mean I have children at this school. I'm talking about my child's inability to access that. You're talking about making those decisions for me as a parent," and most of them, that cuts it right off. (SL16)

Those interviewed also indicated their surprise when an objection was raised that was not really what they expected. One librarian told about such a time, "They didn't object to the dead man in the creek. They objected to the fact that there were teenagers drinking in the woods" (SL26).

Conversation was not always the solution to objections. In fifteen instances, school librarians chose to remove a book from the collection when faced with the possibility of future objections to the material or the possibility of a full, formal challenge to an item in their collection. One librarian explained, "I just pulled it off because that one probably could have made it into the papers with the parent that was complaining"

(SL42). In six other instances, school librarians chose to send the book to another school that had older students. One elementary librarian sent *The Graveyard Book* (Gaiman, 2008) to a middle school saying, "I actually sent that to the middle school because it was too graphic for elementary, and I had a parent who wasn't happy, and my principal couldn't back me up on it" (SL22).

Question 6 Responses: How would you describe your administration's involvement or support of your library program?

Responses to this question fell into four categories:

- administrations that were supportive of the library program but either could not or did not support it financially;

- administrations that were supportive and provided adequate funding;

- administrations who seemed to be supportive but were largely unaware of the library program; or

- administrations who did not support the library program.

Some librarians indicated that while they felt supported by their administrations in the programs or services they provided, that support did not always extend to financing their programs at an adequate level. One librarian stated:

I'm really, really blessed with a great principal and two fantastic vice-principals, assistant principals. I feel like they're very, very supportive. They've really embraced a culture of reading in the school, and we've done a lot of really, really cool things since I've been there, with them. They're great in supporting the program itself. Budget-wise, I don't know if it's me still being kind of new and not realizing that they can do more than they're able to do or if they really can't do a

whole lot more than they're able to do. I don't know. I feel like the budget is a

little restrictive for what I'd like to be able to provide to our students and our staff.

But as far as what I want to do, I've never had anything, and I've come up with

some wacky ideas, I never had them say no to anything. So they're very

supportive unless it's money. (SL25)

Several librarians indicated that without the support of their administration, they would

make different purchasing decisions. One librarian said, "If I did NOT have a supportive

administration, I might think twice about what my purchases were going to be" (SL26).

Another librarian also explained that her purchasing decisions were based on funding,

and not necessarily on what she really felt was needed for the collection: "You're

prioritizing what you purchase, based on how much money you have" (SL38).

Ten of the school librarians indicated that they did receive adequate funding either

through district budgets, school-based decisions, book fairs, or Parent Teacher

Organization support. One participant described the on-going support she received from

her school administration:

My principal is also very supportive and pretty much gives me free range, to be

honest with you. I had $300,000.00 to spend when we opened up the new school

in August of 20XX. He gives me an additional $5,000.00 a year to buy what I

need. (SL27)

Twenty-seven school librarians indicated they received little or no budget allocation from

either their school or district. Some rely almost entirely on funds from book fairs.

Some librarians indicated that their administrations seemed either uninterested or

indifferent in what occurred in the library.

I think he would support anything I did, but he's not involved. Does that make

sense? The only thing he's told me before is that he hates empty shelves and he

wants it to be full of books because our kids struggle with reading and that kind of

thing, but he's not involved in the sense of managing the library. He just kind of

leaves it up to me, which is fine, but sometimes I wish he would give me a little

more guidance. (SL6)

Sometimes, the participants described the administration as providing token, not real,

support, "They're supportive in name, the library's the heart of the school yada yada yada,

but when it comes down to really pushing the library, it's ... nah"(SL44).

Most disturbing were the statements from librarians who felt they did not receive

support from their administration at all.

They are not supportive of it at all. This year I did not get a budget at all, I

approached my administration about the budget and was deferred and ignored for

the entire school year until it was too late to spend money. Then when I

approached him about that, he was very defensive and got very upset with me and

basically told me that he's not going to ever talk to me about funding, and that

funding the media center is a waste of money. (SL39)

For some of those interviewed, the changes in administration in their schools also meant

changing levels of support from principals. One librarian explained that her previous

principal completely backed her; however, "The administration I have right now would

not back me at all because she is so concerned about how we're viewed in the community

that she doesn't have a clue" (SL7). Another explained that she changed schools and felt a

completely different level of support from her new principal:

She did not come in the library one time to see me teaching all year. Not a drop-by, not a formal observation, and the school I was coming from, my principal was in my classroom once a week, if not more. She doesn't really have a clue about what I'm doing. (SL45)

Question 7 Responses: Describe what it was like going through the process of reconsidering materials. (If they have experienced this.)

The thirteen librarians who experienced a full, formal challenge explained how the process occurred in their schools or districts. Most indicated that the process included a written complaint, review by a school committee and, if the complainant was unsatisfied with the school-level decision to retain or remove an item, the complaint would then be reviewed at the district level.

In every case, the school librarian served on the school's committee often becoming the book's advocate:

Unfortunately the school committee made the decision to remove the book from the shelves. Following our district procedure, I decided I was going to serve as the book's advocate. I appealed the decision to the district level. They convened the district committee. They put that process into motion. It was reviewed by the committee. They recommended to the school board that the book be retained with no restrictions and the board approved that. (SL18)

Even when the item in question was not be challenged for retention in the school library but as inclusion in a classroom's curriculum, school librarians served on the review committees and advocated for a book's retention, explaining "As a librarian, we take up

that mantle and we know that going into our profession" (SL16). Six participants were involved with challenges about classroom materials.

Going through the reconsideration process did not always result in retention of the material, and sometimes the process itself was subverted either by administrators, or by school librarians themselves. One librarian explained, "I had a parent write a complaint. They wrote up the form and submitted it. So that I wouldn't have to ... I took it off the shelf" (SL42). Several years later, the same librarian explained that when another challenge occurred several years later, "I had the support from my principal and the county and it stayed on the shelf" (SL42). One librarian explained that despite the decision by her school's Media and Technology Advisory Committee (MTAC), "One of the books that was challenged was a non-fiction book and my MTAC chose to leave it on the shelf and my principal chose to override us" (SL1).

Another participant discussed the difficulty of the process when different levels of administration within her district could not agree on how the policy would work.

I think that our county is trying to go a little more for a county advisory committee with that instead of just flat out school. We discussed it because looking ... like our school board policy really didn't say much of anything about it. There was the form to fill out, but really nothing else. We were switching to kind of a state school board policy and if you read the state school board policy, it refers everything to the principal. The principal has the power to do anything first. We had a media meeting about it and we were like, no, that's not how it works, the principal does not have the power to pull the book off the shelf. (SL29)

After that experience, the district's school librarians worked to review the district's reconsideration policy to provide more guidance.

School librarians described a variety of emotions about going through a challenge. Some experienced frustration with the process or the subversion of the process. Others simply felt upset with the outcome. When asked to describe the reconsideration process at her school, one of those interviewed began her description with a simple sentence, "I hated it" (SL13). Another explained that "I was unhappy about the decision. Unhappy is not the word" (SL18).

Question 8: Describe any support you received during the reconsideration process. If you did have support, where did it come from? If not, how did it make you feel?

The school librarians who experienced a challenge talked primarily about the support they received from fellow teachers, school or district administrators, or other school librarians in their districts. Only three mentioned that they had asked for or received support from the American Library Association's Office for Intellectual Freedom. None indicated that they had contacted their state-level school library associations for support or information.

Some participants did receive support from their districts. One school librarian described her support as:

> The superintendent was wonderful. He thought it was all ridiculous. I remember sitting in my principal's office with him. It was my principal, my superintendent, our public relations person, and my supervisor. We were just being very frank and honest and he said "These people are crazy. They're just crazy." They just are so closed minded. I had a lot of support from higher ups. (SL13)

However, the process itself was not always supported by administrators. One school librarian explained that despite the decision to retain an item by both school-level and district-level review committees, a parent chose to then confront a meeting of district principals who then gave in to her demands to restrict the item so that students could only check the item out with written permission. She described her feelings, "(I) was very, very angry about that decision. I didn't feel at the time I really had a whole lot of other choice but to do that" (SL18). Without outside support, she did not know what to do at this point.

Question 9 Responses: How do you think facing a challenge has impacted your decision-making when choosing what to add to your collection?

Of the thirteen who experienced a challenge, seven school librarians do not think the experience has impacted their process in a negative way. The other six believe they have become much more cautious and are always thinking about the possibility of a challenge. The thought of another challenge made one librarian say, "It makes me be very sensitive to what parents think" (SL10).

Several participants indicated that they felt empowered by going through a challenge, one saying:

> It came to the point where I had to draw a line. Am I going to support what I believe as the librarian or am I going to cower to this jerk who's a school board member? I stood my ground and I felt good about it. I can do it again if I need to. (SL44)

Another explained that he felt a greater responsibility as a school librarian as a result of experiencing a challenge:

It makes me feel a greater responsibility to be fair, to do my best. I think it is

absolutely imperative that we have these policies. I was very grateful that [my

school system] had a written policy in hand. At the same time, I began to really

focus on, because I knew I was going to have money from the book fair and

everything, on presenting a more complete diversity. We have Latino students, we

have a few Asian students, and then, when you look at our collection, and we

didn't have very many African American written, or ... It was weak. I know that

influenced me, in fact, I eyeballed several new wonderful things about African

American culture. I felt like it helped me to be a more responsible media

specialist. (SL49)

Another of those interviewed indicated that her willingness to undertake a challenge was

predicated on the quality of the book:

I think that that's where that phrase that I said, where if it's a book that's worth

fighting for, I'll put it on the shelf. I think that's where that came from when ... It

made me aware that if I put the book on the shelf that might be questionable, it

had to be something I'm willing to fight for. If it is one that I'm willing to fight

for. (SL1)

So, experiencing a challenge impacted how she made selection decisions.

5.3 THEMES FROM THE INTERVIEW DATA

In order to reach a saturation point in the analysis, I reread the interviews a

number of times and conducted several rounds of coding. Based on this careful study, a

number of themes emerged:

1) Communication with those who presented concerns to materials in collections

was key in allaying concerns and avoiding a full, written challenge;

2) Support of administration for school libraries and during the challenge process varied widely and influenced the decisions school librarians made when choosing materials and when choosing whether or not to defend them;

3) The funding of school libraries varies widely both within districts and across states;

4) The grade levels of a school greatly impacted the decision making of school librarians when choosing to add materials, with middle school librarians finding the issue of age appropriateness especially difficult;

5) The awareness of and implementation of both materials selection policies and reconsideration policies influenced both the selection of materials and the successful defense of challenged materials;

6) School librarians sometimes chose to voluntarily remove or restrict access to materials when they thought they might face a full, formal challenge;

7) LGBTQ content was particularly troubling for school librarians when undergoing the selection process;

8) Librarians at combination schools (elementary/middle, middle/high) faced unique challenges when making selections and providing access to materials;

9) School librarians' perceptions of the community environment, particularly those located in rural communities, impacted their decision-making process.

The power of communication was discussed by several of those who were interviewed. School librarians often used conversations within their school communities about the school library program, the selection process, and the importance of including

diverse content as a means of both informing their school communities and as a tactic to avert challenges.

Communication also played a role in the level of support that school librarians felt that they had from their administrations. While some felt that their administrators lacked either interest or awareness in their school library programs, others indicated that their school-level administrators were involved in on-going conversations about their programs as well as their selection decisions. This involvement sometimes translated into increased funding for their selections.

Budgets for school library materials varied widely. Those interviewed also received funds from a variety of sources with official funding coming sometimes from school-level decision-making and sometimes directly from decisions made at the district level. When not adequately funded, school librarians often relied on donations, book fairs, or fund raisers by Parent Teacher Organizations to either supplement their meager funds or to provide the only funds they might receive in a school year.

The grade levels served by the school librarians had an impact on their selection process. Middle school librarians, in particular, often felt that they struggled with the age appropriateness of materials because they served a transitional age from tween to teen. Many of their students wanted to have access to young adult materials, but as sixth graders were perhaps not socially or emotionally ready for them. At the same time, these school librarians were trying to meet the needs of eighth grade students who were certainly capable of handling young adult themes and topics.

While only eight participants mentioned selection policies, thirty-one of those interviewed mentioned the use of reconsideration policies or procedures. The presence of

those policies and procedures were used by participants to either justify the inclusion of material or support them when the inclusion of material was called into question.

When faced with a question about inclusion of controversial content, some librarians voluntarily chose to remove the content in question by weeding the item from the collection, sending the item to a school with older students, or by restricting access to the item. Often, they justified these actions as a way to avoid the hassle of going through a formal reconsideration process despite their awareness of policy that required that a process be followed.

Content that included LGBTQ sexuality or characters was often mentioned by school librarians when discuss content that they chose not to add to their collections. They discussed spending additional time examining the quality of LGBTQ materials especially if they felt they would need to justify its inclusion in their collections.

School librarians with larger grade combinations (elementary/middle, middle/high, or K12) discussed the difficulty of meeting the reading and information needs of such broad ranges of ages in their schools. Some of those interviewed met this challenge by having separate physical sections of their libraries for differing age groups. Others mentioned labelling books as YA (Young Adult) or E (Easy).

When discussing their decision to not include an item in question, several school librarians mentioned the needs of their school community; however, if they mentioned their community was rural, the statement was always accompanied by a mention of the conservative nature of that community. Conservatism was never mentioned in conjunction with a suburban or urban setting.

5.4 UNEXPECTED FINDINGS

Several topics arose during the interviews that merit a mention although they were isolated conversations. One school librarian mentioned the Accelerated Reader program as a tool for collection development citing its use to match students to age appropriate materials and serve as a reading incentive to drive up circulation numbers. Only one school librarian specifically mentioned her school library preparation program when discussing being prepared to face potential challenges. Five school librarians mentioned labelling materials as YA (Young Adult) as a tool for avoiding questions about controversial content.

When asked what content they would add to their collection if they had an unlimited budget, I expected some mention of adding content that might be considered controversial. Not a single librarian discussed controversial content when discussing what they would add in that situation.

5.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the results from the forty-nine interviews conducted as part of the study organized by interview question. The next chapter will present a summary of the study as well as an integration of quantitative and qualitative results. Finally, I will discuss the implications of this study for theory, practice, policy, and future research.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

How school librarians make decisions about what and what not to add to their

collections has a direct impact on the access that their students have to materials.

Previous research on selection and self-censorship have used a single methodology. Some

have examined self-censoring behaviors by having school librarians respond to surveys.

Some studies attempted to determine if school librarians engaged in self-censorship by

creating checklists of controversial materials and then examining school library

collections. Other studies have used interviews with small groups of school librarians. All

of these studies have their limitations. Additionally, very few studies of self-censorship

attempt to employ theory as a way to explain censoring behaviors. This study is grounded

in the Spiral of Silence Theory which posits that individuals may choose either

consciously or subconsciously to self-censor because they believe their opinion might

contradict the dominant public opinion. This dominant public opinion does not have to be

rooted in fact, but is based on the individual's perception of opinion. In this study,

dominant public opinion is measured through examination of the school librarians'

perceptions of their principals' level of comfort with controversial content.

In order to gain a clearer understanding of the selection decisions of school

librarians and their self-censoring behaviors, I chose to employ a mixed design for this

study. This mixed methods study provides insight into the selection process through the

use of two phases. An initial survey gathered data about the school librarians themselves,

their policies and procedures, funding, and their comfort with controversial topics. After the survey data was collected, forty-nine school librarians were interviewed to provide additional insights into their selection processes and their decisions when controversial content was being considered. This chapter begins by examining the findings from both phases of the study and discussing how the data answers the research questions. The final section discusses implications of the study and recommendations for future research.

6.1 DISCUSSION

Research Question 1: How do school librarians describe their own selection process?

Some school librarians described their process as a very systematic one, while others explained that they largely based their purchasing decisions on student interest and maximum usage of the limited funds for purchasing. Those with a more systematic process discussed the implementation of a collection development plan which guided purchasing decisions over a period of years. Additionally, they used formal and informal methods of gauging student and faculty interest in materials through the use of surveys and suggestion boxes. Those interviewed also explained that they chose materials based on curriculum needs or changes based on curriculum mapping of their collections. In particular, teacher requests for materials were weighed against curriculum needs. Data from the survey revealed that 63% of school librarians have access to district-level selection policies to guide their addition of materials to the collection. However, only nine of the forty-nine school librarians discussed actually using those policies as a component of their selection process. This suggests that an awareness of a district policy did not necessarily result in its use. In the interviews, the discussion of the selection

policy was centered on its use as a tool when faced with questions about their collections, and not necessarily as a tool for the actual selection of materials. Data from the survey shows that almost 86% of school librarians are aware of a district-level reconsideration policy or process. This higher percentage was also reflected during the interview portion of this research with thirty-one school librarians mentioning a reconsideration policy or process when discussing possible challenges to material.

When learning about items to consider for their collections, school librarians relied heavily on reviews of materials from professional sources or lists of recommendations or award winners. Thirty-nine of those interviewed discussed the importance of reading reviews of materials that they are considering for purchase. During the interviews, some explained that they needed two or three positive reviews for an item in order to consider it for inclusion in their collections. Others used reviews as a method to justify adding controversial material. Several mentioned that they had mistakenly purchased materials because the reviews did not contain warnings about either profanity or mature content. Despite this heavy reliance on reviews from professional sources, a number of school librarians indicated that they were beginning to use social media sources for reviews and recommendations citing the use of Pinterest, blogs, Goodreads, and reviews on Amazon.com.

The issue of funding was of major concern to school librarians when discussing their selection process. Data from the survey shows a wide range of funding levels for school libraries with some receiving less than $1,000 in the 2015-2016 school year for library materials and a very few receiving over $15,000. Examination of this data by comparing funding to student populations shows even schools serving more than 2000

students sometimes were allocated less than $1,000 to purchase new library materials. Over half of the school librarians surveyed (236) served in schools with a population of 500 – 999. Examination of the range of budgets they received is indicative of the larger issue – disparity in funding. Using data from SLJ's Average Book Prices, to purchase one new book for student based on a population of 750, school librarians would need approximately $15,000. Forty-five percent of the schools in the 500-999 population range indicated they received between $1,001 and $4,999 for the 2015-1016 school year.

The concern about budgets is reflected in the interview comments about funding selections. Often, school librarians explained that they had very limited funding to the extent that they resorted to only replacing worn out materials and purchasing award list titles. Some school librarians indicated they received no funding and in order to have any money for purchases, they conducted book fairs, collected donations, or applied for grants. The discussion of budgets surprisingly led to a discussion of weeding practices as part of the selection process. When discussing a scenario where they had unlimited funds, school librarians explained that they would engage in more heavy weeding of their collections, particularly focusing on replacement of damaged or dated materials and removal of non-circulating items.

A few school librarians also discussed the role of advisory committees in selecting materials. Some committees took an active role in discussing and suggesting purchases; however, most of the school librarians who discussed committees explained that their role was limited to serving more as a way to defend against challenges. In this way, the material was "approved" by a group instead of by a single person.

Research Question 2: To what extent do school librarians engage in self-censorship as part of the collection development process?

School librarians do engage in self-censorship, often justifying the decision to exclude material based on age-appropriateness, concern about community reactions to content, and their own discomfort with controversial content. Community standards was used to explain the decision to include LGBTQ materials in particular. Often when discussing excluding materials from the collection, school librarians specifically mentioned their decision was based on the concern that the inclusion of the material would result in a challenge.

For those school librarians who had experienced a formal, written challenge that resulted in a review of the questioned materials, experiencing that challenge led to a more cautious approach to choosing materials for their collections. However, this is not the case for all of those interviewed. Several felt that having experienced a challenge, they were better prepared to defend their selection decisions in the future.

One of the issues when discussing self-censorship is the narrow definition of the terms, censorship and self-censorship in the research literature. Self-censorship is defined as the decision to not include material in a collection prior to purchase due to either external or internal factors. Censorship occurs when material is removed from a collection after purchase and usually refers to attempts by external forces. The problem is that there is little discussion of the censoring behaviors that school librarians use after an item is purchased for a collection. The interviews revealed that many school librarians were engaging in ex post facto self-censorship: choosing to remove materials from their

own school library collections which they themselves had purchased without going through a reconsideration process.

Research Question 3: When school librarians engage in self-censorship, what are the ways they do it and the factors that influence their decision making?

Engaging in self-censorship prior to purchase is described by school librarians primarily as a selection decision. They rarely refer to the decision to exclude material based on its content as self-censorship. However, school librarians did chose to self-censor by choosing to exclude materials that they were concerned might result in a challenge. In particular, they were more likely to exclude LGBTQ content, materials with profanity, and materials with mature, sexual content. These controversial topics discussed in interviews were also reflected in the survey responses of the participants. When examining the data about the comfort levels of school librarians with controversial topics, the three topics with the highest levels of discomfort were offensive language, violence, and sexually explicit content. It is interesting that LGBTQ content was not in the top three in the survey; however, over 45% of those surveyed indicated some level of discomfort with the topic.

A surprising number of those interviewed indicated they engaged in various forms of ex post facto self-censorship. Some school librarians chose to mark out objectionable language or pictures from materials in their collections. Others chose to remove the book from their collection entirely, referring to this decision as "weeding." Several school librarians mentioned transferring the title to a school that served an older population. In middle schools, young adult materials were often labelled as "YA" or placed on restricted

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shelving where students needed parental permission prior to access. All of these instances failed to follow any reconsideration procedure.

Based on discussion in the interviews, two factors that greatly influenced the decision to self-censor were the concern about community reaction to controversial content and administrative support of the school library. Both of these are external factors which suggests that the spiral of silence theory is an explanation for the decision to exclude content which might be controversial. If school librarians perceived their community as rural, conservative, or likely to challenge controversial content, they chose to exclude it from their collections. Similarly, if a principal or school administrator expressed concern about a topic or if they even thought a principal might be unwilling to back them in a challenge, those interviewed would choose to exclude material.

Examination of the survey data supports this conclusion as well. When examining the school librarians' perception of their principals comfort level with the addition of controversial content to the collection, they indicated that the principals would be most uncomfortable with LGBTQ content, violence, and sexually explicit content. The survey reflected that school librarians believed their principals would be more uncomfortable than themselves with controversial content in every category. Statistical analysis of the perception of their principals and their Willingness to Self-Censor score, showed the impact of these two external forces on the school librarians' comfort levels with controversial content. While using both scores as explanatory variables for the school librarians' comfort level, the perception of their principals provided a greater explanation.

6.2 LIMITATIONS

This study is limited in that the research was conducted in two neighboring states in the south: North Carolina and South Carolina. The study should be replicated in other geographic areas of the United States to determine if the findings hold true in those locations as well. Additionally, the respondents to the survey were largely female and white and worked primarily in public schools. While these demographics are true of school librarians in general, studies need to be conducted to examine if school librarians who are male, ethnically and racially diverse, and work in different types of schools have differences in their selection processes and self-censoring behaviors.

6.3 IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section contains both implications and recommendations together. This was a purposeful choice as I wish to make recommendations for future research based on the implications that this study has for both the theory and practical application in the field of school librarianship.

The heavy reliance of school librarians on professional reviewing sources is an area of concern. While these sources are certainly worthy of consideration, recent discussion about the lack of inclusiveness and coverage of non-mainstream publishers raises questions about the reliance of school librarians on these sources. This study showed that some school librarians were beginning to look outside of traditional review sources and seeking reviews of new content through social media and blogs that examine additional materials. A study of the impact of social media and blogs on school librarians' selection decisions is needed to examine this trend further.

When discussing challenges to controversial material, school librarians primarily discussed young adult literature in middle and high schools, LGBTQ literature in particular. While there have been studies specifically about LGBTQ literature and its inclusion in school and public library collections, little research has been done specifically about how school librarians choose these materials and about whether or not challenges to LGBTQ content are handled differently than other types of controversial content.

School librarians often acted in ways contrary to the Library Bill of Rights and Freedom to Read by choosing to engage in ex post facto self-censorship. This suggests that further research needs to be conducted in order to understand how and to what extent school librarians are prepared to handle challenges to controversial content. Are their school library preparation programs really preparing them to handle challenges in all of their forms? If their programs are preparing them to handle challenges, why are they choosing to voluntarily remove or restrict access to materials? Are school librarians aware of resources that can assist them when they face questions about controversial content?

Ex post facto self-censorship was often discussed in conjunction with reconsideration policies and processes. Many of those who engaged in this form of self-censorship did so while fully aware of the presence of a reconsideration policy. They chose to self-censor in order to avoid the formal reconsideration process. An examination of selection and reconsideration policies is needed. But understanding the policies in place it not enough, the examination should be accompanied by a study of the actual implementation of the policies themselves. Who within a school or school district is

choosing to follow or subvert policy? Does the subversion of policy cause ex post facto self-censorship?

Additionally, in one interview in this study, a school librarian explained that a parent chose to challenge her school library policies about access to materials for students instead of requesting removal of material. This appears to be an emerging trend in censorship with conservative activists seeking to attack the entire Young Adult label within children's literature and ALA positions on access for children (Gaffney, 2017). Research into emerging trends in censorship is needed to understand how to better prepare school librarians to face new kinds of challenges.

Finally, the application of the Spiral of Silence theory to self-censorship behaviors in school libraries has potential to provide a more theoretically based explanation for this phenomena. Understanding the power of external forces, particularly, perceived public opinion, can help us to both better prepare school librarians to avoid self-censorship and to defend against challenges. I believe that awareness of our own biases and tendencies to self-censor can help us overcome them. In this study, examination of the WTSC scale in conjunction with the perceived principals' comfort levels with controversial topics, showed that they could serve as predictors for school librarians' own comfort levels with controversial topics. However, further study of the interaction between these two variables is needed to determine if their usage as a tool for prediction is feasible.

6.4 CONCLUSION

The importance of selection of materials for inclusion in a school library collection cannot be understated. For many children, the school library is their one and only source of information either for completing their school work or simply exploring

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the world around them. While school librarians profess their support of the Freedom to Read, unfortunately sometimes their selection decisions are not grounded in the basic beliefs we share about access for all. Sometimes school librarians choose materials based less on quality and curriculum needs, but more on which will least likely draw unwanted attention in the form of questions about their content. It is imperative that school librarians understand their own selection biases and habits. Without reflecting on how they make decisions, school librarians leave themselves vulnerable to engaging in the very behaviors which they condemn when they are initiated by others.

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APPENDIX A - SURVEY QUESTIONS

Dear School Librarian,

I am inviting you, as a school librarian in North or South Carolina, to participate in my dissertation research. The focus of my research is to understand the decisions being made by school librarians when choosing or not choosing materials for addition to the collection.

This survey consists of closed ended questions. Demographic data will also be collected to describe the respondents to this study. Completion of the survey should take approximately 10-15 minutes. You are free to answer or not answer any particular question and have no obligation to complete answering the questions once you begin. Completing the survey connotes your consent to be a participant in this study.

Your participation is confidential. You will not be asked for any identifying information in the survey questions. All data obtained in this study will be reported as group data. No individual can be or will be identified. The only person who will have access to the data is me, as the Principal Investigator, and my mentor, Dr. Karen Gavigan. There are neither anticipated risks should you participate, nor anticipated personal benefits from being involved in the study. However, there will be educational or professional benefit from this study. The information obtained will be communicated through publication in the literature and presentations at professional meetings. There is no cost to you for your participation.

Additionally, at the conclusion of the study, you will be asked if you would like to assist further by participating in an interview. This is completely voluntary. If you wish to participate, you will be asked to provide your name and email address, so that I may contact you to make arrangements to conduct the interview virtually. Pseudonyms will take the place of participants' names in order to continue to protect the confidentiality of participants. I will not share your email address or use your email for any reason other than to contact you if you are selected to participate in an interview. Your e-mail address will not be kept or stored with any survey information.

Thank you,

April M. Dawkins
Doctoral Candidate

University of South Carolina
adawkins@email.sc.edu

Karen W. Gavigan
Associate Professor
University of South Carolina
kgavigan@mailbox.sc.edu

1. What is your age?

2. What is your gender?
❍ I identify as female. (1)
❍ I identify as male. (2)
❍ Other / Prefer not to answer (3)

3. With which race/ethnicity do you identify? (Select which best applies.)
❍ African American (non-Hispanic) (1)
❍ Asian American (2)
❍ Caucasian (non-Hispanic) (3)
❍ Hispanic (4)
❍ Multi-ethnic/Multi-racial (5)
❍ Native American (6)
❍ Other (7)
❍ Prefer not to answer (8)

4. Do you hold National Board Certification?
❍ Yes, in Library Media (1)
❍ No (2)
❍ Yes, in an area other than Library Media (3)

5. Do you currently hold certification from your state as a school librarian (library media coordinator, library media specialist)?
❍ Yes (1)
❍ No (2)

6. For how many years have you been an educator (teacher and school librarian combined)?
❍ Less than 1 year (1)
❍ 1 - 5 years (2)
❍ 6 - 10 years (3)
❍ 11 - 15 years (4)
❍ 16 - 20 years (5)
❍ 21 - 25 years (6)
❍ More than 25 years (7)

7. For how many years have you been a school librarian (total)?
❍ Less than 1 year (1)
❍ 1 - 5 years (2)
❍ 6 - 10 years (3)
❍ 11 - 15 years (4)
❍ 16 - 20 years (5)
❍ 21 - 25 years (6)
❍ More than 25 years (7)

8. For how many years have you served at your current school(s) as a school librarian?
❍ Less than 1 year (1)
❍ 1 - 5 years (2)
❍ 6 - 10 years (3)
❍ 11 - 15 years (4)
❍ 16 - 20 years (5)
❍ 21 - 25 years (6)
❍ More than 25 years (7)

9. Does your school district (local education agency) have a selection policy for choosing library materials?
❍ Yes (1)
❍ No (2)
❍ I'm not sure. (3)
❍ My school is not part of a school district. (4)

10. Does your school district (local education agency) have a reconsideration policy (and form) for possible removal of library materials?
❍ Yes (1)
❍ No (2)
❍ I'm not sure. (3)
❍ My school is not part of a school district. (4)

11. If your school district does not have a selection policy, does your school library have its own selection policy?
❍ Yes (1)
❍ No (2)
❍ I'm not sure. (3)
❍ My school is not part of a school district. (4)

12. If your school district does not have a reconsideration policy, does your school library have its own reconsideration policy?
❍ Yes (1)
❍ No (2)
❍ I'm not sure. (3)
❍ My school is not part of a school district. (4)

13. If you work at an independent school (not affiliated with a school district), does your school library have a selection policy for choosing library materials?
- ○ Yes (1)
- ○ No (2)
- ○ I'm not sure. (3)
- ○ My school is not an independent school. (4)

14. If you work at an independent school (not affiliated with a school district), does your school library have a reconsideration policy (and form) for possible removal of library materials?
- ○ Yes (1)
- ○ No (2)
- ○ I'm not sure. (3)
- ○ My school is not an independent school. (4)

15. Please respond to the following statements.

	Strongly agree (1)	Agree (2)	Somewhat agree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat disagree (5)	Disagree (6)	Strongly disagree (7)	N/A (8)
I feel supported by my school administration on my collection decisions. (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel supported by my district administration on my collection decisions. (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I feel my position could be in jeopardy when I choose material that has a potential for challenges. (3)	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

16. In which state is your school located?
O North Carolina (1)
O South Carolina (2)

17. What kind of school is it?
O Public (1)
O Private (2)
O Charter (3)
O Alternative (4)
O Other (Please specify) (5)

18. Is your school considered to be located in a community that is rural, urban, or suburban?
O Rural (1)
O Urban (2)
O Suburban (3)

19. What grade levels are served at your current school(s)?
❑ Pre-K (1)
❑ K (2)
❑ 1 (3)
❑ 2 (4)
❑ 3 (5)
❑ 4 (6)
❑ 5 (7)
❑ 6 (8)
❑ 7 (9)
❑ 8 (10)
❑ 9 (11)
❑ 10 (12)
❑ 11 (13)
❑ 12 (14)

20. Is your school a designated Title I school?
- ⭕ Yes (1)
- ⭕ No (2)
- ⭕ I'm not sure. (3)

21. What do you estimate your current school year's budget to be for the purchase of school library materials (books, databases, other information resources)?
- ⭕ Less than $1000 (1)
- ⭕ $1001 - $4999 (2)
- ⭕ $5000 - $9999 (3)
- ⭕ $10,000 - $14,999 (4)
- ⭕ greater than $15,000 (5)

22. Approximately how many students are enrolled at your school?
- ⭕ Less than 500 (1)
- ⭕ 500 - 999 (2)
- ⭕ 1000 - 1499 (3)
- ⭕ 1500 - 1999 (4)
- ⭕ Greater than 2000 (5)

23. For each statement, please choose only one box that reflects whether you strongly disagree with the statement, disagree with the statement, somewhat disagree with the statement, neither agree nor disagree with the statement, somewhat agree with the statement, agree with the statement, or strongly agree with the statement. Don't spend too much time on any one statement. Simply record your first impression.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
It is difficult for me to express my opinion if I think others won't agree with what I say. (1)	⭕	⭕	⭕	⭕	⭕	⭕	⭕

There have been many times when I have thought others around me were wrong but I didn't let them know. (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
When I disagree with others, I'd rather go along with them than argue about it. (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
It is easy for me to express my opinion around others who I think will disagree with me. (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I'd feel uncomfortable if someone asked my opinion and I knew that he or she wouldn't agree with me. (5)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I tend to speak my opinion only around friends or other people I trust. (6)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

It is safer to keep quiet than publicly speak an opinion that you know most others don't share. (7)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
If I disagree with others, I have no problem letting them know it. (8)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

24. Please react to the topics below in terms of how comfortable you would be adding materials to your collection that contain these topics. The materials in question would be developmentally appropriate for your school with positive reviews from respected review sources.

	Extremely comfortable (1)	Moderately comfortable (2)	Slightly comfortable (3)	Neutral (4)	Slightly uncomfortable (5)	Moderately uncomfortable (6)	Extremely uncomfortable (7)
Religious viewpoint - non-Christian (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Offensive language (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
LGBTQ content (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer) (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Violence - weapons, fighting, domestic or dating violence, rape (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Drugs, alcohol, or smoking (5)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Sexually explicit (kissing in younger books) (6)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

25. Please react to the topics below in terms of how comfortable your principal would be in your adding materials to your collection that contain these topics. The materials in question would be developmentally appropriate for your school with positive reviews from respected review sources.

	Extremely comfortable (1)	Moderately comfortable (2)	Slightly comfortable (3)	Neutral (4)	Slightly uncomfortable (5)	Moderately uncomfortable (6)	Extremely uncomfortable (7)
Religious viewpoint - non-Christian (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Offensive language (2)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
LGBTQ content (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer) (3)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Violence - weapons, fighting, domestic or dating violence, rape (4)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Drugs, alcohol, or smoking (5)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Sexually explicit (kissing	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

in younger books) (6)						

26. Would you be willing to be interviewed as part of this study? No names will be released as part of the findings of this study.
❍ Yes (1)
❍ No (2)

27. Please provide your name if you would be willing to be interviewed.

28. Please provide an email so that the researcher may contact you about setting up the interview.

APPENDIX B - INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Tell me how you go about the process of choosing what materials you add to your collection.

2. What are some of the factors that determine if you will add certain materials or not?

3. Describe a time when you chose not to add something. What influenced that decision?

4. If you had an unlimited budget, what types of materials would you choose to add to your collection that you are not adding now?

5. Tell me about a time when someone questioned items in your collection.

6. How would you describe your administration's involvement or support of your library program?

Questions if they had experienced a challenge:

7. Describe what it was like going through the process of reconsidering materials. (If they have experienced this.)

8. Describe any support you received during the reconsideration process. If you did have support, where did it come from? If not, how did it make you feel?

9. How do you think facing a challenge has impacted your decision-making when choosing what to add to your collection?