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Beyond the Diversity Audit: Uncovering Whiteness in Our Collections

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Abstract

In late 2020, a group of librarians at the University of Colorado Boulder came together to pursue the design of a diversity audit for monograph collections. After initial research and reflection, we realized that evaluating our existing collection on its racial or ethnic representation would not only be problematic, but also unnecessary, because it was clear to us that our collections are dominated by white voices and perspectives. How could they be otherwise? They were built for a primarily white audience as part of a system of knowledge production dominated by whiteness. We questioned whether the framework of a "diversity audit" really addressed our goal of a systematic anti-racist approach to collections management. This paper details our process of rejecting the diversity audit framework for a large-scale review of monographs in a large academic library collection in the United States. It reviews the literature regarding diversity audits, as well as background on whiteness studies, as it leads to our rationale for instead developing a workbook for collection selectors. This workbook will position collection management practices within the White Institutional Presence (WIP) conceptual framework developed by scholar Diane Gusa (2010).

Keywords: diversity audits, whiteness studies, white institutional presence, collection management, collection development

Beyond the Diversity Audit: Uncovering Whiteness in Our Collections

Introduction and Institutional Background

In late 2020, a task force of six librarians at the University of Colorado Boulder (CU Boulder) pursued the design of a diversity audit for the libraries' print monograph collections. We believed both that this endeavor was a worthy project aligned with our libraries' strategic plan and that this scope allowed us specificity and breadth, prioritizing the physical collection as a visible representation of the libraries' values and priorities.

Our task force consisted of six faculty-status librarians with different roles and responsibilities. All of us had some responsibility for selecting materials for purchase and assessing collections. As part of our initial process, and explained in detail in our literature review, we noted early on how large-scale assessment of academic collections for diversity would be challenging, and few scalable best practices exist. Our desired outcomes for undertaking a diversity audit included gaining a better understanding of our collections, highlighting those materials and strong collecting areas that represent non-dominant narratives, and adjusting our collection development and assessment practices and policies to become anti-racist. With these desired outcomes in mind, we also acknowledged that our work is impacted by our multiple, intersecting, identities. The majority of individuals on our task force identify as white and we benefit from white privilege within librarianship and beyond. Continual self-reflection and requests for feedback were a necessary part of our process.

Despite our initial acknowledgement that this work of "auditing" would be challenging, we set upon our task. However, after extensive reviews of author- and subject-based diversity audit methodologies, we realized that evaluating our existing collections for racial representation could not only be problematic, but also unnecessary. It was clear to us that our collections were

dominated by white voices and perspectives. How could they be otherwise? Within our context as a Predominantly White Institution (PWI), with white students accounting for well more than 50% of our student population (Lomotey, 2010), our collections were built for a primarily white audience as part of a system of knowledge production dominated by whiteness.

In our context, a diversity audit isn't necessary to achieve and may even impede the goal of a systematic anti-racist approach to collections management. To proceed with progress towards our stated goals, a necessary first step is to identify the ways in which whiteness and racism are built into our collection building practices and policies. To identify some of the ways in which whiteness manifests in our collections, we present a literature review to better understand whiteness in academic libraries, and outline first steps toward building a reflective workbook for subject liaisons and collection selectors, positioning collection management practices within the White Institutional Presence (WIP) conceptual model developed by scholar Diane Gusa (2010). In this chapter, we will explain our research into diversity audit models, our decision not to pursue those methodologies, and our work to instead help academic librarians identify and combat whiteness in collection building practices.

Methodologies for Performing Diversity Audits of Library Collections

Academic libraries have been developing tools and methods for evaluating collections for cultural diversity for decades. The profession has also been aware that there are no quick fixes for building inclusive and representative multicultural collections (Chadley, 1992).

Since the earliest studies were published, methods and practices have changed very little and often employ strategies such as list-checking, subjective cultural coding, inviting patrons to recommend materials, or comparing the size of ethnic material holdings with local census information (Delaney-Lehman, 1996; Schomberg & Grace, 2005). Some case studies focus on

serials or subscriptions (Maxey-Harris, 2010; Vega Garcia, 2000), while others look at specific subject areas (Grover, 1999; Maxey-Harris, 2010; Pettingill & Morgan, 1996; Stone, 2020). A number of audits have been conducted on children's literature (Jimenez, 2015; Kester, 2021; Williams & Deyoe, 2014; Williams & Deyoe, 2015). Other audits have been conducted around specific ethnic and racial groups (Adam, Barratt-Pugh, & Haig, 2017; Hererra, 2016; Pettingill & Morgan, 1996; Phelps, 2020; Schomberg & Grace, 2005; Vega Garcia, 2000;).

While audits are useful for providing libraries with a general sense about the content of their collections, they are often stifled by size, time, or lack of accurate data. As Vega Garcia noted over 20 years ago, most libraries have a strong desire to build multicultural collections, but encounter bibliographic control and access issues that prevent accurate assessments (2000). Other challenges include the inability to define diversity in the first place (Ciszek & Young, 2010), or identify appropriate subject headings and language outside the arguably problematic and outdated Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) that center whiteness (Drabinski, 2013; Phelps, 2020; Wood, 2021). Another major challenge for audits of author identity is the high chance that authors' gender, ethnicity, race, or sexual identity could be labeled inaccurately (Manuell, McEntee, & Chester, 2019; Mortensen, 2019; Stone, 2020).

In recent years, public recommitments to racial and social justice in the United States have driven a flurry of new attempts at conducting diversity audits. New methods include checking grassroots-developed title lists such as #OwnVoices and GoodReads, reviewing book awards lists, developing minimum targets by using U.S. Census data, and incorporating reflective questions that weed out bias (Cruz, 2019; Kristick, 2020; Wood, 2021). Others have focused on collections supporting LGBTQIA+ and gender-noncomforming populations (Adler,

2017; Bosman, 2016; Drabinski, 2013; Graziano, 2016; Moss, 2008; Proctor, 2020; Scoggins, 2018; Wagner & Crowley, 2020).

Methodologies We Considered

Having reviewed the literature for methods other libraries employed when auditing their collections for racial and ethnic diversity, we began to evaluate which methods might be most applicable for our collections. We identified two potential areas for analysis: representation of subject diversity and representation of author diversity. By identifying these areas, we hoped to empirically understand the demographics of our collections so that we could more effectively address inequalities and establish more inclusive collecting practices. In our attempts to implement methods to measure these areas, however, it became clear to us that both approaches presented major challenges and engaged in potentially harmful practices.

Identifying diverse subjects. Academic libraries are traditionally organized according to the Library of Congress Classification (LCC), and so our task force supposed that an audit following a similar kind of disciplinary or subject division might be possible. Yet it quickly became apparent from the dearth of research on evaluating collections at academic libraries for subject diversity that we would not be able to leverage any existing methodologies. We therefore began exploring our own methods for identifying diverse subjects in our collections by establishing our own definition for our understanding of "diverse subjects": non-Western and anti-colonialist narratives that don't capture or promote Western values or histories. Course syllabi historically (and currently) often present subjects through Western-centric frameworks and materials. One hoped-for outcome of our audit was to present instructors with materials that could supplement or replace existing course materials, and offer students alternative readings to

what they receive through their coursework, in addition to helping us better understand our collections and adjust our collection development practices accordingly.

In order to assess the diversity of our subjects, we considered targeting a heavily studied time period within a specific discipline at CU Boulder, in one of our liaison areas (English Literature): late 18th to early 19th century English Literature/Romanticism, in order to simplify our scope and establish assessment methods that could scale and be applied to the rest of the collection. Having identified a base collection to assess, we began looking at LCSH to establish if they could be effective tools for identifying diverse subjects. However, the shortcomings of LCSH are well documented and make them incompatible for such an assessment. In 1971, Sanford Berman explicitly linked LCSH with the oppressive systems this assessment aims to challenge. He claimed:

> In the realm of headings that deal with people and cultures—in short, with humanity—the LC [Library of Congress] list can only 'satisfy' parochial, jingoistic Europeans and North Americans, white-hued, at least nominally Christian (and preferably Protestant) in faith, comfortably situated in the middle and higher-income brackets, largely domiciled in suburbia, fundamentally loyal to the Established Order, and heavily imbued with transcendent, incomparable glory of Western civilization. (Berman, p. ix)

Unfortunately, forty-eight years later Grace Lo (2019) asserts that little has changed and LCSH continue to "reflect a narrow point of view" (p. 179).

Realizing that LCSH may be more of a hindrance than a tool to facilitate the kinds of insights we were after, we wondered: what if we used a particular LCC range (to continue the example from above, 18th-19th century Romanticism in English literature)

and created a corpus of data from all associated bibliographic records, looking particularly at publisher summaries and tables of contents? What if we then used computational approaches such as topic modeling to do a "distant reading" of the metadata that described a given subject area in our collection?

Nearly from the get-go, we envisioned several potential roadblocks to what initially seemed an exciting possibility. First, we questioned whether bibliographic records would reliably include publisher summaries or book descriptions, and whether this data would be skewed to favor those records created in-house or by vendors. We also were not sure whether including descriptive information in bibliographic records of print monographs has been consistent over time at our institution. If we were to assume the best—more complete and reliable records than was probable—would these descriptions or tables of contents actually verbalize anti-racist or anti-colonial approaches and if so, would we recognize them? If they seemed to favor Western-centric approaches, how could we be sure without the context of a closer reading? What if the authors were actually using anti-colonial theoretical frameworks to critically engage Western-centric content, though this may be obscured through distant reading? And while it may have given us some anecdotal evidence regarding specific LCC areas, this type of methodology was not scalable for a large academic library collection as a whole.

We likewise realized that the potential of looking at just one subject area for diversity might be problematic not only because available metadata was inconsistent, but also because the LCC system organizes the breadth of human knowledge into silos. Scholars describing use of LCC for diversity audits have noted that "[d]ue to the interdisciplinary nature of most diversity-related subjects, assessment based on LCCS

ranges can be difficult as subjects cut across many different LCCS ranges" (Ciszek & Young, 2010, p. 156). Similarly, Howard and Knowlton stated, "As with African American studies and women's studies, LGBTQIA materials are often scattered across the library, making it more difficult to visualize the scope of a topic" (2018, p. 79). In any case, this approach would leave out interdisciplinary scholars and may not capture the diverse perspectives pushing against oppressive narratives and ways of knowing across disciplines.

We briefly wondered about the possibility of sampling books in our collection, across disciplines, and doing a closer reading to assign codes related to subject diversity. Not only would this approach be time intensive, but it would also be ineffective and problematic; one study by Clarke and Schoonmaker (2019) further explored some of the complications of identifying or assigning metadata access points for diversity (especially for racial, ethnic, national, and cultural identities).

One of our final attempts at devising a methodology for subject diversity had to do with utilizing OCLC's GreenGlass tool in a way similar to the methodology outlined in Ciszek & Young (2010) for WorldCat Collection Analysis. Records could, again, be broken down by LCC, and those title lists by classification could then be compared to similar institutions as well as "the entire WorldCat database to identify unique holdings in the collection, measure content strengths and weaknesses, and identify areas for additional collection development" (p. 156). While the appeal of a new tool that we have short-term access to was difficult to resist, we realized that the tool itself would not solve our conceptual problems: a breakdown by LCC for diversity would be challenging and problematic for all of the reasons listed above, and while this kind of analysis might show

areas of weakness as classified by LCC, it would not show areas of weakness in or invisibility of non-dominant, anti-colonial, and non-Western perspectives that are not easily captured by LCC.

Identifying diverse author identities. While having diverse subject coverage in a collection is important, without understanding the background of the authors, subject representation can be misleading. Books about underrepresented groups are often written *about* these groups rather than *by* them. The libraries' books are then not meant to inform these groups, as they repeat things they already know, but rather are for white consumption (Tuhiwai-Smith, 2012). Academic collections have historically been driven by an imperialistic desire to intellectually dominate the "other" by categorizing and extracting their knowledge (Brook, Ellenwood, & Lazzaro, 2015). Thus, a collection at a PWI that has diverse subject coverage is still likely dominated by white voices and white ideas, and is designed for a white audience. This hypothesis led us to explore conducting an audit of the ethnic and racial diversity of authors in our collection.

Many studies, especially in the health sciences, have used census data to identify race and ethnicity by surname (Chakravartty, Kuo, Grubbs, & McIlwain, 2018; Fiscella & Fremont, 2006). This methodology initially seemed promising, as it would be a scalable way to identify author ethnicity in a large academic library collection. However, this method has two main issues: it is inaccurate for many groups, and it relies on problematic census categories of race. Surname analysis is less accurate due to intermarriage, name changes, and adoptions, and this problem is especially pronounced for women (Fiscella and Fremont, 2006). Surname analysis is particularly bad at identifying African Americans due to the legacy of slavery (Sizemore, 2019). Further, using census categories of race and ethnicity would serve to confirm the idea that race is

both fixed and categorizable. This is problematic because "researchers treat race as fixed, thus reifying the category and, by extension, ignoring the existence of a racial stratification order" (Bonilla-Silva & Zuberi, 2008, p. 24).

Other studies identified ethnicity using internet searches to find images and biographies, particularly in studying fiction authors or public library collections (Mortensen, 2019; So & Wezerek, 2020). For biographies to be useful, the author's race or ethnicity must have been noted in the biography. For images, the auditor would be put in a position to assign a racial or ethnic category based on appearance. This method problematically puts forward that any such identification can be objective. Relatedly, #OwnVoices has been criticized for placing diverse authors in uncomfortable and unsafe situations where they have been forced to disclose LGBTQ+ identities or victim status (Lavoie, 2022). This demonstrated to us the deep problems with attempting to assign identity to authors. Even if this methodology can be successful in other contexts, it would be significantly less effective for a large academic library collection where many if not most of the authors in our collection do not have an internet presence. This tends to be especially true of diverse historical figures, as they are less likely to be represented in common sources like Wikipedia (Wikipedia/Systemic Bias, 2021).

We found examples of studies that used surveys or existing databases to identify authors' race and ethnicity, either by contacting authors after they published works or where the identity questions were asked as a part of the publication process (Ginther, Schaffer, Schnell, Masimore, Liu, Haak, & Kington, 2011; Hopkins, Jawitz, McCarty, Goldman, & Basu, 2013; Merritt, 2000). Surveys have the advantage of allowing participants to self-identify. However, they still often have problematic categories to choose from. We considered applying this method to a subset of the collection, the CU Authors collection, written by CU faculty. We realized that a

survey of CU faculty authors would be likely to tell us what we already know: that our faculty is largely white (University of Colorado System Office of Institutional Research, 2020). While this method may work for such a specific group of authors, it would not be scalable beyond this small collection. Applying this methodology to other collections would be highly labor intensive and likely to be plagued, like many other surveys, by low response rate. It would also not work for many of the materials in a large academic library, which do not have living authors.

As we investigated identifying the ethnicity of our collections' authors, we realized we already knew the broad answer to our question about author identity. As our collection was built to support the activities of a research-intensive university, the bulk of the collection is scholarly works. These works are primarily written by tenured or tenure-track professors, as they have both the requirement to publish and the institutional support necessary to do so. We know that the people who have tenured and tenure-stream positions are largely white (Hopkins et al., 2013). We did not need an audit to know that our collections are enmeshed in the system of academic knowledge production, a system shaped by whiteness.

To Audit or Not to Audit

As we researched ways that we could analyze our collection's diversity, one question kept coming up: why conduct a diversity audit when we know CU Boulder is a PWI, the pipeline of scholarly publication is white, and that our collections reflect this whiteness? As Sofia Leung notes, "[c]ollections are representations of what librarians (or faculty) deem to be authoritative knowledge and as we know, this field and educational institutions, historically, and currently, have been sites of whiteness" (2019, n.p.). To undertake a large-scale diversity audit would suggest that it is possible that the libraries' collections at CU Boulder somehow do not participate in the historical and societal oppressions that we know to be true. This, despite the

fact that CU Boulder placed last among PAC-12 schools in diversity (defined by racial representation among undergraduate students) in 2019 (Woldemichael, Bulbula, Gardner, Oliveraz, Pearman, Zanowski, & Dunteman, 2020). Even more revealing, 72.61% of CU Boulder faculty overall self-identified as White/Unknown in 2019, while 85.19% of Libraries faculty identified as White/Unknown (University of Colorado System Office of Institutional Research, 2020). While some of CU Boulder's librarians have built unique collections which intentionally capture and share the scholarship, creative writing, and experiences of people of color—such as the CU Japanese and Japanese Community History Project (University of Colorado Boulder University Libraries, 2021), the Latin American Indigenous Languages Project (Ibacache, 2021), and the Stainforth Library of Women's Writing, arising from the Stainforth Catalog in CU Boulder's Special Collections (Leuner, Hollis, & Ozment, n.d.)—our institution cannot take exception to the rules of whiteness in higher education.

Diversity audits can be an unnecessary hurdle, a requirement to prove that racism exists in our collections. Insisting on the quantitative data of an audit as the only adequate evidence of problematic collection practices reflects a dismissal of the lived experiences of people of color. Librarians of color have told us that academic library collections are overwhelmingly white and our users have told us the same thing – do we really need quantitative data in order to believe them? As the "Statement Against White Appropriation of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color's Labor" puts it: "We been telling you and you still don't listen" (Brown, Cheng, Espinal, Fiedler, Gabiola, Leung, Mody, Moore, Neely, & Ossom-Williamson., 2021, n.p). We assert that the lived experiences of our colleagues are more than sufficient evidence of racism and white dominance. We can and should listen to our BIPOC colleagues and users and continue from there.

We find that many traditional modes of diversity audits, such as list-checking, present the problem of diverse collections as one of representation, thereby implying that adding a few missing titles by diverse authors or on diverse subjects might solve the problem. This reflects the way "library and information studies (LIS) has framed the race problem as one of diverse representation of racialized bodies, rather than one of racial power, domination, and privilege" (Leung & Lopez-McKnight, 2021, p. 2). Rather than only rely on one-off solutions, we want to better understand and disrupt the power embedded in the systems that build and maintain our collections. List-checking and other similar methodologies do not get at these underlying systems, but act as a band-aid for a chronic issue, rather than a structural or foundational solution.

As Leung and Lopez-McKnight point out, "framing this problem as one of diversity (and/or inclusion) problematically allows LIS as a field to devise superficial solutions that maintain the racial hierarchy where whiteness is dominant" (2021, p. 3). We have a white-dominated system of academic knowledge production: racial power and privilege have created a cadre of academic writers who are mostly white (Chakravartty, et al., 2018; Hopkins, et al. 2013); mostly white editors have created a publishing system that favors white academics and white topics (So & Wezerek, 2020); overwhelmingly white librarians build collections of materials published by this system as well as make decisions informed by curricula that privilege books by white authors (American Library Association, 2012). Libraries are a key component of support and complicity in this system, as the main purchasers, as legitimizers of this knowledge, and as providers of sources for research.

Overall, it is clear that library collections are built by systems enmeshed in whiteness, and it is a cycle that libraries reinforce and enable rather than disrupt. We want to develop tools

that might work to counter whiteness in collection development and work to resist and defy this white-dominated system, and do not believe diversity audits are the right tools in our context. Finally, knowing that whiteness is the problem (rather than diversity), we want to better understand the field of Whiteness Studies and to ground our next steps in this scholarship.

Whiteness Studies

Whiteness studies gained traction as a distinct field throughout the 1990s (Twine & Gallagher, 2008). As a continuation of the development of race and ethnic studies, whiteness studies reversed the traditional focus of research from "minority" groups to a focus on the dominant white group (Doane, 2003). The research emphasized the historical construction of white identity, as well as the nature of whiteness and its role in race and ethnic relations. Thus, it is a powerful theoretical lens through which to move beyond the "diversity audit" framework and to address the root issue: how whiteness was and is built into our structures, systems, and practices of collection building.

Whiteness studies draws on research from a variety of fields such as legal studies, ethnic studies, cultural studies, history, sociology, and anthropology and takes a multidimensional approach to examining whiteness and its role in race relations. It has developed a large body of scholarly work with continuing growth, in which there exist numerous understandings and theories that not all scholars would agree on or endorse. This phenomenon stems not only from the multiple research approaches adopted in the field, but also from the theoretical and analytical complexity of the subject. For instance, even a shared definition of whiteness has been challenging to develop (Doane, 2003; Schlesselman-Tarango, 2017). Nevertheless, there are some common themes that are considered fundamental to the understanding of whiteness and are highly relevant to collection building.

Whiteness Ideology

Whiteness refers to a position in a racialized social structure; that is, it is an identity that is positioned in a hierarchy as superior to other racial groups (Cancelmo & Mueller, 2019). Whiteness does not exist based on biological traits or by nature (Frye, 1983). Rather, whiteness is an ideology that is socially, culturally, and historically constructed to support a stratified social structure. The construction and re-construction of whiteness is a long, changing, and ongoing process and is intertwined with historical events (Chen, 2017). In a society ruled by whiteness ideology, we have to understand how whiteness operates and its effect on knowledge production and dissemination before reaching the question of library collection building, because "many of the barriers to fair representation in knowledge dissemination lie outside the domain of library work" (Chiu, Ettarh, & Ferretti, 2021, p. 60).

Us-Other

The racialized white identity contains an "us-them" dichotomy. The concept of race was developed through the production of representations of the Other during European expansion and colonization (Miles, 1989). Published representations of the image, characteristics, or qualities of certain populations were attributed to that population as labels that distinguish "other" from "us" and were closely linked to cultural and social superiority or inferiority (Chen, 2017; Miles, 1989). This process of representing the Other entails a strong sense of exclusivity. As Cheryl Harris stated in her foundational article "Whiteness as Property," "Whiteness and property share a common premise—a conceptual nucleus—of a right to exclude" (1993, p. 1714).

White Supremacy

As Henry and Tator define it, "[w]hiteness is linked to domination and is a form of race privilege." (2006, p. 353). Whiteness determines which groups are entitled to cultural,

educational, economic, political, social, and other advantages, and hence reproduces racism and inequality in society. Scholars often trace the origins of whiteness studies to W.E.B. DuBois, who observed a “public and psychological wage” for being white in the form of social status and symbolic capital (Twine & Gallagher, 2008, p. 8). Many studies have been devoted to revealing the ways in which white supremacy manifests itself in social life and the materialization of white privilege (Doane, 2003; Jung, Costa Vargas, & Bonilla-Silva, 2011; Kendall, 2012; Lipsitz, 2018; Roediger, 1994;).

Normalization and Mainstreaming

White understandings and practices have historically been set as the norm and mainstream in the United States. As Ashley W. Doane explains, “because whites have historically controlled the major institutions of American society, they have been able to appropriate the social and cultural ‘mainstream’ and make white understandings and practices normative” (2003, p. 7). A compelling example of this normalization and mainstreaming of whiteness is the White Savior motif in popular culture that “allows for the negative stereotyping of a nonwhite character or culture as essentially broken, marginalized, and pathological while an ideal white person emerges as possessive of messianic characteristics” (Hughey, 2016, p. 223). As Leung and Lopez-McKnight critique, "BIPOC knowledge has never been considered valid knowledge” (2021, p. 7). This is a specific interpretation of the normalization and mainstreaming of whiteness in the realm of knowledge creation and dissemination, which is essential to our discussion of collection building.

Invisibility of Whiteness

Closely related to the normalization and mainstreaming of whiteness is the lack of consciousness and visibility of the power of whiteness specifically among whites: “[g]iven that

what passes as the normative center is often unnoticed or taken for granted, whites often feel a sense of culturelessness and racelessness" (Doane, 2003, p. 7). Whiteness is embedded in our daily practice and permeates our cultural understandings and social narration (Nakayama & Krizek, 1995), while it is the "invisible" and "unexamined" norm (Andersen, 2003). The invisibility of whiteness is what led, for example, to the LCSH practice of taking whiteness as default, describing identities only when they do not conform.

These themes and understandings in whiteness studies, intertwined and overlapping, prompt us to consider how whiteness has shaped our collecting practices and collections today.

White Institutional Presence and the Academic Library

Diane Gusa's 2010 article "White Institutional Presence: The Impact of Whiteness on Campus Climate" discusses various dimensions of how whiteness is at work in higher education. The dimensions of WIP include: Monoculturalism, White Ascendency and Entitlement, White Blindness (here called White Evasiveness), and White Estrangement. These dimensions are closely related to the themes in Whiteness Studies outlined above. We use Gusa's framework of WIP to understand how whiteness underlies our collection building processes as well as how the libraries' collections contribute to an environment of WIP. For each of Gusa's four dimensions, we examine how the library contributes to and is shaped by each concept.

Monoculturalism

Similar to the expansiveness of white ideology mentioned above, monoculturalism in academic spaces is "the expectation that all individuals conform to one 'scholarly' worldview, which stems from… the superiority and normalcy of White culture" (Gusa, 2010, p. 474-475). This concept is reflected in library collections that center materials that conform to a white scholarly worldview, and exclude materials that do not conform, whether consciously or

unconsciously. Monoculturalism manifests itself in all aspects of culture. It "creates a strong belief in the superiority of one group's cultural heritage, history, values, language, beliefs, religion, traditions, and arts and crafts" (Sue, 2004, p. 764). Monocultural values are also embedded in the environment and setting, including through the natural environment, architecture (including honorific building names), art and decoration (including statues), as well as the racial and ethnic makeup of the student, faculty, and staff population. Overwhelmingly white library collections contribute to a monocultural environment.

White Ascendency and Entitlement

White ascendency includes the systems of "thinking and behavior that arise from White mainstream authority and advantage, which in turn are generated from whiteness's historical position of power and domination," or white supremacy, as outlined above (Gusa, 2010, p. 472). This leads to a sense of white entitlement, the notion that it is right and natural for whites to maintain control over spaces, discourses, and outcomes. White ascendency can be seen in the domination of white voices in our collections, as well as the sense that this is both right and natural. This reflects a history of white domination in the academy, including white privilege in hiring and promotion of faculty and librarians, privilege in the selection of books published by academic presses, and privilege in which voices are included in syllabi, curricula, and assigned as textbooks. White ascendency and entitlement are also reflected in the anticipated users of our collections. Library collections historically reflect an "imperialist desire to know and gather the cultural artifacts of marginalized cultures" (Brook, et al., 2015, p. 258). Thus even our materials on diverse topics are often not for diverse communities, but instead for a white audience.

White Evasiveness

Diane Gusa uses the term “white blindness” to describe an ideology that “obscures and protects White identity and White privilege” while simultaneously espousing the “neutral” concept of color evasiveness (2010, p. 477). Here, we will use the terms “white evasiveness” and “color evasiveness,” which we think more accurately capture the impact while also avoiding ableist language (Annamma, Jackson, & Morrison, 2015). We recognize that the concept of “color evasiveness” as coined by Annamma, Jackson, and Morrison is different and more expansive than “color blindness,” and that this language is not only a simple change in terminology; still, we choose to use “evasiveness” as it is a more accurate and incisive concept, acknowledging the work of evasiveness as active and institutionalized rather than passive and individualized. Color evasiveness “contends that everyone is the same,” ignoring and undermining legacies of racism and white supremacy (Gusa, 2010, p. 477). By negating discourse around racism, color evasiveness effectively renders whiteness the hidden, invisible norm, and never the cause of racial inequality. White evasiveness is closely related to the theme of “invisibility of whiteness,” above.

White evasiveness means librarians might think of their collections as neutral rather than as expressions of white privilege, and therefore not in need of critical assessment. It can even lead to considering the make-up of the collections as reflecting “merit” rather than white domination in various stages of knowledge production. White evasiveness can also be seen in cataloging systems that set whiteness as the default (such as only creating subheadings for non-white racial or ethnic groups, or classifying books from diverse authors in separate areas of the library).

White Estrangement

White estrangement sustains WIP by "distancing Whites physically and socially from people of color" (Gusa, 2010, p. 478). This is related to the concepts of normalization and mainstreaming. Many white people spend much of their lives segregated from people of color, and when they arrive in the potentially more diverse spaces of higher education, find themselves unable to conceive of how to create a truly multicultural environment or even to initiate genuine contact and dialogue with their peers of color.

Overwhelmingly white collections contribute to white estrangement from people of color by prioritizing white structures of knowledge production, communication, and format. White-dominated collections contribute to white estrangement by both alienating people of color from library resources, and failing to connect users to the scholarship and ideas of people of color. White estrangement also stymies efforts to establish multicultural library communities, events, and spaces. The task of creating a truly diverse collection is made more difficult by the overwhelming whiteness of the library profession, as white librarians' estrangement from communities of color will mean they have a harder time creating a multicultural environment and a collection that reflects the needs and interests of a diverse community.

Next Step: Building a Tool

After working to understand how libraries' collections are formed by and complicit in WIP, we decided that our next step would be building a tool that librarians could use to first reflect on collection building practices, and then act to change them. The goal is not just to identify white domination in collections, but to change the way we do work so that we can build collections in an anti-racist manner. The workbook guides librarians through the concepts of WIP and discusses how whiteness is embedded in several parts of the collection building process. In addition, for each section we created reflective questions meant to spur action.

Questions include those for individuals making selection decisions as well as questions related to systemic or institutional problems. Building this workbook was the way we decided to addressracial justice in collections work, but is certainly not the only possibility. Other conclusions, ideas, and solutions are not only valid but will be necessary to transform the scholarly knowledge ecosystem.

When we were writing the first draft of this chapter, we had shared a draft workbook with select local colleagues. Their critiques greatly informed our work, and we thank them for their time and expertise. Since that time we have continued to refine the workbook, sharing it internally and at library conferences. The workbook, while still evolving as we recieve further input, is now publicly available and can be accessed at https://libguides.colorado.edu/anti-racist-collections-review-acquisitions. We are currently planning a follow-up publication that will focus on the workbook. The workbook is not meant to be an exhaustive list of the kinds of questions that may arise from Gusa's framework, or anti-racist collection management in general. Rather, they are starting points with the aim of fostering conversation and continued growth in these areas. The following are examples of the questions in the workbook meant to help librarians reflect and act on whiteness in our collections:

- Are we going beyond traditional scholarly publishing venues to consider materials that reflect diverse ways of knowing and thinking?
- Are we considering where our collections money goes, and what publishers or authors it is supporting?
- Are selection filters (i.e., in approval profiles) potentially eliminating materials that don't conform to a white scholarly worldview?

- What does this material communicate about its intended audience? Who are the anticipated users of this material? Is this material only about diverse communities, or is it truly for those communities?
- Since low usage of diverse materials can reflect white ascendancy in the curriculum, how might we go beyond weeding criteria that rely on circulation?
- How can we better engage with a multicultural community to include materials either overlooked or marginalized by white structures of knowledge production, communication, and/or format?
- Are we valuing the experience, knowledge, and abilities of BIPOC librarians in building diverse communities and collections, and compensating them accordingly?

Reflection and Conclusion

We again acknowledge that this work was undertaken by a small group of librarians with varied backgrounds and positionalities in terms of race, gender, and other aspects of our identities, but the majority of our group identifies as white. For us, this complicates the work of creating an initial guide to identify WIP in our collecting practices, and our work to become anti-racist in general, because many of us benefit from the very systems we are trying to disrupt. Our biases are undoubtedly in play. For example, we did not initially understand the concept of "White Blindness" as using ableist language, and there are likely other suggestions and ideas in our work that could inflict harm on our communities.

We also know that work around anti-racism has been done in the CU Libraries in the past, both collectively and individually, and most often by colleagues of color. We acknowledge their labor and the labor of all librarians of color working in a predominantly white profession. We know that research and work on "diversity" in libraries has not always been rewarded when

conducted by librarians of color (in terms of tenure and promotion, or in the culture more broadly). We strive to honor the work of our colleagues at CU Boulder and in the wider library community by dedicating ourselves to acting against white dominance in libraries.

Still, we know there are limitations to our work so far, and we are grateful to colleagues who previously pointed them out to us, and who might in the future. Our scope was exploratory and therefore limited. For example, our initial premise was primarily to look at print collections which are purchased by the libraries rather than at our vast digital holdings which are often licensed in bulk, and will have different considerations. We limited this scope in order to see whether an assessment was feasible with a small segment of the collection.

Finally, our reflective workbook questions remain questions. We have much work to do in answering them, together with our colleagues at CU Boulder and beyond. While our initial work is meant to spark reflection and conversation, we must continue to go further, taking action. If we reject the diversity audit methodologies we have thus far encountered or envisioned for our large academic library collections, we must use that energy instead to envision a better way forward and take steps to make it a reality. Indeed, one of the benefits of not doing an audit is that we can dive right into the work that needs to be done.

Some of our other next steps include: using the workbook of questions locally to spark discussion with library colleagues; gathering additional questions and resources to continually iterate the workbook; sharing the workbook with our wider professional library communities; and using the workbook to engage with students, staff, and teaching faculty around issues of whiteness in library collections. These conversations, as noted, must lead to action and progress in building and maintaining anti-racist collections.

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