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THE DEVELOPMENT OF US CHILDREN'S LIBRARIANSHIP AND CHALLENGING WHITE DOMINANT NARRATIVES

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While educators, library workers, authors, and youth continuously challenge racial, ethnic, and tribal (mis)representation in US children's literature by, for example, writing about anti-Blackness and Orientalism in Dr. Seuss's body of work (Ishizuka and Stephens 2019) or studying the representation of anthropomorphic apes in picture books (Campbell 2018), there is, relatedly, a need for an examination of how library service to children enacts, replicates, and maintains the inequities of a white hegemonic society. The establishment of children's librarianship was tied not only to the development of reading habits in children, but also to the shaping of their worldviews, their assimilation to White Supremacist "norms," and their guidance toward "piety, purity, and knowledge" (Garrison 1972–1973).

As a first-generation, college-educated, Brown Puerto Rican children's librarian, I'm aligning myself with the critical work done around whiteness, power, and racial identity in children's librarianship. Through my work, and the work of Indigenous, Black, and People of Color (IBPOC) library workers such as Augusta Braxston Baker, Pura T. Belpré, Charlemae Hill Rollins, Effie Lee Morris, and Lotsee Patterson, we want to recognize and provide a revisionist history to center and affirm the lives and identities of Indigenous children and children of color and Indigenous librarians and librarians of color. Racial equity in library and information science (LIS) is an ongoing process, commitment, and work, and this chapter aims to examine, using a Critical Race Theory (CRT) lens, the history of US children's librarianship and past and present

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collection development practices, as well as to provide recommendations on how to reimagine these practices.

The incorporation of CRT into the analysis of children's librarianship gives me and the IBPOC women discussed in this chapter the opportunity to challenge white dominant narratives and center our voices in the "retelling" of US children's librarianship. As IBPOC in a predominantly white field, our "experiences lead to different understandings of racism" (Matsuda et al. 1993) and its impact on our work, our field, and its history that it is constantly whitewashed, distorted, and sanitized. There's a need to bring collective IBPOC historical accounts and experiences to the landscape of the field.

CRITICAL RACE THEORY AND WHAT IT HAS TO DO WITH A "NICE" AND "CUTE" FIELD LIKE CHILDREN'S LIBRARIANSHIP[1]

CRT analyzes the role racism plays in perpetuating inequities and oppressions in society. It is a tool of analysis that is not often discussed or integrated into coursework for current and future children's library workers. It was through my independent studies, experiential knowledge (Cappiccie et al. 2012), and a school of social work graduate course that I was exposed to CRT, and I subsequently made my own connections to use it to expose and deconstruct white dominant and oppressive perspectives in children's librarianship.

One of the basic tenets of CRT is the notion of the permanence of racism, that it is embedded in the fabric of US society and social structures. It suggests that "racist hierarchical structures govern all political, economic, and social domains" (DeCuir and Dixson 2004), which include social institutions like the US public library system. Given the persistence and permanence of racism and how it is produced, replicated, and challenged in social systems, Patricia Hill Collins proposes the *domains of power framework* to think of racism as a system of power with four domains (Collins 2009). Each domain is defined below, and I present each one's racial analysis, context area, and power dynamics. At the same time, I incorporate how public libraries, where the majority of children's collections are based, are represented in the four domains, which will provide the framework of analysis for this essay.

The *structural domain* is the first domain of power, and it shows how racial inequities are organized through social institutions such as schools, hospitals, and government agencies. Collins describes it as "the structure of how racism as a system of power is set up, and how it is organized without anybody doing anything" (Collins

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2009, 53). The US public library system and buildings as a social institution are clearly situated in this domain of power.

The *disciplinary domain* is the second domain of power, where "people use the rules and regulations of everyday life to uphold the racial hierarchy or to challenge it" (Collins 2009, 53). This includes the chastising, surveillance, and filtering practices of organizations. Library policies and guidelines are designed and established to control and regulate access to and usage of library buildings, services, collections, and materials.

The *cultural domain* is the third domain of power, which manufactures and replicates the ideas and views that justify racial inequities. This domain is increasingly significant in constructing representations, ideas, and stories about race and racism as a *system of power*, particularly through the media (Collins 2009, 53). This is done through works such as texts, illustrations, films, TV, music, toys, and memorabilia. Contemporarily, children are exposed to problematic cultural artifacts and racist ideologies from birth, and school curriculum and library materials are not exempt from these unequal representations. Library collections mimic this *cultural domain*, and collection development processes play a role in upholding or questioning racial inequities in materials available.

The *interpersonal domain* is the fourth and last domain of power, which shapes and enacts race relations among individuals, among themselves, and in one-on-one encounters, and it "involves ordinary social interactions where people accept and/or resist racial inequality in their everyday lives" (Collins 2009, 54). This domain also encompasses relationships between organizations, institutions, and communities. In a public library setting, this domain is represented through library worker–library worker (management, supervisors, colleagues), library worker–library user (adults, teens, children, teachers, caregivers), library worker–library stakeholders (publishers, vendors, community groups, and organizations), and library user–library user interactions. All, individually and collectively, represent, produce, and resist racial power dynamics impacted by their identities and social systems.

Within and across each domain of power presented by Patricia Hill Collins's framework, racism is produced, replicated, and resisted, and all are necessary for the ability of racism to function as a system of power. US public libraries mirror each domain, and throughout this discussion of US children's librarianship, I will pay particular attention to the *structural domain* (public library) and *cultural domain* (children's collections).

Collections portray and carry the past, present, and future of white hegemonic structures and racial inequities of society and libraries. While library workers and

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those in charge of developing the collection come and go, collections are steadier and are more representative of society's ideologies. The *cultural domain* in children's library rooms, which are spaces in public libraries created for children's materials, services, and programs, is represented by books and other cultural products that are part of their collections. What do children's collections represent to our community, children, and field? Collections mirror the racist past and present, reflecting whose lives are deemed valuable, meaningful, and worth remembering. Although a library collection has the capacity for representation, validation, and possibility, it also harms, invalidates, misrepresents, and offers distorted images to our children. Adults whose charge is to select, acquire, and incorporate books into library children's collections hold a great amount of power over the stories available to children (Aggleton 2018), as does the content and ideas we are reproducing and transmitting to them.

But then, what are the racial, ethnic, and tribal identities, ideologies, and biases of the children's library workers in charge of developing the collections? What are the ideologies expressed and portrayed in the evaluation, acquisition, and selection tools used by these library workers? How are White Supremacy and racist ideologies over-represented through the different areas of children's collection development? This is why positioning a CRT framework and lens in children's librarianship is intrinsic to critiquing and disrupting racial oppressive ideas and conditions in our "nice" and "cute" field. But it can also present possibilities and actions for change and it can be used to "propose radical solutions for addressing it" (Ladson-Billings 1999, 27). The inclusion of collection development practices and resources in this chapter aims to provide a base in helping reimagine racial equity and justice in children's librarianship and the much-needed commitment to CRT's social justice element in children's collections.

THE "PURE" HISTORY OF US CHILDREN'S LIBRARIANSHIP: THE EARLY YEARS (1785–1938)

From the beginning, children's library services were establishing and replicating whiteness and social control within the *structural domain* and *cultural domain*. The earliest accounts of book collections and library services to children in the US are through Sunday school libraries dating back to 1785. Christian churches, especially those located in the North and West (Harris 1984), kept small collections of books for their Sunday schools in an attempt to "reduce crime and illiteracy and in general to improve some of the moral and social conditions of [white] children in the late eighteenth century" (López 1976, 318).

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In 1803, white Boston teacher Caleb Bingham presented a collection of 150 books to the town of Salisbury, Connecticut, establishing the Bingham Library of Youth (López 1976, 317). This library was for the use of white children ages nine to sixteen and is generally considered to be the first US library for children. Several public libraries that are often mentioned among the claims of the earliest children's collections and services include the Town Library (1834) in Peterborough, New Hampshire; the Arlington Public Library (1835) in Arlington, Massachusetts; Aguilar Free Library (1886) of New York; and the Public Library of Brookline (1890) in Brookline, Massachusetts (Jenkins 2000; Jordan 1913; Rose 1954). Although the beginnings of print materials and resources for children in libraries are located in New England states, other schools and libraries in the Northeast and Midwest and on the West Coast were relevant in this early history. Along with expanding library services and sharing books with children, they were also guilty of inculcating White Supremacist ideologies into youth.

One of the most renowned and harmful spaces for the instruction and "education" of Indigenous children was the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Pennsylvania. Since its establishment in 1879, the school's stated purpose was to assimilate and "destroy" Indigenous children through its teaching and punishments. The school's *cultural domains*, represented by the curriculum and reading rooms, included materials that presented Euro-American worldviews and "conduct of life," vocational education, religious doctrine, stories of American Indians who adopted "American" lifestyles, and titles that encouraged children's cultural assimilation (Lear 2015). The library purposely avoided titles that challenged white racial ideologies or recounted harsh discipline and violence toward Native Americans. Children's book collections in residential schools are vivid examples of integrating and replicating the *structural, disciplinary,* and *cultural domains*, and "helped implement both cultural and biological forms of racism" (Lear 2015, 180).

The history of public libraries in the United States is a racialized and gendered one, and as Gina Schlesselman-Tarango emphasizes, when we talk about the development of early librarianship and early library workers, we are likely referring to white women (Schlesselman-Tarango 2016). The roles of domesticity and mothering historically imposed on women, along with the elitist, altruistic, and "niceness" notions surrounding libraries and children, are worth accentuating, as a reminder that children's library collections were created and shaped by "educated" middle- and upper-class white women who focused on reproducing White Supremacy. Since its inception, children's librarianship has been hiding behind the idea of neutrality and purity, avoiding conversations regarding library workers' racial, ethnic, and tribal identities and white privilege and their impact on children's collections.

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Some of the “educated” white women who played a role in the early years of the field were Caroline M. Hewins from Hartford (Connecticut) Public Library, Alice M. Jordan from the Boston Public Library, Clara Whitehill Hunt from Brooklyn Public Library, and Anne Carroll Moore from the New York Public Library, four white librarians who are known as the “founders” and developers of specialized collections and library services to children. They guided other library workers to design “children’s rooms and services such as storytelling and became cultural authorities in the rapidly growing area of children’s publishing” (Pawley 2015, 14).

The creation of separate areas for children, which can be seen as another layer within the *structural domain*, became a major focus of public libraries that rapidly spread around the United States due to the public’s embracing of this new white women–dominated field and their work with children, their “kindly material guidance” to lead children, and their goal to focus on the guidance of the minds and morals of the future citizens (Garrison 1979, 224). White children’s librarians hiding behind the idea of “progressive ideology of literacy and readership,” “shaping a better tomorrow by guiding a child’s reading,” and recommending books to develop “educated and well-behaved citizens” were simply manufacturing, replicating, and inculcating white hegemonic ideologies to children through *cultural domains* (Hand 2012, 37; Kimball 2014, 502n).

Many of these early white children’s librarians were establishing themselves as leaders and tastemakers of the field, and their biggest goal and purpose was to “get good books to children” (Vandergrift 1996, 690), fueling them to develop booklists, work as book reviewers, and work closely with publishers and booksellers to impact (control) selection tools and collection development practices used in children’s librarianship. As more children’s rooms were developing, library workers turned to other librarians and professional groups as “authorities” in guiding them to select books for their collections.

Among the first children’s librarians to develop recommended booklists for children was Caroline M. Hewins, whose lists focused on “classics” and “quality” literature for youth (Vandergrift 1996). Her first booklist, *Books for the Young*, was published in 1882 and generally included books with a white Westernized view and entertaining “but never trashy” topics (Eaton 2014, 41). Later on, the list was edited and published by the American Library Association (ALA) in 1897 as *Books for Boys and Girls: A Selected List*, and in its preface Hewins lays out a clear vision of whose children (white, of course) she was targeting the list to and which stories were worth including and omitting.

Another booklist created by white children’s librarians was *The Bookshelf for Boys and Girls: From Nursery Rhyme to Grown-Up Time*. In the introduction they write, “We include stories of boys and girls who have good times at home and at school, on the

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farm and in the city" (Hunt, Fletcher, and Mathiews 1919, 13). When describing the selection of picture books, they demand, "Do not allow little children to see ugly and vulgar pictures" (3). This invites one to ask which children they are envisioning as readers. Which children are they "protecting" by creating a false sense of reality and superiority? How would IBPOC library workers and children read and internalize reading the following annotations created by white library workers?

At the turn of the twentieth century, the H. W. Wilson Company was establishing itself as a children's collection development resources provider, with the publication of their *Children's Catalog*. First published in 1909, the *Children's Catalog: A Guide to the Best Reading for Young People Based on Twenty-Four Selected Library Lists* opened the market of commercially produced catalogs of recommended children's books for libraries (Bush 1996). Still in print today, retitled *Children's Core Collection*, this catalog was, and still is, included as a required resource for library school courses focused on children's and school librarianship. Lists created by Caroline M. Hewins, Alice M. Jordan, and Anne Carroll Moore were among those incorporated in the 1916 *Children's Catalog,* demonstrating the influence and power the white children's librarians who had "founded" children's rooms in US public libraries had over children's collections in all libraries. They were interlocking and integrating the *structural, cultural, and interpersonal domains* within systems of power of the subfield of US children's librarianship.

Throughout the years, US children's librarianship kept expanding and situating itself as a professional field and a powerhouse working along with the children's literature world. Within the oldest US library association, the American Library Association (ALA), several milestones of the field were established. In 1895, ALA formally recognized "children's librarian" as a job title and specialization of librarianship (Hand 2012), and a couple of years later, at the 1900 ALA convention in Montréal, Canada, the Club of Children's Librarians was formed by eight children's librarians, including Anne Carroll Moore and Caroline M. Hewins (Bush 1996). This "informal club" became the official Section of Children's Librarians within ALA, currently known as the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC). This new section that focused on children's librarianship was also commended with the responsibility of two children's book award that would shape what was envisioned to be considered "distinguished" and "high quality" books within US children's literature: the John Newbery Award (1922) and the Randolph Caldecott Award (1938) (Association for Library Service to Children, n.d.-a, n.d.-b).

Certainly, the early years of the development of children's rooms, collections, and librarianship as a field portrayed the role US public libraries had in enacting,

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replicating, and maintaining inequities. White women, with their leading roles in the field, were creating the base of the canon of US children's literature and must-have titles for children's libraries. Collection development tools and practices presented the power of the *cultural domain* in sustaining and supporting the *structural domain* in the white hegemonic systems of power. But children's librarianship and public librarianship were also the setting for early library worker leaders and activists who would recognize and confront the White Supremacist ideologies of cultural works, the field, and society.

CHALLENGING PATTERNS AND NARRATIVES IN CHILDREN'S LIBRARIANSHIP

In US children's librarianship, between the years 1921 and 1972, there were prominent IBPOC children's librarians whose lives and work ran parallel to (or appeared soon after) the white children's librarian "founders" of the field; who experienced racial injustice at the personal and professional levels; and whose careers, lives, and work intertwined with their commitment to their communities and the humanity and experiences of IBPOC children in the US, and in children's books.

While in New York we had Augusta Braxston Baker and Pura T. Belpré, the Midwest had Charlemae Hill Rollins and Effie Lee Morris, and Lotsee Patterson was all around Indian Country, resisting racial inequities and challenging different domains of power through their lives and work. These IBPOC children's library workers present a unique voice, where their stories, experiences, and work are counternarratives in our field. In contrast to their white counterparts, Baker, Belpré, Hill Rollins, Morris, and Patterson were explicitly supporting and mentoring each other and centering the life and humanity of the IBPOC children they worked with, and constantly challenging the *interpersonal domain* (by confronting their white peers' racism) and the *disciplinary domain* (by "breaking" segregating library and lending rules). They dedicated their work and voice to disrupting white dominant ideologies through the *cultural* and *structural domains* by expanding, creating, and critiquing children's cultural works, children's literature, and children's collections. Their impact is still felt today.

Augusta Braxston Baker was an African American children's librarian and storyteller at the New York Public Library, and a bridge between the early white children's librarians and early and contemporary IBPOC children's librarians (Vandergrift 1996). Experiencing segregation as a child, and then the continuous racial inequities in the field, Baker set out to create and increase the children's collections at the New

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York Public Library with an emphasis on books about the African American experience. She worked closely with Arturo A. Schomburg and community members in Harlem to establish and develop the James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection for children (Vandergrift 1996).

Baker, aware of the power of *cultural domains*, was concerned about the children's books with racist and harmful texts and images of African Americans that were included on the lists and given to all children. She went on to create a set of criteria to evaluate the illustrations, plots, and storylines of children's books and their representations of African American characters, and also provided her own list of recommended titles. In 1938, the first list of her publication *Books about Negro Life for Children* was printed, and revised editions were subsequently published throughout the years, later as *The Black Experience in Children's Books* (Smith 1995). Her list not only assisted children in locating books in the library, but also was distributed, sold, and consulted by children's librarians, children's literature editors and authors, and caregivers.

Augusta Braxston Baker, through the *interpersonal domain*, challenged other children's librarians and their attitudes toward IBPOC children in their libraries. She encouraged them to "inform themselves about prejudice, human relations, and intercultural activities" (Vandergrift 1996) and purposely evaluate the barriers they were replicating through *structural, disciplinary, and interpersonal domains* in their children's rooms. In her 1955 article published in *Top of the News*, Baker does the emotional labor and addresses directly her fellow (white) children's librarians: "Your attitude toward minority groups has an important bearing on the attitudes of your children. Therefore, it is your primary duty to improve your own human relations" (Baker 1955, 40). Baker later expands and focuses on the *cultural domain* through the library's collections: "Now think about your room. Are there books on the shelves which will hurt and alienate your newcomers while at the same time they perpetuate stereotyped ideas in the minds of your regular library users?" (Baker 1995, 41). Augusta Braxston Baker challenged the benevolent notion of the early years of US children's librarianship and provides concrete examples of how children's librarians can disrupt white dominant narratives.

Another IBPOC library counterstoryteller who played a founding role in US children's librarianship was Pura T. Belpré, an Afro–Puerto Rican bilingual children's librarian, storyteller, and puppeteer. She began her long career with the New York Public Library in 1921 and focused her work on challenging *cultural and interpersonal domains* along library services to Spanish-speaking children, mainly Puerto Ricans

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arriving to New York in the first decades of the twentieth century. Believing that "reading always enhances children's understanding of both themselves and the world" (Sánchez González 2013, 15), she went on to write Puerto Rican stories missing from library shelves; working and providing children's library services in her language; and disrupting the "traditional" US library services to children in public libraries. Later on, in a new position as the Spanish children's specialist of the New York Public Library, she went around the library system evaluating children's collections and updating their Spanish-language titles and resources, breaking and disrupting the *structural domain*.

Belpré created Spanish-language children's booklists to be distributed among libraries, community centers, and organizations that work with children. Through her work, she was also critical of lists and books that "demean African American children" and wrote about racism and children's books and lists. In *Fragment on Racism and Children's Fiction*, Belpré writes,

> In evaluating Black and biracial books for pre-school through grade levels, a major criterion was that no book would be listed if it was considered likely to communicate any *racist concept* or *cliché* about Blacks to either a Black or a white child, or if it failed to provide some strong characters to serve as role models. (Sánchez González 2013, 50; emphasis added)

In creating lists of recommended titles for children, Belpré was intentional in centering the humanity of IBPOC children, principally Black children, and the possible impact of the presence of White Supremacist ideologies in children's books on the lives and worldviews of all children. Additionally, she interrogated the role these children's books play in replicating racial inequities and the messages they send with their very presence in children's collections.

Moving away from the Northeast, Charlemae Hill Rollins, an African American children's librarian at the Chicago Public Library (1926–1963), was also playing a role in disrupting white dominant narratives. For three decades she held her position as head of the children's department at a Chicago Public Library branch located in a predominantly African American neighborhood. Throughout her career she was a powerful counterstoryteller and strongly advocated for library services in African American communities and for respectful depictions of African Americans in the *cultural domain* of children's books. She not only focused on accurate and respectful representation in cultural works for the sake of African American children themselves, but also aimed "to create a more equitable and democratic world for everyone" (Mabbott 2017, 521).

Using her position and voice, she turned her concerns about White Supremacist ideologies in children's books and libraries' booklists into action. She constantly

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voiced complaints, through the *interpersonal domain*, about the children's books included on the Chicago Public Library buying lists that portrayed stereotypical and damaging representations of African Americans, and also wrote letters and reached out to publishers about the lack of appropriate books for African American children (Tolson 1998). In 1941, she published her seminal work, *We Build Together: A Reader's Guide to Negro Life and Literature for Elementary and High School Use*, which included a guide to aid teachers and children's librarians in evaluating and selecting the best children's books for their collections. Several editions were published throughout the years and were widely consulted for children's collection development; the book's publication exalted Rollins's status as an expert in children's literature, a children's librarianship advocate, and a leader in the field (Willet 2001).

Charlemae Hill Rollins was actively involved in professional organizations such as the ALA and its Children's Services Division, becoming in 1957 the first African American librarian to serve as president of the children's librarians section (Willet 2001). She also served on the Newbery-Caldecott Award Committee and other children's award book committees. Her leadership skills were apparent not only in her community, the library system, and professional organizations, but also in the network of IBPOC children's librarians, where she served as mentor, advocate, and supporter of their work, critically expanding her commitment to social justice.

African American children's librarian Effie Lee Morris was another of the IBPOC early leaders of the development of racially inclusive library collections for children. She made contributions to different library systems across the US and professional organizations, expanding her impact through different *structural domains*. Morris started her career at the Cleveland Public Library in 1946, focusing her work on library services for African American children and establishing the first Negro History Week celebration for children at her library (Garner 2009). Nine years later, she moved to the New York Public Library, where in 1958 she started library services for visually impaired children, serving as the children's specialist at the NYPL's Library for the Blind. Later, in 1963, she arrived in California and became the first coordinator of children's services at San Francisco Public Library, where she remained for the rest of her children's librarian career.

At the San Francisco Public Library, Effie Lee Morris established the Children's Historical and Research Collection, a collection focused on out-of-print children's books "that depict the changing portrayal of ethnic and culturally diverse groups over time" (California Library Association, n.d.). She was also vocal about the harmful and stereotypical representations of African Americans in children's books and

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the lack of high-quality titles included in children's collections. In an interview for *American Libraries*, Morris commented on the lack of accessibility and dearth of African American children's literature. In the 1983 piece she argues,

> Meanwhile many books that have presented the truths of black heritage and black culture are no longer in print. Did not the Civil Rights Movement offer any lasting insights into the Black quests for humanity and dignity? Have we rolled back so far from the knowledge gained in the 60's? The increasing instances of repression against minorities are reported daily. History repeating itself. (Brandehoff 1983, 132)

"History repeating itself"—a statement that still resonates today in children's librarianship, with the (mis)representations (or lack) of IBPOC characters in children's books and its inclusion/exclusion of children's collections. Effie Lee Morris would continue to discuss her work and experiences in library services to children and with critical literacy at conferences, gatherings, committee meetings, and local and international events. Within professional organizations that work with children's library services and literature, Morris was an active member of the ALA, ALSC, Public Library Association (PLA), and the Black Caucus of the American Library Association (BCALA), and served as the first chair of the Coretta Scott King Book Awards Committee and chair of the Newbery Book Award and the Caldecott Book Award committees. Throughout her career, she valued and supported children's book awards like the Pura Belpré Award, Coretta Scott King Book Awards, the Newbery and Caldecott, and understood their impact on children's collection development (Orange 2012).

Comanche counterstoryteller, librarian, and educator Lotsee Patterson was one of the first to take a leading role in tribal librarianship and library services to Native children. In 1959, she started her career as a teacher at a public school in the town of Boone in Oklahoma. Her students, who were Apache, Comanche, and Kiowa, didn't have a library at their school and didn't have reading materials at home (Biggs 2000). The experience drove Patterson to commit her life to Native American library services. She reached out to school administration to train teachers and recruit Native Americans to be trained in basic library skills to develop school library collections. Later, this initiative developed into grant-supported projects for training in the creation, selection, and maintenance of library collections and services for Native children and communities.

Patterson touched on *interpersonal*, *cultural*, and *structural domains* and dedicated her research to write about the lack of American Indian librarians, collection development for Indigenous materials, and how current collection development selection resources, like book reviewing magazines, "lack expertise or extensive knowledge of the topic of American Indians" (Hogan 2011, 90). She created several bibliographies and

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collection development tools, such as *A Core Collection for an Indian Community Library* (Biggs 2000), which is one of the widely used unpublished bibliographies in libraries.

Like many of the previously mentioned IBPOC women librarians, Patterson was also active in professional library organizations. In a meeting at the 1972 ALA conference, she expressed her frustration at the lack of support for tribal libraries and library services for Native Americans. Along with several colleagues, she helped establish the ALA Subcommittee on Library Services to Native Americans, which later became the American Indian Library Association, which Patterson cofounded (Sampson, n.d.).

This brief historical overview (1921–1972) presents the life and work of IBPOC children's library workers, highlighting their labor in positioning themselves in the history of US children's librarianship and doing the work to disrupt the white dominant voices in children's collections. Their social/racial justice work continues to directly influence the collection development processes practiced by children's librarians and the cultural works that are handed out to children. The presence and impact of the different *cultural domains*—bibliographies, book awards, selection tools, and literary works—on collection development is still felt to this day.

REIMAGINING OUR PAST: TOWARD RACIALLY INCLUSIVE COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES

Evaluating and situating US children's librarianship in the present day, what can we learn and unlearn from the early years of US children's librarianship and the work of white and IBPOC children's librarians? How can *we all* work to dismantle whiteness and dominant narratives reflected in our work and children's collections? In this section, I would like us to reimagine the early years of the field, and what a racially just and inclusive field looks like for all library workers and children. I point out areas that library workers in the children's librarianship field should center in their work to take steps toward disrupting the root of white dominant ideologies that have been controlling and molding our libraries, collections, and practices. It is only through an action-based commitment to social justice and racial equity that we can work toward the eradication of all forms of oppression in the field.

- ***Acknowledge the humanity of ALL children.*** Part of our work is to enrich and support the life and existence of children through cultural works. Valuing and centering the humanity of historically marginalized IBPOC identities and critiquing the impact of harmful representations in the materials we incorporate in our collections would move us toward true racially inclusive children's collections.

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- ***STEP BACK, support, and value IBPOC children's library workers in the field.*** The work of Augusta Braxston Baker, Pura T. Belpré, Charlemae Hill Rollins, and many other IBPOC children's librarians was central to providing tools and practices to disrupt white dominant ideologies. As for librarianship itself, children's librarianship is overwhelmingly white (Association for Library Service to Children, n.d.-c) and there's a need to bring and value IBPOC library workers into the field to continue the work of the early leaders. The work of past leaders also inspires current and future generations of IBPOC children's librarians, and hiring, mentoring, retaining, and supporting IBPOC library workers to develop children's collections and work with children would continue to pave the way toward racial inclusivity.
- ***Be INTENTIONAL in challenging white dominant narratives in children's collections.*** When creating and expanding a collection, evaluate the quantity and quality of cultural works by and about IBPOC. Some libraries undergo a "diversity audit" (Jensen 2018) as a first step toward evaluating their current collections, and its results serve to identify the gaps in their libraries. Incorporate a clause in your library's collection development policies that intentionally advocates for the selection and inclusion of materials by and about IBPOC in the children's collections.
- ***LEARN about, AMPLIFY, and USE collection development tools and resources by and about IBPOC communities.*** Book reviews in major publishing journals continue to be the go-to place for children's librarians to learn about new titles to include in their library collections. A 2015 "Diversity Baseline Survey" (Low 2016) in which eight review journals participated shows that 89 percent of book reviewers are white, which will have an impact on how they read, critique, and evaluate children's books. We need to look at reviewers outside mainstream sources, in outlets created by librarians such as *American Indians in Children's Literature*, the *CrazyQuiltEdi* blog, and *Hijabi Librarians* to center the perspectives and representations of IBPOC communities. Look for small and independent publishers that historically have published children's books by and about IBPOC marginalized voices and experiences, and include their titles in libraries.
- ***CENTER and UPLIFT the work done by IBPOC children's librarians.*** Professional library organizations were created to provide safer places for IBPOC librarians to organize, mentor, support, and do work for and about the IBPOC communities they represent and work with. Organizations like the American Indian Library Association (AILA), the Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association (APALA), the Black Caucus of the American Library Association (BCALA), the Chinese American Librarians Association (CALA), and the National Association to Promote

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Library and Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish-Speaking (REFORMA) offer subcommittees, working groups, and spaces for IBPOC children's librarians. Along with other colleagues, they also produce reading lists and book award lists and promote the work of IBPOC creators. All of these serve as selection tools for children's collections.

- ***Critically QUESTION and CHALLENGE the children's literature publishing industry.*** Just as Augusta Braxston Baker and Charlemae Hill Rollins addressed publishers and editors of children's books directly to challenge and call out the harmful representations they keep propagating, current children's librarians need to continue that pattern to disrupt the narratives that dominate children's books and, hence, children's collections. Through social media, in professional conferences' exhibit halls, and in campaigns such as *#StepUpScholastic*, librarians, along with teachers, caregivers, authors, illustrators, and children themselves, can raise concerns about the representations and misrepresentations of IBPOC communities and children in children's cultural works to those in leadership roles in children's publishing.
- ***LEARN and UNLEARN about bias, internalized oppressions, and White Supremacist ideologies in ourselves and our structures, and about its impact on our work.*** White allies and IBPOC librarians continue to create tools and provide resources and analyses to teach and challenge White Supremacist ideologies in our field, and to suggest ways to promote and support the ongoing process of learning and unlearning oppression that impacts our collection development practices. Resources like Simmons University's "Anti-oppression LibGuide" (Simmons University 2020) and the "Guide for Selecting Anti-bias [*sic*] Children's Books" (Derman-Sparks 2016) are essential professional development tools for our work as children's librarians. *Reading While White* also serves as a relevant resource to evaluate and challenge whiteness in children's librarianship. It is a blog created by white children's librarians that discusses how allyship, white privilege, and solidarity could be used to amplify IBPOC voices.

Bringing a CRT lens to US children's librarianship helps situate it within the larger conversations and works about CRT in library and information science more broadly, and about who is constantly left out as an area of critical analysis and scholarly work. Collins's domains of power framework (2009) is just one of the CRT frameworks and tools that provide opportunities to center race and whiteness in children's librarianship and to expose and challenge white dominant narratives in the field and collections. Nostalgia, niceness, and "purity," sentiments and ideas historically tied to childhood and children's literature, have the effect of erasing and avoiding the critique of how

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racism, whiteness, and oppression impact the experiences and lives of children and works written for children. As library workers whose role and work directly impacts children, we need to constantly evaluate our identities, white hegemonic structures, and the structural and cultural domains that shape, influence, and celebrate whose humanity, selves, and existences we center in our collections and world.

NOTE

1. Title inspired by Gloria Ladson-Billings's article "Just What Is Critical Race Theory and What's It Doing in a Nice Field Like Education?"

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