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# Self-censorship in Iowa elementary libraries

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## Self-censorship in Iowa elementary libraries

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to ascertain whether or not Iowa elementary school children had access to fiction and non-fiction titles containing potentially controversial topics. The purpose of this study is to investigate whether Iowa elementary schools with professionally certified school librarians hold a greater number of recommended books from ALA Notable Children's Books list from 2002-2009 in which reviews do not indicate potentially controversial topics as compared with those ALA Notable Children's Books from the same years in which reviews indicate potentially controversial topics. The methodology used for this study was quantitative research. The researcher randomly chose 45 schools out of the nine AEA regions in the State of Iowa. These schools had catalogs that were accessible via the Internet and had a certified teacher librarian on staff. The test group had 25 titles that had potentially controversial topics listed in the review. The control group held the same number of titles that were included in the 2002-2009 ALA Notable Children's Books. Upon completion of the data collection, the researcher was able to determine that several regions had noteworthy differences in ownership of potentially controversial titles.

SELF-CENSORSHIP IN IOWA ELEMENTARY LIBRARIES

A Graduate Research Paper  
Submitted to the  
Division of School Library Studies  
Department of Curriculum and Instruction  
In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree  
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by  
Lacey Fliger  
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This Research Paper by: Lacey Fliger

Titled: Self-Censorship in Iowa Elementary Libraries

has been approved as meeting the research requirement for the  
Degree of Master of Arts.

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to ascertain whether or not Iowa elementary school children had access to fiction and non-fiction titles containing potentially controversial topics. The purpose of this study is to investigate whether Iowa elementary schools with professionally certified school librarians hold a greater number of recommended books from ALA Notable Children's Books list from 2002-2009 in which reviews do not indicate potentially controversial topics as compared with those ALA Notable Children's Books from the same years in which reviews indicate potentially controversial topics.

The methodology used for this study was quantitative research. The researcher randomly chose 45 schools out of the nine AEA regions in the State of Iowa. These schools had catalogs that were accessible via the Internet and had a certified teacher librarian on staff. The test group had 25 titles that had potentially controversial topics listed in the review. The control group held the same number of titles that were included in the 2002-2009 ALA Notable Children's Books. Upon completion of the data collection, the researcher was able to determine that several regions had noteworthy differences in ownership of potentially controversial titles.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

In Kindersley, Canada, the Elizabeth School elementary librarian removed the book, *Trouble at Tarragon Island*, due to its references to bullying, to breasts, and the use of the word *bazoongas* (American Library Association [ALA], 2007). The librarian felt that book was inappropriate for readers between the ages of eight and fourteen. Retired school principal, Wayne Parohl, said that it is “common practice for books to be screened by school librarians before they are made available to students” (p. 1). Parohl explained that the book would be passed on to the Kindersley High School.

Contrary to the above scenario, the librarian’s role is to uphold intellectual freedom and support the school curriculum; “School library collections are developed and evaluated collaboratively to support school’s curriculum and to meet the diverse learning needs of students” (ALA, 2007, p. 90). Librarians refer to this process as selection of materials. An institution’s selection policy governs the selection of library materials. Local school districts establish selection policies that include criteria for the process of selection and reconsideration. This guides the librarian in the review, evaluation, and selection of library materials.

One of the purposes of a selection policy is to prevent censorship. Censorship is defined as “suppression of ideas and information that certain persons- individuals, groups, or government officials- find objectionable or dangerous” (Kravitz, 2002, p. 3). This research investigated school library catalogs via the Internet in an attempt to determine whether the school library holdings include titles with potentially controversial topics, the lack of which may indicate self-censorship undertaken by teacher librarians.



## **Teacher Librarians and Collection Management**

The State of Iowa has statutes defining a qualified teacher librarian as one who is licensed by the Board of Educational Examiners, and works with students, teachers, support staff and administrators. Librarians shall direct the library program and provide services and instruction in support of the curricular goals of each attendance center. The teacher librarian shall be a member of the attendance center instructional team with expertise in identifying resources and technologies to support teaching and learning. (Iowa Department of Education, 2007, p. 4)

A teacher librarian is prepared for the operations of school libraries. This includes, but is not limited to, collection development, selection of materials, and the writing of policies and procedures. It is the responsibility of the teacher librarian to provide patrons with a collection that includes multiple points of view. Materials and resources presenting these points of view should support the school curriculum while also generating interest in reading for pleasure (Iowa Department of Education, 2007).

*Iowa School Library Guidelines* is a document that was written to guide teacher librarians and school districts in establishing guidelines for best practice library programs. In order to fulfill the best practice recognition, a library must provide comprehensive support for teaching, learning, and student achievement goals (Iowa Department of Education, 2007). In section II.1 of the *Iowa School Library Guidelines*, it states that “a collection should contain materials that represent diverse opinions on controversial topics and are multicultural and gender fair” (p. 12). Many school librarians use their local districts’ selection procedure that typically recognizes the following

factors: service policy, environmental characteristics, collection specifications, and current selection needs. The librarian must also consider the most important factor: the patron's intellectual freedom (ALA, 2007).

### **Selection and Intellectual Freedom**

Intellectual freedom is “prerequisite to effective and responsible citizenship in a democracy” (American Association of School Librarians & Association of Educational Communications and Technology, 1998, p. 91). This freedom of access to information is essential for students and patrons to become lifelong learners. The *Intellectual Freedom Manual* is published by the ALA (2007) as a tool to assist library personnel in adhering to these policies. This manual states that policies and practices of library professionals should represent diverse points of views. The manual also provides legal and professional ethics guidelines for library personnel. The library media program is charged with upholding a patron's right to intellectual freedom.

The manual not only explains intellectual freedom, it is also an important tool that can be used in writing a selection policy. A selection policy is a written statement that is prepared by each individual school district. A district's selection policy can be found in the individual school board policy handbook. This handbook is available to students, staff, and parents. The policy includes statements of responsibility for material selection, processes and criteria for selection of materials, and information regarding a reconsideration process.

Appendix A of this study is an example of a selection policy from an Iowa school district. School districts in Iowa may be guided by the suggestions from the Department of Education in forming a committee. The Iowa Department of Education states "The

board of directors has adopted policies to address selection and reconsideration of school library materials" (Iowa Department of Education, 2007, p. 14). The individuals that may be included are librarians, teachers, and administrators. The librarian has an important job in the process of adopting policies and procedures for the library. He or she is the library and patrons' advocate during this process. Effective communication with the school community allows the librarian to address the importance of selection and reconsideration policies and their function.

Most selection policies also include the steps that an objector must follow. These steps are referred to as the reconsideration process. Reconsiderations can be a formal or informal process. Depending on the circumstances of the material being objected to, the objector may choose either option. Informal reconsideration process begins with the review of the material in question by the librarian and/or the principal in response to an oral complaint. In a formal reconsideration process, the objector typically completes a form requesting that the material be reviewed by a district reconsideration committee composed of both school district employees and community members, as specified in district policy. If the objector is not satisfied with the decision, he or she may appeal the process to the school board, again following written board policies and administrative regulations. . The importance of a selection policy is evident when an objector decides to challenge materials in the formal reconsideration process. A timely decision is important in order to ensure that access to items in questions; policies usually recommend timelines like the one expressed in the sample policy in Appendix A:

" the school district has thirty days to review the material before making a final

decision. The objector is then asked to present their case in front of the school board only if the person is appealing the committee's decision does this commonly occur. A final decision is then made" (Cedar Falls Community School District, 2006, p. 4).

This procedure may be followed in this particular district but is not the only sequence in place for other districts.

When a book is challenged, it is important that the teacher librarian and school community follow the district's selection policy and procedures. All reconsiderations are to be brought to the attention of the principal. A reconsideration or selection committee is usually in place by the second week of school each year. This can vary with each individual district. This committee is guided by the document, "to this end, principles of intellectual freedom must be placed above personal opinion, and reason above prejudice, in the selection of resources" (Cedar Falls Community School District, 2006, p. 3).

### **Challenges to Library Materials**

According to Donelson (1985), challenges to library materials date back to the early eighteenth century. Works of poets and playwrights were the first censored materials in England. These works had not even made it to print or a library before they were banned by local citizens. Ken Donelson, English teacher and writer, believes that this was the beginning of censorship.

According to ALA (2007), in the past few decades challenges of library books have been on the decline. The decline is due in part to parents, groups, individuals, and government officials turning their censorship attempts to more technology based materials such as the Internet. Censorship challenges in United States schools have

dropped dramatically in the past fifteen years- from a high of 762 challenges in 1995 to 513 known attempts in 2008. However, censorship figures are deceiving. Research indicates that reported challenges represent only 20% to 25% percent of all challenges made (Jenkins, 2001). This implies that many of today's challenges are unrecorded and unnoticed. Furthermore, one especially troubling aspect of censorship is self-censorship conducted by librarians outside of established procedures.

### **Self- Censorship: Intellectual Tyranny**

Self-censorship has been described by researchers as “a secret practice that is the least obvious but arguably the most powerful and pervasive form of censorship, which is informal, private, and originates with the decision maker” (Dillion & Williams, 1994, p. 11). The decision maker that Dillion and Williams describe is either the school librarian or other school personnel. The first form of self-censorship is preselection censorship. Preselection censorship occurs when works are not selected because they are controversial in the opinion of the selector, when specific categories of materials are not selected because selectors believe that students lack the background to appreciate them, and when materials are not selected because of the format (Kravitz, 2002). The second form of self-censorship is post-selection censorship. This includes removing books from reading lists, putting them on restricted shelves, hiding them behind librarians' desks, and moving them from elementary to middle school level shelves (Kravitz, 2002).

Self-censorship has entered the 21<sup>st</sup> century school library. Historically, social control has been a component of library selection and service policy. Geller (1976) refers to social control as “control from managerial staff or community influences” (p. 1255). Studies have been conducted since the early 1800's and self-censorship has been blamed

on the librarian's self-esteem, patron's complaints, fear of anticipated challenges, and the moral values of those involved. Regardless of their motivation, self-censoring librarians or other school personnel use numerous excuses for rejecting books they believe should not be in the school's collection. These excuses include limited budgets, lack of demand or interest, literary quality, limited shelf space, values of the community, the author's integrity, content, moral values, taste, theft, and at times discrimination against fiction as a genre (Coley, 2002). While some materials may be legitimately left behind, it is difficult to determine when such selection standards are applied appropriately and when self-censorship is occurring. The materials that are forgotten could be the ones that could cause the most controversy.

In summary, a high number of challenges occur to public school library materials. Over the years, "seventy-one percent of all challenges in the 1990s were to materials in schools or school libraries and one third of schools experienced at least one challenge" (Jenkins, 2001, p. 22). Challenges are not only coming from parents, religious and political groups, and minorities. The most private and discreet of all challenges are coming from within the internal group of school personnel and librarians (Kravitz, 2002).

### **Problem Statement**

School librarians in Iowa may be engaging in self-censorship of children's literature materials.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this study is to investigate whether Iowa elementary schools with professionally certified school librarians hold a greater number of recommended books from ALA Notable Children's Books list from 2002-2009 in which reviews do not

indicate potentially controversial topics as compared with those ALA Notable Children's Books from the same years in which reviews indicate potentially controversial topics.

### **Hypotheses**

1. Most of the 45 schools with automated library catalogs and professionally certified teacher librarians will have less than 50% of the test list of recommended, potentially controversial children's books.

(Appendix B)

2. Most of the 45 schools with automated library catalogs and professionally certified teacher librarians will have more than 50% of the control list of recommended children's books without reviewer identified controversial topics. (Appendix C)

3. Most of the schools owning more than 50% of the control list non controversial titles (Appendix C) will have fewer than 50% of the test list potentially controversial titles (Appendix B).

4. Various geographic locations in Iowa will show more prevalence to self censorship.

### **Assumptions**

This author assumes that self-censorship occurs in Iowa elementary school libraries. It was also assumed that self-censorship may be influenced, for example, by the personal values or beliefs of the person selecting materials.

## **Limitations**

One limitation that may affect the reliability and validity of this study is limited to elementary school libraries in Iowa that have certified school librarians and which also have automated catalogs accessible via the internet.

## **Definitions**

Self-Censorship- "a form of censorship that originates with the decision-maker" (ALA, 2007, p. 7).

Selection Policy- "a policy that states succinctly what your system is trying to accomplish in its educational program, and, in somewhat more detail, the objectives" (ALA, 2007, p. 5).

Intellectual Freedom- "Intellectual freedom is the right of every individual to seek and receive information from all points of view without restriction. It provides for free access to all expressions of ideas through which any and all sides of a question, cause or movement may be explored" (ALA, 2007, p. 3).

Teacher Librarian- "School librarians collaborate with others to provide instruction, learning strategies, and practice in using the essential learning skills needed in the 21st century" (AASL, 2009, p. 3).

Controversial- "Content that made titles a potential target for a challenge included profanity, sexuality, religion, violence/horror, racism, suicide/death, and crude behavior" (Coley, 2002, p.1).

## **Significance**

The study of self-censorship in Iowa is important for many reasons. First, self-censoring results in a violation of First Amendment Rights. The American Library



Association has a Library Bill of Rights first published in 1960 and revised in 2000, stating that libraries should be guided by these five basic policies:

I. Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.

II. Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.

III. Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.

IV. Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas.

V. A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.

VI. Libraries which make exhibit spaces and meeting rooms available to the public they serve should make such facilities available on an equitable basis, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting their use (ALA, 2000, online).

The second reason the study of self-censorship in Iowa is important is that school personnel and librarians are not always aware they are self-censoring materials. By raising the awareness of the problem, the study may further their understanding of the problem.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The research that will be reviewed in this section falls into three categories: retrospective library censorship studies 1959-1985, survey research that measures respondents' reports about their collections, and research with direct examination of a school's catalog to determine the presence of controversial titles in the collection.

#### **Retrospective Studies**

Fiske's (1959) study was one of the first in-depth studies regarding book selection and censorship. Fiske's study focused on where the censorship was occurring; whether by patrons or internally by the librarian. The study included 26 communities in California that were selected to ensure even distribution of the population. Fiske conducted 204 interviews of various participants consisting of public librarians, school librarians, municipal librarians, and school administrators.

Fiske's study uncovered several findings that were related to censorship. Librarian censorship was associated with educational background, position and personal viewpoints. The librarians in Fiske's study had control of purchasing and selection. All participants had master's degrees from accredited colleges. She found issues of self-censorship that are relevant to the current study in particular. Of the librarian group, school librarians accounted for 42% of the objections to controversial books in their collections while public librarians accounted for 65% of the objections in their collections. The study found that grounds for objections were separated into seven categories: politics, sex/obscenity, profanity, race/religion, controversial or unsuitable materials, literary merit, or other. The strongest censoring was within the category of

sex/obscenity with over 54% of objections. The next highest was in the category of profanity with 23%. The rest were equally dispersed.

In a study similar to Fiske's, Busha (1972) conducted a survey of Midwestern public librarians in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Wisconsin's. Busha's purpose was to determine the:

- \* extent that librarians accept the intellectual freedom principles of the *Library Bill of Rights* and the *Freedom to Read* statement;
- \* attitudes of librarians toward censorship;
- \* relationship of librarians' censorship attitudes to their attitudes toward selected authoritarian beliefs; and
- \* relationship of librarians' intellectual freedom and censorship attitudes.

From an actual population of 3,253 public librarians within the five states, Busha selected 900 to take part in his study using a stratified random-sampling technique. Of the 900 questionnaires sent out, 684 were returned and 624 were deemed usable for the study.

Busha's (1972) study uncovered a disturbing trend related to public librarians in the Midwest. He found that while 14% supported clearly pro-censorship attitudes, only 22% of the librarians surveyed strongly opposed censorship. The remaining librarians, accounting for 64% of the respondents, held neutral beliefs in regards to censorship. This neutral standing does not agree with "the favorable attitude expressed by almost all of these same librarians toward the liberal freedom-to-read and intellectual principle contained in the *Library Bill of Rights* and the *Freedom to Read* statement" (p. 147).

## Survey-Based Studies

In order to obtain information about censorship, Carmichael (1989) chose to survey junior and senior high school library media specialists in Iowa to see if censorship was taking place. The purpose of the study was to find out how often formal and informal censorship occurred within the schools, and if media specialists were fulfilling their roles as protectors of intellectual freedom.

Carmichael (1989) chose the survey method to obtain the data for this study. These surveys were sent to media specialists who had been in an Iowa school district library for a minimum of two years. A list was then compiled of eligible candidates, numbered, and a table of random numbers was used to select 25%, or 116, of the eligible media specialists who received the questionnaires. Of the 116 media specialists 93 (80%) participants returned questionnaires.

Carmichael was able to establish that 50% or more of the censorship cases would be categorized as informal. Informal censorship occurs when pressure is focused on those in positions of authority not to follow legally established procedures for access to information. His data taken from two semesters showed that out of twelve challenges, six of the challenges originated with superintendents and principals. As a result of these challenges, the materials were removed. The other six challenges were considered to be formal censorship. Formal censorship occurs when an agency gives authority to the censorship procedure. The other six challenges were handled using the selection policy set in place by the particular school district. The media specialists surveyed also noted that when a challenge was brought forth by a teacher or a student, a more formal process was followed. It was also noted that even though a challenge, formal or informal, had

been brought to a media specialist's attention, it was not always acted upon in a timely manner.

In closing, Carmichael (1989) concluded that in many cases the media specialist did not insist upon following the selection policy reconsideration procedures when someone who he/she viewed as "boss" originated the challenge.

Similar to the Carmichael study, McClaury's (1994) study surveyed middle and high school librarians in Iowa. Her study consisted of identifying titles that had been censored and included in challenges. McClaury then determined if unofficial removal might be occurring.

McClaury's (1994) study was based on censorship that occurs without recognition. Her study chose to look at the situation in which a patron removes or steals a book from a library rather than a librarian or other school official censoring a title. This form of censorship was measured by particular librarians researching missing or deleted titles from their catalogs.

McClaury (1994) sent her survey to middle and high school librarians who had automated systems that had been functioning since 1991. The automated system would allow the librarian to check the catalog with ease. McClaury asked that the librarians provide her with a list of missing titles. "Missing" items included anything that had been reported stolen or lost, checked out indefinitely, or not checked out, but not on the shelf at the time of the inventory.

When the study was conducted, McClaury (1994) sent surveys to 130 schools. Of the 130, only 46 met the requirements of having an automated system and completed an inventory of the collection in the past two years.

The completed list of missing materials was compared to the compiled list of 387 censored titles. The list of censored titles was compiled from the 1993-1994 *Newsletter of Intellectual Freedom*, 1991-1993 People for the American Way reports, *Banned in the USA* by Herbert Forestel, and titles mentioned on the American Library Association Intellectual Freedom list (McClaury, 1994). The 46 schools surveyed reported approximately 130 missing materials for the two years in question. From these missing titles, only 9% were titles on the censored book list. The most common titles referred to as missing were Stephen King titles and the books *The Outsiders*, and *Black like Me*. McClaury stated in her study that these books may be missing from the collection for many reasons. These reasons may include: popularity of the titles, subject area popularity, and theft. For these reasons McClaury recommended that librarians combat these issues by installing security devices in the library or make all exits visible.

McClaury (1994) was unable to determine whether censorship or alternative challenge procedures were being taken. She was, however, able to come to a conclusion that 9% of missing books were challenged titles. The possibility remains that these books were removed by either patrons or librarians.

Unlike the Carmicheal (1989) and McClaury (1994) studies based on book censorship, Moody's (2004) study of public librarians in Australia gained insight into their opinions and actions they would take against controversial materials. Moody's study used an online questionnaire to improve the response rate. The questionnaire was designed to identify attitudes towards the topic, and to gather the professional experiences of the respondents. Moody also chose to omit wording that would suggest or make light of censorship. For example, one question described a book as "a novel which

depicts Indigenous Australians in a stereotypical way.” The word ‘stereotypical’ was used rather than ‘negative’ or ‘racist’ to avoid implying a value judgment in the question (Moody, 2004, p. 7).

To accommodate the resources and time constraints, Moody’s (2004) participant pool consisted of 151 public librarians in Queensland. These participants were selected at random from a published list. Participants were sent a letter giving them the URL where they could access the questionnaire. The participants had a month to complete the survey. The response rate of the survey was low as only 17.4 % or 25 participants responded. Moody attributes the low survey return to email delivery of the study, that the subject matter was unimportant to the participant pool, and to cultural differences.

Moody identified that librarians felt very strongly about censorship yet they did tend to exclude certain materials based on controversial nature. Moody went in depth and discussed the reasons behind their exclusion. Librarians chose to exclude materials that discussed illegal acts and inaccuracies in the text. At the end of the study, Moody’s points prompted librarians to recognize their own biases. She also attempted to have them consider if their biases were impacting their work as librarians. Moody’s goal was to raise awareness of the government and the community and to assist the libraries in upholding the rights of their patrons through selection. This prompted the librarians to follow their selection policy and reflect when making acquisitions.

### **OPAC-Based Studies**

While some researchers have preferred the method of surveying respondents to gather accurate data, Coley’s (2002) study was the first attempt at measuring self-censorship in public schools by looking at the schools' catalogs rather than relying on the



librarian's responses. Coley compiled a list of 20 well-reviewed controversial titles that contained content that made them a potential target for a challenge. This content included profanity, sexuality, religion, violence/horror, racism, suicide/death, and crude behavior. He used the Texas union catalog to randomly search one hundred high school library catalogs. The Texas union catalog was established in 1993. It is referred to as the Texas Library Connection (TLC). Coley patterned his study except for the single copy criteria, after those of Harmeyer (1995); however, only a single copy of a book on the target list had to be found in order for the library to be given credit for owning the book (Coley, 2002). He checked over 44 million items in over 5,300 school catalogs. In order for the schools to be excluded from the self-censorship label, they had to have at least 50% of the titles on his list. Coley's results were unanticipated.

Based on Coley's criteria concerning the 50% ownership of these titles, it seemed that a large majority of Texas high school librarians' practiced self-censorship. Eighty-two percent of the high schools investigated were found likely to be engaging in the practice of self-censorship, based on the 50% ownership requirement (Coley, 2002). Twenty geographical areas designated as Educational Service Center Regions compromise the state of Texas. Although this study did not attempt to control for the geographical location of the one hundred schools selected, it is interesting to note that at least one campus represented each of these regions. Coley's study suggested that the practice of self-censorship might not be limited to a particular area of the state, yet the rural areas tended to be more conservative and less likely to own books that had high potential for being controversial.

Following Coley's (2002) research in Texas high schools, Bellows' (2005) study investigated public high school media centers in Florida by searching the OPAC of 102 schools. Further, Bellows used two lists for comparison of potentially controversial and non-controversial books. Bellows' purpose was to measure what percentage of schools had a majority of highly regarded books containing controversial material. Books were selected using an adapted version of Coley's method. This version looked at several aspects: books that had won awards or received several starred reviews, books with a copyright of 2000 -2004, and the books' age appropriateness. The books were ranked based on the reviews received. Two lists were constructed. List A was comprised of titles in which the reviews had mentioned profanity, sex and sexual issues, occult activities, violence, drugs and or alcohol. List B included titles whose reviews were lacking those topics. The goal in this process was to create one list of highly regarded and well reviewed titles containing controversial material that may be challenged and another list of highly regarded and well reviewed books that were non-controversial. The importance of the two lists was that all the books chosen by Bellows were well reviewed regardless of their challenging content.

The selection of schools was chosen for this study by the availability of the school's catalog on the SUNLINK, Florida's public school online union catalog. In order for Bellows (2005) to accurately examine self-censorship trends in regards to school population, it was necessary to classify the schools based on student population (Bellows, 2005). One hundred and two schools were chosen to represent various regions of the state. Much of the data received were based on geographic location and student population.

The results from Bellows' (2005) study were slightly more positive than Coley's (2002) study. Coley's and Bellows' criteria both identified a school library should be labeled as self-censoring if it had fewer than 50% of the identified potentially controversial titles. Seventy-four percent of the schools in the Bellows' study had 50% or fewer controversial titles. This is slightly less than Coley's study, where 80% of the schools surveyed had 50% or fewer controversial titles.

The data also showed that the smaller schools tended to own fewer controversial titles than larger schools. The largest schools however, did not necessarily own the most controversial titles (Bellows, 2005). However, particular geographic regions were also more likely to be engaging in self-censorship than other parts of the state.

Bellows (2005) concluded that particular areas of the state, namely rural regions, were more likely to engage in self-censorship than the regions in the central part of the state. Bellows (2005) suggested that media specialists need to begin upholding the principles of intellectual freedom "if self-censorship is occurring they are not only doing a disservice to the child but also the society as a whole" (p. 26).

## **Summary**

Historically, self-censorship has been an issue in North American libraries (Fiske, 1959; McClaury, 1994; Coley, 2002; Bellows, 2005). Censorship comes in many forms and can be attributed to "limited budgets; lack of demand or interest; literary quality; limited shelf space; values of the community; the author's integrity; content; moral values; taste; theft; poor, unfavorable, or unenthusiastic reviews; and, at times, discrimination against fiction in general" (Coley, 2002, p. 4). Self-censorship has been described by researchers as "a secret practice that is the least obvious but arguably the

most powerful and pervasive form of censorship which is informal, private and originates with the decision maker” (Dillion & Williams, 1994). Coley (2002) and Bellows (2005) studies found that self-censorship is occurring based on size and geographic location. The decision makers in this study are the certified teacher librarians in public schools. The teacher librarians are in charge of collection development. The development and access of a well-rounded collection is instrumental to both patron and curricular needs of the school. Current research will investigate the availability of access to potentially challenged or banned materials in elementary schools in Iowa.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

This research will be conducted in order to determine if self-censorship is occurring in randomly selected Iowa elementary school libraries with catalogs available via the Internet. It will also determine if there is a geographic region in Iowa that is more prevalent to self-censorship. This research study is a replication of both Coley's (2002) and Bellow's (2005) studies with adaptations. Coley (2002) was among the first known researchers to analyze a library collection by accessing it online. In Bellows (2005) research study, he used two lists of books the test list and the control list. He also found specific differences to the geographic location within five sections of Florida. Coley (2002) and Bellows (2005) both concluded that geographic location was a factor in self-censorship. This study will analyze the data for patterns of self-censorship within specific geographic areas. The researcher will utilize the nine Area Education Agency (AEA) geographic regions for the division of the state of Iowa in an attempt to determine if this was a factor in randomly selected Iowa elementary libraries. School size will not be analyzed in this study.

#### **Research Design**

This study will be a quantitative study of the frequencies of library holdings of potentially controversial children's books and the prevalence of self-censorship. Quantitative research is described by Creswell (2008) as "an inquiry approach useful for describing trends and explaining the relationship among variables, measured with numbers, and analyzed with statistical procedures, in order to determine whether the

predictive generalizations of the study hold true” (p. 645). For this study, the researcher will use quantitative content analysis of schools’ online access catalogs.

### **Population**

The researcher will conduct the research study using a stratified random selection of schools. The researcher will search the Iowa Department of Education site directory list of public elementary schools in Iowa. The researcher will narrow the list of schools by selecting only the schools that have catalogs accessible via the Internet and certified teacher librarians in the district. In order to find Iowa elementary schools that employ certified teacher librarians, The Iowa Department of Education BEDS list will be consulted.

This researcher is using a small sample of 45 schools. Thus the student population along with the geographic region and existence of a teacher librarian could increase the identifiable information about each school, whereas it is desired that the schools in the study remain anonymous. This research study will include 45 randomly selected Iowa elementary school libraries. These libraries will be selected from all those in Iowa whose catalogs are accessible online and which employ certified teacher librarians in the district.

The schools will be divided into nine regions by their AEA affiliation. The state of Iowa is divided into nine AEA’s. A map is Appendix E of this study. The researcher randomly chose five elementary schools from the pool of qualified schools for each AEA. All schools fitting the online catalog and teacher librarian criteria will be separated into the nine AEA regions and five schools will be drawn for each AEA. Creswell (2008) refers to this as stratified random sampling. This sampling is used so that any individual has an equal probability of being selected from the population. Stratified sampling is

defined by Creswell (2008) as “a procedure in which researchers stratify the population on some specific characteristic.” An example in this study would be geographic location. The schools will be assigned a number so they will remain anonymous.

### **Procedure**

The researcher will use two groups of children’s fiction and nonfiction titles when searching the online catalogs of 45 public elementary schools in Iowa. The control group and test group copyright dates range from 2002-2009 in order to give the smallest libraries time to have purchased the control group titles. The test group will contain the potentially controversial titles from the 2002-2009 ALA Notable Children’s Books. The control group will contain titles that are non-controversial ALA Notable Children’s books for 2002-2009. These two groups will each have twenty five titles with a recommended age group of 5-12 years of age.

The test group of children’s literature will be composed of 25 titles from the 2002-2009 ALA Notable Children’s Books that have potentially controversial topics. The researcher will read reviews of all ALA Notable Children’s Books in the *Booklist* publication seeking any information in reviews about potentially controversial topics. Controversial topics include “content that made titles a potential target for a challenge included profanity, sexuality, religion, violence/horror, racism, suicide/death, and crude behavior (Coley, 2002). The researcher began with the 2009 list of ALA Notable Children’s Books. From this list of 80 books, the researcher indentified Booklist reviews that showed three books with potentially controversial topics. For example, one of the 2005 ALA Notable Children’s Book reviews noted this about the book *Heck the Superhero*: “Heck's experience with a street drug, for example, and Marion's suicide are

more appropriate for mature readers.” The researcher used the same process for the 2008 list; working down through earlier lists until a group of 25 recent ALA Notable Children’s Books with potentially controversial topics were identified. This list of titles is Appendix B.

The control group list of children’s literature is composed of 25 titles that are on the same 2002-2009 ALA Notable Children’s Books list. *Booklist* is a reputable review source used by school librarians for materials selection. There were 692 titles of a non-controversial nature from 2002-2009 ALA Notable Children’s Books lists. The researcher used random sampling to select a list of 25 titles for the control list. The titles are Appendix C.

The researcher will use a data collection sheet (Appendix D) to determine whether or not selected titles are present in Iowa elementary schools' online catalogs. This collection sheet appears in Appendix D of the study.

The researcher will record data by the regions (see Appendix E) to determine whether self-censorship is more prevalent in various geographic regions of the state. The schools will be numbered and coded by AEA region and listed in Appendix F. No specific school names will be mentioned in study results.

### **Data Collection**

The researcher will search the 45 schools’ catalogs via the Internet one at a time. A title search for each of the 50 titles will be completed. If a title search does not produce the title, the researcher will attempt an author search and keyword search. This will alleviate the possibility of an error of a differently entered title.



## **Data Analysis**

In order to accept or reject the hypotheses and determine whether self-censorship is likely, the researcher analyzed frequencies of the schools' holdings of titles and compare the results of the test group with the control group as well as study geographic regional data. In order to analyze data related to hypothesis 1 that less than 50% of the identified list of recommended, potentially controversial children's books are present in all 45 schools; the researcher will calculate the number of books from the test list that each school holds. In order to analyze data related to hypothesis 2 that more than 50% of the identified recommended children's books without potentially controversial topics are present in all 45 schools; the researcher will calculate the number of books from the control list that each school holds. In order to analyze data for hypothesis 3 that schools owning more than 50% of the control list non-controversial titles will have fewer than 50% of the test list potentially controversial titles, the researcher will use Appendix F to compare the test and control list for each school. Finally, to analyze data for hypothesis 4, the researcher will report data of self-censorship in Iowa elementary schools by AEA geographic region. If the school has less than 50% of the 25 test group titles, while holding over 50% of the 25 control group titles, the school will be identified with self-censorship. The researcher replicated Coley's (2002) study in the use of the 50% ratio, and replicated Bellows' (2005) study using a test and control list and the geographic analysis.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **DATA ANALYSIS**

The purpose of this study was to determine whether Iowa elementary schools with professionally certified school librarians hold a greater number of recommended books from the ALA Notable Children's Books from 2002-2009 in which reviews do not indicate potentially controversial topics as compared with those ALA Notable Children's Books from the same year in which reviews indicate potentially controversial topics. This research study included 45 randomly selected elementary schools with five schools from each of the nine AEAs. To qualify for this study, each of the schools had to have a certified teacher librarian and a catalog that was publicly accessible via the Internet. In addition, the current research study used both test and control groups of 25 titles in each group. The test group was compiled first with the inclusion of 25 recommended fiction and nonfiction titles from the 2002-2009 ALA Notable Children's Books that have a potentially controversial topic listed in the review. An equal number of control group titles were compiled from the 2002-2009 ALA Notable Children's Books, to complement the copyright dates of the titles within the test group.

Hypothesis one stated that most of the 45 schools with automated library catalogs and professionally certified teacher librarians will have less than 50% of the identified list of recommended, potentially controversial children's books (Appendix A). Table 1 identifies the number of titles from the test group that each of the 45 elementary schools held. Of the 45 schools, only one school held all 25 of the titles from the test group. Thirty-one (69%) of the school districts held 12 titles or fewer (under 50%) of the

25 titles. Fourteen (31%) of the schools held more than 50% of the potentially controversial titles; therefore, hypothesis one is accepted.

Table 1:

*Test Group Title Holdings*

School #	AEA Region	# Test Titles
1.	Northwest	8
2.	Northwest	12
3.	Northwest	4
4.	Northwest	4
5.	Northwest	10
6.	AEA 8	17
7.	AEA 8	4
8.	AEA 8	25
9.	AEA 8	6
10.	AEA 8	11
11.	AEA 267	18
12.	AEA 267	6
13.	AEA 267	11
14.	AEA 267	18
15.	AEA 267	5
16.	Heartland	8
17.	Heartland	10
18.	Heartland	4
19.	Heartland	12
20.	Heartland	9
21.	Grant Wood	16
22.	Grant Wood	12
23.	Grant Wood	7
24.	Grant Wood	21

School #	AEA Region	# Test Titles
25.	Grant Wood	19
26.	Great Prairie	4
27.	Great Prairie	13
28.	Great Prairie	18
29.	Great Prairie	7
30.	Great Prairie	10
31.	AEA 9	15
32.	AEA 9	10
33.	AEA 9	4
34.	AEA 9	8
35.	AEA 9	6
36.	Keystone	14
37.	Keystone	18
38.	Keystone	13
39.	Keystone	7
40.	Keystone	21
41.	Loess/Green Valley	6
42.	Loess/Green Valley	7
43.	Loess/Green Valley	11
44.	Loess/Green Valley	9
45.	Loess/Green Valley	12

Hypothesis two stated that most of the 45 schools with automated library catalogs and professionally certified teacher librarians will have more than 50% of the

identified list of recommended children's books without reviewer identified controversial topics (Appendix B). Table 2 identifies the number of titles from the control group that each of the 45 elementary schools held. Of the 45 schools, only three schools held all 25 titles from the control group. Thirty-seven (82%) of the schools held 13 titles or more (over 50%) of the 25 titles. Eight (18%) of the schools held less than 50% of the non-controversial titles; therefore, hypothesis two is accepted.

Table 2:

*Control Group Title Holdings*

School #	AEA Region	# Control Titles
1.	Northwest	8
2.	Northwest	13
3.	Northwest	10
4.	Northwest	4
5.	Northwest	13
6.	AEA 8	25
7.	AEA 8	10
8.	AEA 8	25
9.	AEA 8	4
10.	AEA 8	13
11.	AEA 267	21
12.	AEA 267	15
13.	AEA 267	18
14.	AEA 267	14
15.	AEA 267	10
16.	Heartland	10
17.	Heartland	8
18.	Heartland	13
19.	Heartland	17
20.	Heartland	21
21.	Grant Wood	23
22.	Grant Wood	19
23.	Grant Wood	13
24.	Grant Wood	23
25.	Grant Wood	25
26.	Great Prairie	14
27.	Great Prairie	19
28.	Great Prairie	24
29.	Great Prairie	13
30.	Great Prairie	19
31.	AEA 9	20
32.	AEA 9	22
33.	AEA 9	18
34.	AEA 9	14
35.	AEA 9	15
36.	Keystone	19
37.	Keystone	21
38.	Keystone	17
39.	Keystone	14
40.	Keystone	23
41.	Loess/Green Valley	14
42.	Loess/Green Valley	19
43.	Loess/Green Valley	24

44.	Loess/Green Valley	17
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45.	Loess/Green Valley	14
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Hypothesis three stated that most of the schools owning more than 50% of the control list non controversial titles (Appendix C) will have fewer than 50% of the test list potentially controversial titles (Appendix B). Of the districts studied, 37 schools owned more than 50% of the control list non controversial titles. Of those 37 schools, 19 (51%) also had less than 50% of the test list titles . Thus, just over half of the schools who purchased the non-controversial titles did not purchase the equivalent in the potentially controversial titles. Furthermore all but two of the 45 schools held more titles from the control group than from the test group titles; those two schools held the same number from each group. Therefore, hypothesis three is accepted.

Table 3:

*Test Group and Control Group Title Holdings*

School #	AEA Region	# Control Titles	# Test Titles
1.	Northwest	8	8
2.	Northwest	13	12
3.	Northwest	10	4
4.	Northwest	4	4
5.	Northwest	13	10
6.	AEA 8	25	17
7.	AEA 8	10	4
8.	AEA 8	25	25
9.	AEA 8	4	6
10.	AEA 8	13	11
11.	AEA 267	21	18
12.	AEA 267	15	6
13.	AEA 267	18	11
14.	AEA 267	14	18

15.	AEA 267	10	5
16.	Heartland	10	8
17.	Heartland	8	10
18.	Heartland	13	4
19.	Heartland	17	12
20.	Heartland	21	9
21.	Grant Wood	23	16
22.	Grant Wood	19	12
23.	Grant Wood	13	7
24.	Grant Wood	23	21
25.	Grant Wood	25	19
26.	Great Prairie	14	4
27.	Great Prairie	19	13

28.	Great Prairie	24	18
29.	Great Prairie	13	7
30.	Great Prairie	19	10
31.	AEA 9	20	15
32.	AEA 9	22	10
33.	AEA 9	18	4
34.	AEA 9	14	8
35.	AEA 9	15	6
36.	Keystone	19	14
37.	Keystone	21	18

38.	Keystone	17	13
39.	Keystone	14	7
40.	Keystone	23	21
41.	Loess/Green Valley	14	6
42.	Loess/Green Valley	19	7
43.	Loess/Green Valley	24	11
44.	Loess/Green Valley	17	9
45.	Loess/Green Valley	14	12

Hypothesis four stated that various geographic locations in Iowa will show more prevalence to self-censorship with most of the schools owning more than 50% of the control list non controversial titles (Appendix C) will have fewer than 50% of the test list potentially controversial titles (Appendix B). This researcher divided the state of Iowa in sections based on the school districts AEA regions. There are nine AEA regions in Iowa. Each of the regions was represented by five randomly selected schools that were selected from those that had an automated catalog that was accessible via the Internet and was staffed by a certified teacher librarian. Table 4 shows the regions and the number of schools that held more than 50% of the control titles and fewer than 50% of the test group titles. In both Keystone AEA and AEA 8, only one of the five schools analyzed had over 50% of the control titles while having fewer than 50% of the test titles. Keystone AEA represents the far northeast corner of the state. Examples of the school districts that it services are Dubuque, Decorah, Allamakee, and North Fayette. AEA 8 represents the northern part of the state. Examples of school districts it services are Storm Lake, Webster City, Algona, and Spencer. Also noteworthy, The Loess Hills/ Green Valley

AEA showed that all five schools analyzed held more than 50% of the control titles while holding fewer than 50% of the test titles. The Loess Hills/ Green Valley AEA represents the lower southwest corner of the state. Examples of the school districts that it services are Council Bluffs, Clarinada, Creston, and Lamoni. There were several AEA regions that showed noteworthy variances in the data, ranging from only one to all five schools showing a prevalence for self-censorship, therefore, hypothesis four is accepted.

Table 4:

*Regional Totals for Test Group and Control Group Holdings Comparisons*

AEA Region	# of Schools per Region
Northwest	2 of the 5
AEA 8	1 of the 5
AEA 267	2 of the 5
Heartland	3 of the 5
Grant Wood	2 of the 5
Great Prairie	3 of the 5
AEA 9	4 of the 5
Keystone	1 of the 5
Loess Hills/Green Valley	5 of the 5

## SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

Controversial topics have been in literature since the early 1900's (Kravitz, 2002).

Authors of books with potentially controversial topics have continued throughout the years to write about issues that their readers may be experiencing (p. 3). Despite the availability of books covering controversial topics, the researcher questioned whether or not teacher librarians were purchasing these books for their school library collections.

### Summary

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether Iowa elementary schools with professionally certified teacher librarians hold a greater number of recommended books from ALA Notable Children's Books list from 2002-2009 in which reviews do not indicate potentially controversial topics as compared with those ALA Notable Children's Books from the same years in which reviews indicate potentially controversial topics. The methodology used for this study was quantitative.

The researcher conducted the research study using stratified random selection of schools. The list was then narrowed by selecting only schools that had a catalog that was publicly accessible via the internet and employed a certified teacher librarian. The test group of children's literature was composed of 25 titles from the 2002-2009 ALA Notable Children's Books that have potentially controversial topics. The researcher read reviews of all ALA Notable Children's Books in the *Booklist* publication seeking any information in reviews about potentially controversial topics. Controversial topics include "content that made titles a potential target for a challenge included profanity, sexuality, religion, violence/horror, racism, suicide/death, and crude behavior (Coley, 2002).

The researcher began with the 2009 list of ALA Notable Children's Books. From this list of 80 books, the researcher identified Booklist reviews that showed three books with potentially controversial topics. The researcher used the same process for the 2008 list; working down



through earlier lists until a group of 25 recent ALA Notable Children's Books with potentially controversial topics were identified. The control group list of children's literature is composed of 25 titles that are on the same 2002-2009 ALA Notable Children's Books list. *Booklist* is a reputable review source used by school librarians for materials selection. There were 692 titles of a non-controversial nature from 2002-2009 ALA Notable Children's Books lists. The researcher used random sampling to select a list of 25 titles for the control list.

Upon completion of data collection, the researcher was able to determine several findings regarding availability of potentially controversial titles. Of the 45 schools in the nine AEA regions, only one school held all 25 titles from both lists, two regions had only one school in which the data indicated the possibility of self-censorship, and another AEA region was noteworthy because all five schools analyzed had more than 50% of the control titles while having fewer than 50% of the test titles.

## **Conclusions**

This study followed Coley's (2002) and Bellows (2004) studies in regards to identifying school libraries that held books on potentially controversial topics. Unlike Coley's (2002) where a number of schools included in the study held none of the titles identified by the researcher, all 45 of the schools held at least four titles. Conversely, only two schools included in this research study held all test titles.

Another access discrepancy arises between the greater availability of control group titles and test group titles. All but two of the 45 schools held more titles from the control group than from the test group titles, and two of the schools held the same amount of control group and test group titles. Notably, none of the schools held more test group potentially controversial titles than they did control group titles. Forty percent of the school districts studied held at least twice as many control group titles as test group titles. The researcher speculates that self-censorship impedes simple literary quality factors in library materials selection in these schools.

## **Recommendation for Further Research**

Access to fiction and non-fiction titles that contain potentially controversial topics will remain an issue for school libraries throughout Iowa. Elementary school children must have access to books that incorporate topics such as religion, profanity, sexuality, religion, violence and horror, racism, suicide and death, and crude behavior. Denying children the opportunity to read quality literature denies children a chance to experience real world living (Coley, 2002).

This study could be duplicated in the same area in ten years to analyze changes in collections. Further studies of this current research could identify particular school districts in AEA regions without keeping the schools anonymous. Additionally, this current research study could be adapted to include middle and high school libraries.

The researcher had some difficulty in identifying titles that contained potentially controversial topics that were also ALA Notable Children's Books. The control group (prior to random selection of titles from the eligible book lists) held far more titles than the test group. Future research could be conducted to identify literature with other controversial topics besides profanity, sexuality, religion, violence/horror, racism, suicide/death, and crude behavior. This study only begins to investigate the availability of literature that contains potentially controversial topics.

Finally, a future research could explore the school districts that do not have a certified teacher librarian on staff. The researcher could then see if there is a correlation to self-censorship with someone who is not knowledgeable in choosing materials that uphold Intellectual Freedom versus a school that has a certified teacher librarian on staff who has knowledge in how to choose materials that supports the schools selection policy.

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## APPENDIX A

## SAMPLE SELECTION POLICY

K-12 District Cedar Falls, Iowa

Policy Title:                    Selection of Learning Resources                    Code No. 603.3

### Statement of Policy

Learning resources are selected by the school district to support its educational goals and objectives and to implement, enrich, and support the instructional program. Resources must serve the breadth and depth of the curriculum and provide for the needs and interests of individual students. It is the obligation of the district to provide intellectual and physical access to materials that cover a wide range of abilities and many differing points of view. To this end, principles of intellectual freedom must be placed above personal opinion, and reason above prejudice, in the selection of resources.

The Board of Education shall delegate to the superintendent the authority and responsibility for the selection of all learning resources. The superintendent delegates responsibility for actual selection to the appropriately trained personnel who shall discharge this obligation consistent with the Board's selection criteria and procedures. The selection process shall involve representatives of the professional staff directly affected by the selections and/or the professional library media staff.

The Board also allows for systematic review of existing resources and permits the reappraisal of allegedly inappropriate resources through the established process.

The learning resources covered by this policy include both print and nonprint items selected for library media centers, classrooms, learning centers, laboratories, and the district media office. Included are textbooks, gift materials, resources retrieved or viewed electronically, materials borrowed from other agencies, and guest speakers, among others.

### General Selection Criteria

Staff members involved in selection of learning resources shall use the following criteria as a guide:

- \* educational significance;
- \* contribution the subject matter makes to the curriculum and the interests of students and staff
- \* favorable reviews found in standard selection sources;
- \* favorable recommendations based on preview and examination of resources by professional personnel;
- \* reputation and significance of the author, producer, publisher, or speaker;

- \* validity and appropriateness of the resource for intended use;
- \* contribution the resource makes to the range of representative viewpoints on controversial issues;
- \* high degree of potential appeal to users;
- \* quality and variety of format;
- \* value commensurate with cost and/or need;
- \* timeliness and/or permanence; and
- \* integrity of the resource.

#### Selection of Learning Resources

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#### Specific Selection Criteria

1. Learning resources shall be appropriate to the subject area, and for the age, emotional development, ability, learning styles, and social development of the students for whom the resources are intended.
2. Physical format and appearance of resources shall be suitable for intended use.
3. Resources shall be selected to give students an awareness of our pluralistic society, and provide a global perspective.
4. Resources shall be selected which support multicultural/nonsexist viewpoints and encourage all students to understand, appreciate, relate to and value cultural and personal diversity.
5. Resources shall be selected to meet the needs of the wide range of student physical, emotional, and cognitive development.
6. Resources shall be selected which support and encourage students to examine their attitudes and behaviors as individuals, and to relate those attitudes and behaviors to the concepts of duties and responsibilities as citizens.
7. Resources shall be selected for their strengths rather than rejected for their weaknesses of language and style or other elements.
8. The selection process shall provide opportunities for participation by students, teachers, support staff, administrators, library media specialists, and other members of the community.
9. Selection, an ongoing process, shall include routine procedures for removal and/or replacement of worn, obsolete, dated, unused or unusable resources.

10. Gift materials shall be judged by the criteria listed in the preceding statements and be accepted or rejected on the basis of the criteria.

#### Procedure for Reconsideration of Resources

In the event resources are questioned, the principles of intellectual freedom shall be defended rather than specific resources.

The Board recognizes the right of individual parents to request that their child not be required to read, view, or listen to specific resources, provided a written request is made to the appropriate building principal.

A standing Reconsideration Committee shall be formed in each building by the second week of each school year. The purpose of the committee shall be to review any complaint received during the school year, learn all the circumstances related to the acquisition and use of the challenged resource, review the guidelines listed in the selection policy, decide whether the policy has been followed correctly, and then recommend action regarding future

#### Selection of Learning Resources

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use of the resource. The committee at secondary buildings shall consist of: the building principal, 1 media specialist, 1 teacher, 1 parent or community member, and 1 student. The committee at elementary buildings shall consist of: the building principal, 1 media specialist, 1 teacher, 1 parent or community member, and the District Media Coordinator. Any staff member responsible for the selection or the providing of the challenged material will not be included on the committee. If necessary, the principal will appoint a temporary replacement.

#### When Complaints Are Received from Parents or other Community Members about learning resources

1. All staff members shall report complaints to the building principal involved, whether received by telephone, letter, or in personal conversation.
2. The building principal or a designated representative shall contact the complainant to discuss the objection and attempt to resolve it informally by explaining the philosophy and goals of the school district, building, course, and/or library media center.
3. If the complaint is not resolved informally, the building principal shall provide the complainant with "The Learning Resources Selection Policy," including the form "Statement of Concern About Learning Resources," which must be filled out completely and returned to the building principal within ten (10) working days, before the complaint will be given consideration.

4. If the completed form is not returned within the time period, the issue shall be considered closed. If the form is returned, the reasons for selection of the resource shall be restated by the appropriate staff and turned in to the building principal.

5. Resources shall not be removed from use, or access restricted within the district, pending a final decision. However, access to the resources can be denied to the child(children) of the complainant(s), if requested.

6. Within 20 (twenty) working days upon receipt of a completed "Statement of Concern About Learning Resources" form:

a. The principal shall notify the superintendent, appropriate director of education, and the building's Reconsideration Committee that a complaint has been received.

b. Each member of the Reconsideration Committee must read, view, or listen to the learning resource in question in its entirety.

c. After both the staff member responsible for selecting the learning resource and the complainant have met with the Reconsideration Committee, the committee will discuss the resource and make a decision.

d. The building principal shall send written notification of the action taken to all involved parties as well as to the appropriate director of education and the superintendent.

e. Any person not satisfied with the decision of the committee may file a request to appeal the decision to the Board of Education. Within ten (10) working days of the receipt of the written notification,

#### Selection of Learning Resources

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the complainant or user may file an appeal in the superintendent's office for a school board hearing. It shall be the superintendent's responsibility to schedule and expedite the hearing.

f. Each Board member must read, view or listen to the learning resource in question in its entirety within 30 days of when the complaint was presented to them. At a following designated board meeting, the complainant and a representative of the Reconsideration Committee will be allowed to present information to the board pertaining to the complaint. The board will then deliberate action to be taken, with a decision being announced no later than the following board meeting. The superintendent will provide written notification of the board's decision to all participating parties with 10 working days of the board's decision.

g. Persons dissatisfied with the decision of the board may appeal to the Iowa Board of Education pursuant to state law.



**APPENDIX B**

**TEST GROUP TITLES AND POTENTIALLY CONTROVERSIAL TOPIC NOTE  
FROM REVIEWS**

*Witness* by Karen Hesse (2002)- racial, Ku Klux Klan

*Skeleton Man* by Joseph Bruchac (2001)- scary for age group

*The Land* by Mildred D Taylor (2001) - racial epithet

*The House of the Scorpion* by Nancy Farmer (2002) - clones and zombies/ scary for age group

*Noah's Ark* by Jerry Pinkney (2003) - religious

*My Corner of the Universe* by Ann Martin (2002) - suicide

*I Pledge Allegiance* by Bill Martin Jr. (2002) - reference to God

*Olive's Ocean* by Kevin Henkes (2003) - suicide

*Hana's Suitcase: A True Story* by Karen Levine (2003) – too graphic for intended age group

*Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* by J.K. Rowling (2003) – reference to wizardry

*Heck, Superhero* by Martine Leavitt (2004) –street drugs and suicide

*Our Family Tree- An Evolution Story* by Lisa Westberg (2004) - evolution

*Ruby Lu Brave and True* by Lenore Look (2004) – jokes are inappropriate for intended audience

*The Fire Eaters* by David Almond (2004) – graphic, grotesque stunts

*Harry Potter: Half Blood Prince* by J.K. Rowling (2004) - wizardry

*And Tango Makes Three* by Justin Richardson and Peter Parnell (2005) - sexual orientation

*Hi! Fly Guy* by Tedd Arnold (2005) – controversial vocabulary

*Big Bang!* by Carolyn Cinami DeCristofano (2005) - evolution

*It's not the Stork! A Book about Girls, Boys, Babies, and Bodies* by Robie H. Harris (2006) – sexually graphic

*Higher Power of Lucky* by Susan Patron (2006) – use of inappropriate language

*Across the Alley* by Richard Michelson (2006) - religion and race

*Who Discovered America* by Germán Arciniegas (2007) – political/historical views

*Yo! Jo* by Rachel Isadora (2007) - language and racial slang

*Elijah of Buxton* by Christopher Paul Curtis (2007) – graphic slavery details

*Boys of Steel: the Creators of Superman* by Marc Tyler Nobleman (2008) - religion

## APPENDIX C

**CONTROL GROUP TITLES**

*Cowgirl Kate and Cocoa* by Erica Silverman (2005)

*Zen Shorts* by John J Muth (2005)

*The Graveyard Book* by Neil Gaiman (2008)

*Ways to Live Forever* by Sally Nicholls (2008)

*Waiting for Normal* by Leslie Connor (2008)

*A Couple of Boys Have the Best Week Ever* by Marla Frazee (2008)

*Nothing* by Jon Agee (2007)

*Remembering Mrs. Rossi* by Amy Hest (2007)

*The Killer Tears* by Anne Laure Bondaux (2006)

*Mercy Watson Goes For a Ride* by Kate Dicamillo (2006)

*The Adventures of the Dish and the Spoon* by Mini Grey (2005)

*Eyes of the Emperor* by Graham Salisbury (2005)

*Lilly's Big Day* by Kevin Henkes (2005)

*The Lightning Thief* by Rick Riordan (2004)

*The Baby on the Way* by Karen English (2004)

*Al Capone Does my Shirts* by Gennifer Choidenko (2004)

*The Man Who Walked Between the Towers* by Mordicai Gerstein (2003)

*Keeper of the Night* by Kimberly Willis Holt (2003)

*Owen and Mzee* by Isabella Hatkoff (2003)

*The City of Ember* by Jeanne DuPrau (2003)

*Picture of Hollis Woods* by Patricia Reilly Giff (2003)

*Togo* by Robert Blake (2002)

*Amanda Pig and the Really Hot Day* by Jean Van Leeuwen (2002)

*Duck on a Bike* by David Shannon (2002)

*Judy Moody gets Famous!* By Megan McDonald (2001)

**APPENDIX D**

**DATA COLLECTION SHEET**

Schools Sorted By AEA Regions	AEA Region	Number of Potentially Controversial Titles Held from the Test List	Number of Non- Controversial Titles held from the Control List
1.	Northwest	8	8
2.	Northwest	12	13
3.	Northwest	4	10
4.	Northwest	4	4
5.	Northwest	10	13
6.	AEA 8	17	25
7.	AEA 8	4	10
8.	AEA 8	25	25
9.	AEA 8	6	4
10.	AEA 8	11	13
11.	AEA 267	18	21
12.	AEA 267	6	15
13.	AEA 267	11	18
14.	AEA 267	18	14
15.	AEA 267	5	10
16.	Heartland	8	10
17.	Heartland	10	8
18.	Heartland	4	13
19.	Heartland	12	17
20.	Heartland	9	21
21.	Grant Wood	16	23
22.	Grant Wood	12	19
23.	Grant Wood	7	13
24.	Grant Wood	21	23
25.	Grant Wood	19	25

26.	Great Prairie	4	14
27.	Great Prairie	13	19
28.	Great Prairie	18	24
29.	Great Prairie	7	13
30.	Great Prairie	10	19
31.	AEA 9	15	20
32.	AEA 9	10	22
33.	AEA 9	4	18
34.	AEA 9	8	14
35.	AEA 9	6	15
36.	Keystone	14	19
37.	Keystone	18	21
38.	Keystone	13	17
39.	Keystone	7	14
40.	Keystone	21	23
41.	Loess Hill/ Green Valley	6	14
42.	Loess Hill/ Green Valley	7	19
43.	Loess Hill/ Green Valley	11	24
44.	Loess Hill/ Green Valley	9	17
45.	Loess Hill/ Green Valley	12	14

**APPENDIX E**

**AREA EDUCATION AGENCY REGIONS MAP**

\*\* As of July 1, 2010 Loess Hills AEA and Green Valley AEA will be merged into one AEA. This is the reason for the researcher choosing schools from only nine regions.

