Stevenson Elementary School Library Diversity Audit Report

Introduction

This diversity audit, conducted during the Fall quarter of 2023, was initiated as part of a one-credit Directed Fieldwork with Stevenson Elementary School's folktale collection. The project, sponsored by Teacher Librarian Jennifer Ching, aimed to address concerns about the collection's inadequate representation and service to the diverse student population at Stevenson. By systematically collecting data, the audit sought to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the existing collection, providing a foundation for determining priorities in future weeding and collection development to better represent the student body.

Overview of Stevenson Elementary School

Stevenson Elementary School, a Title 1 public elementary school in the Bellevue School District, houses a diverse student body. The student population includes a mix of ethnicities, with a notable percentage of Asian (45%) and Latine (40%) students.[1]

Racial Diversity at Stevenson Elementary School
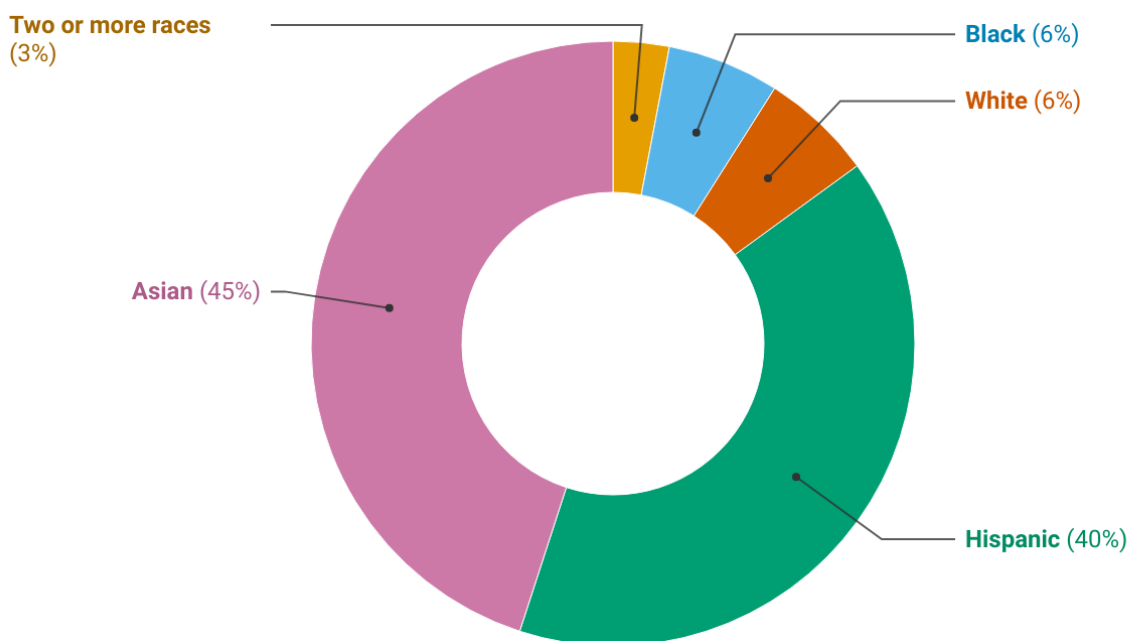
Source: Stevenson Elementary School Profile • Created with Datawrapper

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[1] Mizrahi, "2022-23 School Profile," 1.

The school's demographic makeup also encompasses a range of economic classes and linguistic backgrounds. According to the 2022-2023 School Profile, 50% of students are eligible for free or reduced priced meals, compared to the 21% district average. 68% of students at Stevenson have a first language other than English – compared to the 45% district average. Furthermore, 60% of Stevenson students are English language learners, compared to 25% district average.[2] This is in part due to the school's unique Spanish Dual Language Program.

Justification for audit

The above demographic information – accompanied by anecdotal evidence provided by the Teacher Librarian – indicates a need to investigate the diversity of representation in the folktale collection to evaluate the collection's merits and areas for improvement, identifying priorities for both removal of outdated materials and enhancement to better serve the Stevenson student body through collection development.

Methodology

Exisiting data:

A variety of data sources were retrieved and collected to conduct this audit. Book metadata and library circulation data were downloaded from the library vendor's Follett Destiny browser interface.[3] Existing metadata, such as subject headings, proved lacking in indicating instances of diverse representation in the collection, so additional data was collected to better understand the collection.

Data collection:

The data collection process was based off of a diversity audit conducted by the staff of Cedar Rapids Public Library in Iowa.[4] The data collection process was designed to simulate the browsing experience of students. This included a thorough assessment of book covers and illustrations to identify any instances of diverse representation. A Google form was utilized to record representation indicators across categories such as LGBTQIA+ representation, representation of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), representation of physical disabilities, representation of neurodivergence, representation of diverse economic classes, representation of religious diversity, and representation of stories from diverse cultures (Native American, African, Asian and Pacific Islander, and Latin American cultures).[5] These categories were recorded when the cover and illustrations indicated a specific group was a central figure in the text (e.g. If people with a physical disability were represented in a text, that would be

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[2] Mizrahi, 1.

[3] Follett's Folktale Collection Metadata, https://github.com/c-f-rey/lis_590_dfw_diversity_audit/blob/main/artifacts/CRWReportJob1245096.csv.

[4] Voels and Washington, *Auditing Diversity in Library Collections*, 42.

[5] Data intake Google Form, https://docs.google.com/forms/d/15bMPPOH0mmxyTduByqds_S1lyHfXvOiWC4RV8fhNfVA/edit.

recorded in the data intake process).[6] If multiple instances of representation were present in a book, all indicators were recorded to address the text's intersectionality.

If a book lacked any diverse representation – but rather represented what the I determinted to be the White, cisgender, heteronormative, able-bodied, and/or neurotypical hegemonic cultural norm – no representation indicator was recorded. Rather the lack of data associated with these books was used a measure in the subsequent computational analysis.

Additionally, any instances where an animal or mythical beast was a central figure of a book were recorded to both investigate their representation in the collection, as well as a measure against the diverse representation categories (e.g. Are animals better represetnted in the collection than BIPOC?)

Lastly, the languages of each text were recorded to understand the how well the collection served the diverse linguistic spread of Stevenson's student body.

Author demographic data:

Notably, no demographic information was collected on the authors of the books in the folktale collection. While it is crucial for authors to share the diverse identity of their main characters – especially in the deeply cultural stories contained within a folktale collection – there are serious ethical concerns with collecting demographic information about authors without their consent.[7] Thus such information was not collected for this audit.

Flaws and biases in the data:

As the sole researcher working on this project, al data collection was subject to my personal judgment and influenced by my positionality as a White, queer, nonbinary, able-bodied, neurotypical person. Given I was the sole collector and analyst of the data, there are potential errors in my collection, as well.

Analysis

382 of the books available in the folktale collection – the vast majority of the collection – were analyzed. A computational analysis through R of the the collected and compiled datasets yielded the following results:[8]

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[6] Diversity Audit Data,
https://github.com/c-f-rey/lis_590_dfw_diversity_audit/blob/main/artifacts/Stevenson%20Elementary%20DFW%20diversity%20audit%20data%20collection%20(Responses)%20-%20Form%20Responses%201.csv.
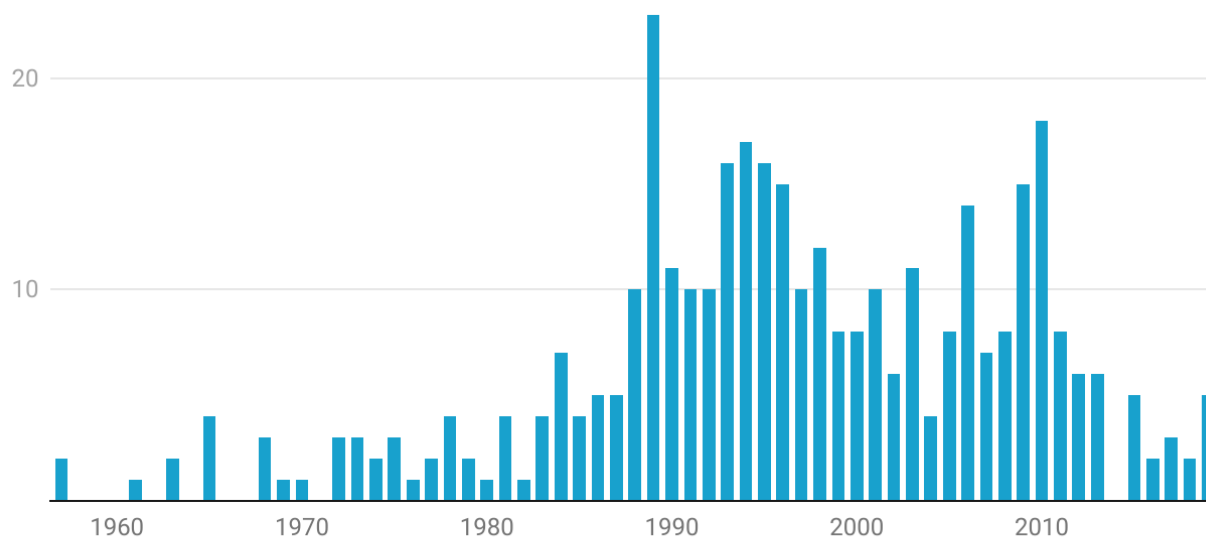[7] "Why We Need Diverse Books Is No Longer Using the Term #ownvoices."
[8] Diversity Audit Computational Analysis R Script,
https://github.com/c-f-rey/lis_590_dfw_diversity_audit/blob/main/artifacts/stevenson_folktale_diversity_audit.R.

Temporal range

Number of books by publication year in Stevenson's folktale collection
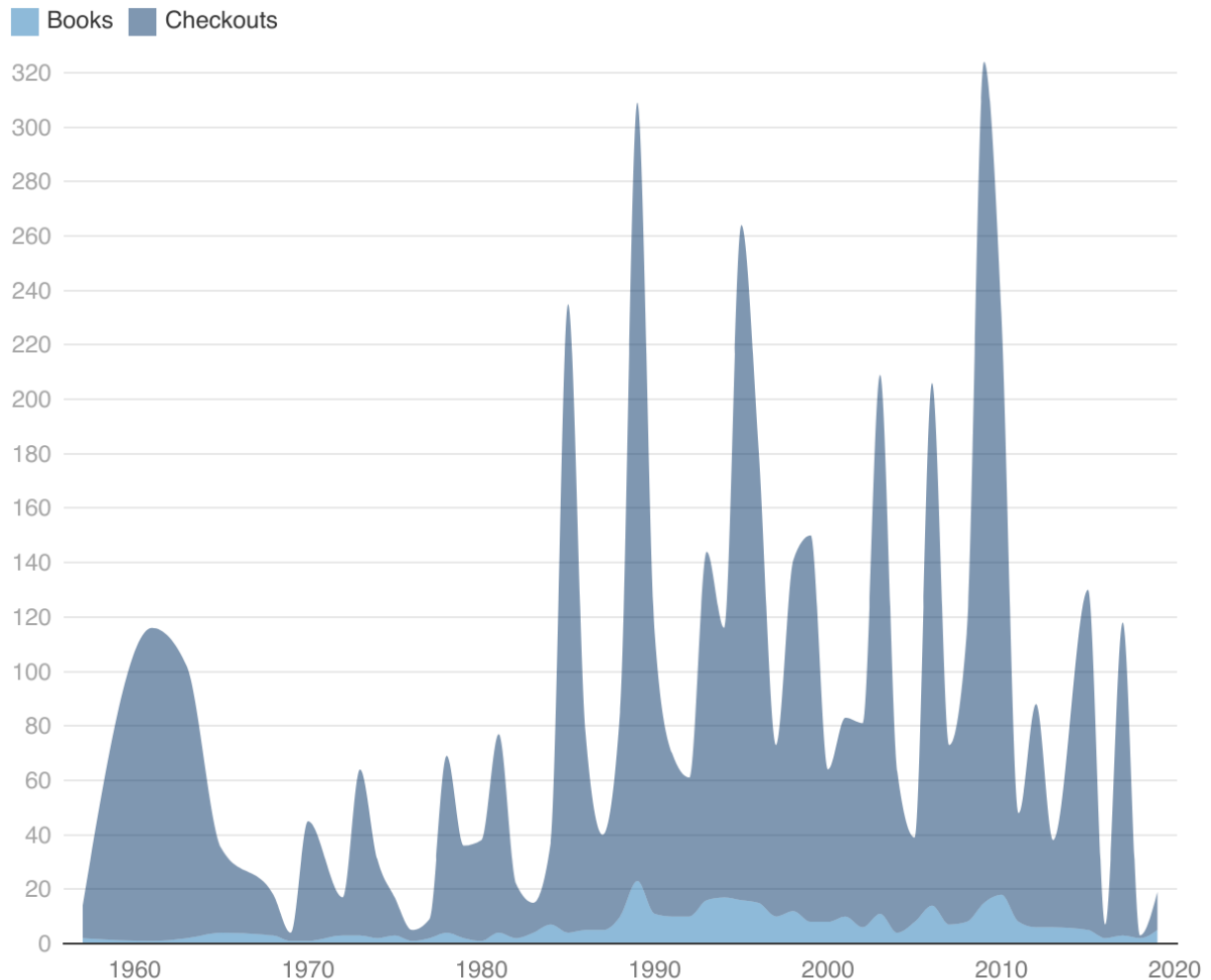
The average publication date is 1996.

Source: Stevenson Library Folktale Collection Diversity Audit • Created with Datawrapper

The majority of books in the collection were published before 2000, with an average publication year of 1996 – meaning the average age of a book in this collection is almost 28 years old.

Greater circulation among newer books despite being fewer in collection for less time

Number of Books and Checkouts by Publication Year

Books ▪ Checkouts

Source: Stevenson Library Folktale Collection Diversity Audit • Created with Datawrapper

As indicated by figure by the above visualization, books with more recent publication dates are seeing greater circulation, despite there being fewer in the collection for less time For example, there are 15 books from 2009 that have been checked out a total of 309 times. Whereas there are 15 books in the collection published in 1996 that have been checked 166 times – that's 143 fewer checkouts than books published in 2009 despite being in the collection 15 years longer. This indicates a need to increase additions of modern publications into colleciton to be of greater relevance to the user population.

Language Distribution

The vast majority of books in the folktale collection (93%) are in English. A combined 6.5% of the collection are in either Spanish (7 books) or English and Spanish (18 books).

Languages Available in the Folktale Collection

60% of students at Stevenson are English Language Learners

| Language	Books
English	353
English & Spanish	18
Spanish	7
English & Arabic	1
English & Korean	1
Hebrew	1

Created with Datawrapper

Given that 68% of students at Stevenson speak a first language other than English, there is a significant need to increase the diversity of available languages in the collection. A more granular breakdown of the languages spoken at Stevenson is not available, so more specific recommendations cannot be made at this time. Though, Steven's high Hispanic population and their Spanish Dual Language program indicate that the library should invest in more in both English and Spanish.

Diversity (or lack thereof) in the collection:

Analysis of the data revealed a considerable lack of diversity in the Stevenon's folktale collection.

Instances of Representation Among Main Diversity Categories Studied
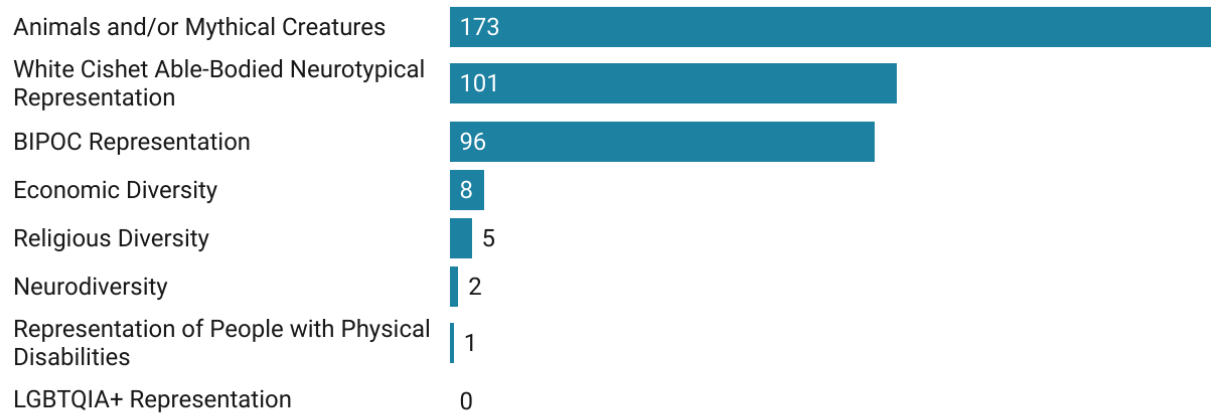
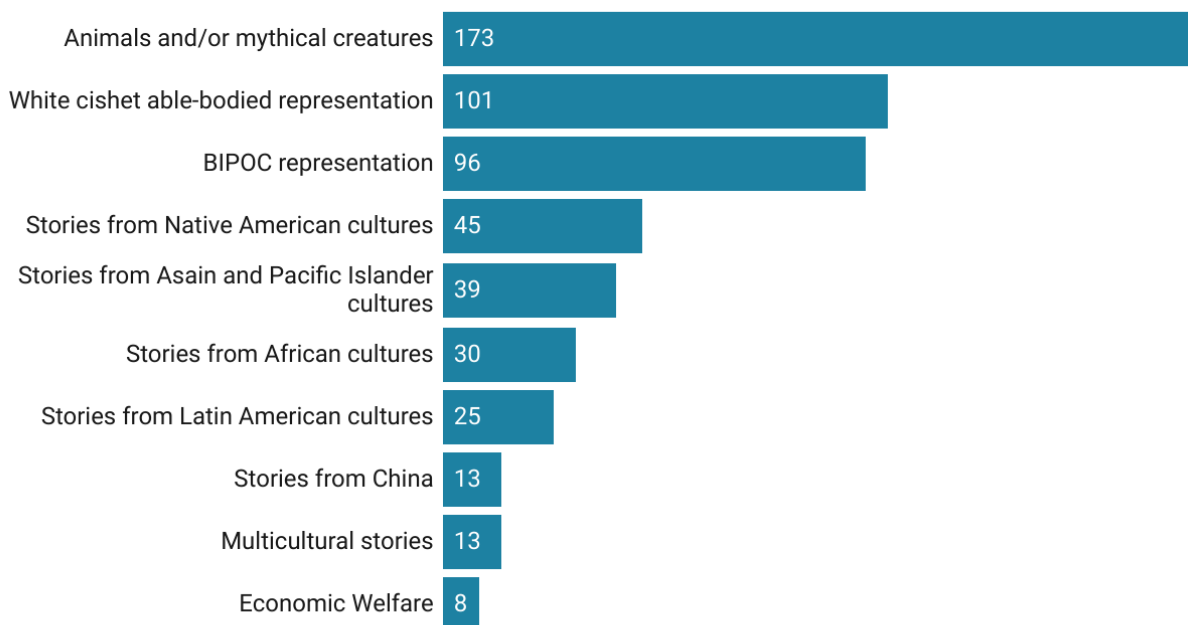|	
Animals and/or Mythical Creatures	173
White Cishet Able-Bodied Neurotypical Representation	101
BIPOC Representation	96
Economic Diversity	8
Religious Diversity	5
Neurodiversity	2
Representation of People with Physical Disabilities	1
LGBTQIA+ Representation	0

Source: Stevenson Library Folktale Collection Diversity Audit • Created with Datawrapper

Analysis of the main representative categories shows that here are little of no instances of LGBTQIA+ representation, representation of people with physical disabilities, representation of people with neurodivergence, representation of diversity of economic classes, nor representation of religious diversity. The largest groups represented in the collection are animals and/or mythical creatures (173 books – almost half of the collection), followed by representation of White Cishet Able-Bodied Neurotypical people (101 books), and BIPOC (96 books).

Animals are most represented group in folktale collection

Most frequent instances of representation:

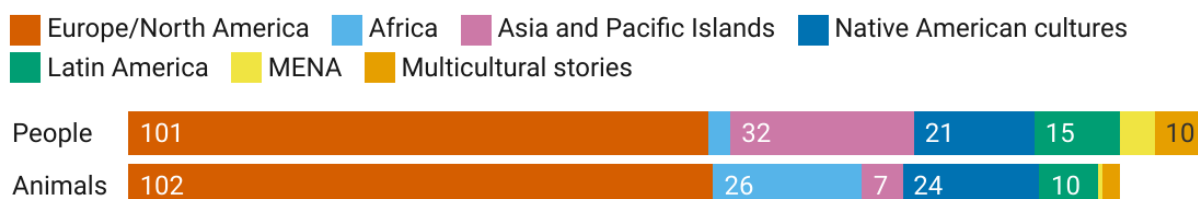| Category	Value
Animals and/or mythical creatures	173
White cishet able-bodied representation	101
BIPOC representation	96
Stories from Native American cultures	45
Stories from Asain and Pacific Islander cultures	39
Stories from African cultures	30
Stories from Latin American cultures	25
Stories from China	13
Multicultural stories	13
Economic Welfare	8

Source: Stevenson Library Folktale Collection Diversity Audit • Created with Datawrapper

When analyzing the most represented groups within the folktale collection, we see that cultural groups see the greatest amont of representation behind the aforementioned groups. This indicates a relative strength of the folktale collection regarding its diversity. While the broadest swath of cultural stories focus on Whitenss, there are a significant number of stories from around the world, offering opportunities for students to engage with folktales outside of the cultural hegemonic paradigm. Anecdotally, however, it seemed that the majority of books in the collection were written by White authors, even stories from nonwhite cultures. This is a cause for concer considering these White authors are retelling stories from cultures that are not their own, perhaps without permission from said groups, thus appropiating said cultures. Though, as stated previously, author demographic information was not collected, therefore this claim cannot be substantiated.

Representation of animals compared to representations of people:

Given the high degree of animal representation in the collection, investigation into the culutral breakdown of this animal representation, as well as comparison to cultural breakdown of human representation, is warranted.

Depictions of Animals vs. People by Cultural Group

Legend: Europe/North America | Africa | Asia and Pacific Islands | Native American cultures | Latin America | MENA | Multicultural stories

People	101	32	21	15	10
Animals	102	26	7 24	10	

Source: Stevenson Library Folktale Collection Diversity Audit • Created with Datawrapper

In the above visualization, we can see that, while people are represented more than animals in the collection as a whole, this does not hold true when broken down by cultural group. Stories from North American and European cultures see a near equal division in the representation of of animals and people. Stories in the collection from Asia and the Pacific Islands, Latin America, and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) – as well as multicultural stories – see a greater representation of people than animals. Stories from African and Native American cultures, see a greater depiction of animals and mythical creatures than people from those cultures.

It is not necessarily negative that animals are heavily represented in a group of cultural stories. It may speak to those cultures' harmonious relationships with the natural world, acknowledging the sentience of plants and animals,. It is a cause for concern, however, if there is a lack of opportunities for readers to interact with see those cultural as human. For example, Out of the 30 stories from African cultures, there are only 4 stories depicting people from Africa. (If you include the 6 books depicting Black Americans, there are a total of 10 books in the collection that depict Black people.) It is of further concern that, anecdotally, many of the authors seemed to be White people detatching the stories from the people of the cultures from which they originated.

Representation of people compared to student population:

The following chart serves as a visualization of the percentage distribution of racial diversity within the student body against the portrayal of diverse racial identities within the library's folktale collection:

Representation of People in the Folktale collection compared to Stevenson Student population
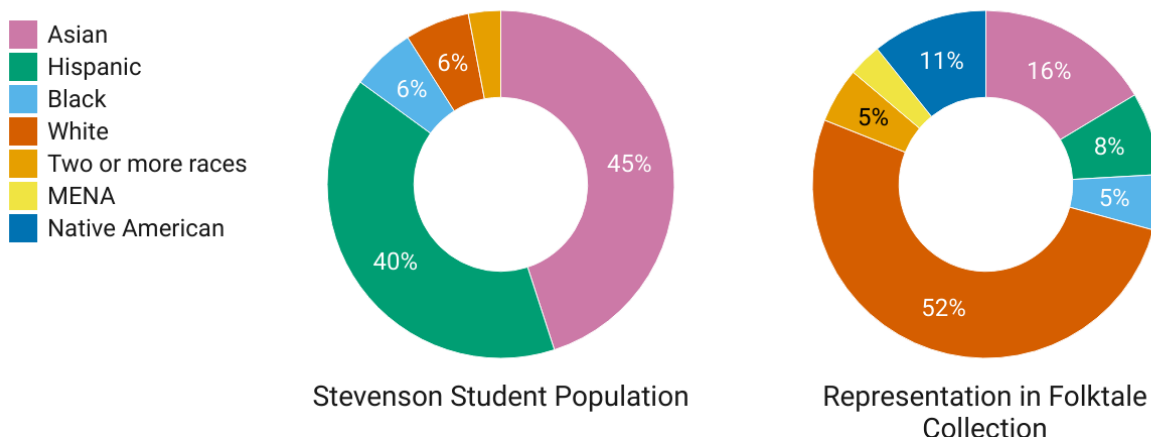
Asian
Hispanic
Black
White
Two or more races
MENA
Native American

Stevenson Student Population

45%
40%
6%
6%

Representation in Folktale Collection

16%
8%
5%
52%
5%
11%

Source: Stevenson Library Folktale Collection Diversity Audit • Created with Datawrapper

From the above visualziation, we can see there are clear disparities regarding representation in the collection compared to the student population:

- White students are 6% of Stevensons student population, depictions of White cisgender able-bodied individuals is 52% people depicted in the collection.
- Asian students are 45% of Stevensons student body, but only 16% of the people depicted in the collection.
- Latine students are 40% of Stevenson student body, but only 8% of the people depicted in the collection.
- Black students are 6% of the students at Stevenons, but 5% of the collection – just ten books – depicted Black people.
- No data on Native American, MENA student population at Stevenson to compare to collection, thought certainly would benefit the collection to add more stories from these cultures to the collection. Especially stories actually told by members of said cultures.

This data indicates that there is significant need to increase racial diversity in the folktale collection to better represent the student population, as well as the broader community.

Recommendations

Given the findings of this study, I would recommend the following regarding weeding the collection and developing new selection criteria for future collection development:

Weeding Recommendations

Books should be considered for weeding from the collection if they meet most or all of the following criteria:

- Older publication date
- Duplicate story
- Stories from Europe and North America
- Seeing little or no circulation in recent years

A list of the catalog, sorted by highest priority for weeding based off of the following criteria, can be found [here](#).

Collection Development Recommendations

Future development of the collection should consider the following selection criteria:

- Increase diversity in the collection by adding more LGBTQIA+ representation, stories featuring people with physical disabilities or neurodivergence, and a variety of economic classes and religious backgrounds.
- Enhance racial/ethnic diversity by increasing the representation of Asian, Pacific Islander, Latine, and Black stories.
- Prioritize stories told by people with the same identity group as those they are depicting to ensure authentic representation.
- Shift the focus from animal representation to increasing BIPOC representation.
- Increase availability of different languages, especially books in Spanish, as well as Spanish & English to support Stevenson's Spanish Dual Language Program

Conclusion

In conclusion, the diversity audit of Stevenson Elementary School library's folktale collection has revealed significant shortcomings. The collection's outdated nature and lack of representation pose a clear disconnect with the diverse student body and broader community. It is important to emphasize, however, that the dearth of diversity in the collection is not a failure on the part of the Stevenson Library staff but rather indicative of broader issues within the current state of publishing and literary culture.

Firstly, it is commonly known that the publishing industry does not publish enough books to reflect the diversity of our global community.[9] Additionally, while some diverse resources are available, the process of incorporating them into the library can a substantial undertaking. Orders from Follett come into the library fully processed with accompanying catalog information. Whereas purchasing diverse books directly from smaller publishers would require the Teacher Librarian to processes and catalog those resources on their very limited schedule and budget. This underscores the urgent need for library vendors and the publishing industry to enhance their efforts in providing more inclusive materials.

By addressing these challenges and implementing the recommendations outlined in this report, the Stevenson Elementary School library can embark on a path towards creating a more

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[9] So and Wezerek, "Opinion | Just How White Is the Book Industry?"

inclusive and representative collection that better reflects the rich diversity of its student population and community.

Acknowledgments

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