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CENSORSHIP AND SELF-CENSORSHIP IN THE PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL
LIBRARIES OF GLOUCESTER COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

by
Melissa L. Owen

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts Degree
of
The Graduate School
at
Rowan University
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Approved by

Advisor

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ABSTRACT

Melissa L. Owen

CENSORSHIP AND SELF-CENSORSHIP IN THE PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL LIBRARIES OF GLOUCESTER COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

2006/2007

Dr. Marilyn Shontz

Master of Arts in School and Public Librarianship

It is essential that young adults have access to books that are of interest to them, regardless of controversy that may surround such titles. The purpose of this study was to determine the existence of commonly banned young adult (YA) books in the library collections of traditional public high schools in Gloucester County. A significant lack of such books may be a sign that censorship or self-censorship has hindered the development of the collection, thereby robbing students of their freedom to read.

The researcher searched the OPACs of thirteen traditional public high schools for thirty-seven predetermined titles. The titles that were searched for were selected by compiling the titles listed in the ALA publications *Hit List: Frequently Challenged Books for Young Adults* (1996) and *Hit List for Young Adults 2: Frequently Challenged Books* (2002). The researcher obtained data in three ways: through remote access to the online catalog, through the *JerseyCat* database, and through on-site visitations. A total of 481 title searches were completed. The results of the study indicated that some form of censorship may have occurred in four of the thirteen libraries.

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CHAPTER I

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Rationale

Pressure from parents, community leaders, board members, and others may inhibit the availability of controversial titles in public secondary schools. Certain districts may outwardly forbid library media specialists (LMSs) from purchasing/circulating certain titles; in other cases, library media specialists may simply fear retribution for keeping controversial titles in their collections and therefore may employ self-censorship.

According to the Web site of the American Library Association (ALA), Article 1 of the *Library Bill of Rights* states that “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” (ALA, 2006b, ¶ 1). The Web site also insists that “under the First Amendment, children and teens have the same rights as adults to select the materials they wish to read, listen to or view” (ALA, 2006a, ¶ 20).

It is the librarian’s responsibility to ensure that he/she has created a balanced collection, representative of diverse topics and varied opinions. Because school librarians are required to make countless purchasing decisions every year, it is possible, and perhaps even likely, that at times a decision is made to exclude a particular title in order to avoid potential problems. By raising awareness about the topic of self-

censorship, librarians may be more cognizant of the decisions they make and the motives behind those decisions.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine the existence of commonly banned young adult books in the library collections of traditional public high schools in Gloucester County. The titles that were searched for were selected by compiling the titles listed in the ALA publications *Hit List: Frequently Challenged Books for Young Adults* (1996) and *Hit List for Young Adults 2: Frequently Challenged Books* (2002).

Research Questions

1. Of the titles selected for this study, which existed in selected high school library media center collections?
2. Which of the titles selected for this study existed in the highest and lowest number of library media center collections?
3. What characteristics of the high schools were related to the highest/lowest number of titles included in this study?

Definitions

For the purposes of this paper, the following terms are defined:

American Library Association (ALA) – “The leading professional association of public and academic libraries and librarians in the United States...” (Reitz, 2006).

Banned book – “A book, the publication and/or sale of which has been prohibited or suppressed by ecclesiastical or secular authority because its content is considered

objectionable or dangerous, usually for political and/or social reasons...” (Reitz, 2006). For purposes of this study, the phrase banned books will be used interchangeably with both challenged books and censored books.

Bibliometrics – “The use of mathematical and statistical methods to study and identify patterns in the usage of materials and services within a library or to analyze the historical development of a specific body of literature, especially its authorship, publication, and use...” (Reitz, 2006).

Censorship – “Prohibition of the production, distribution, circulation, or display of a work by a governing authority on grounds that it contains objectionable or dangerous material...” (Reitz, 2006).

Challenge - “A complaint lodged by a library user acting as an individual or representing a group, concerning the inclusion of a specific item (or items) in a library collection, usually followed by a demand that the material be removed. Library programs may also be targeted...” (Reitz, 2006).

JerseyCat – “JerseyCat is New Jersey's statewide virtual catalog and interlibrary loan system...” (JerseyCat, 2006).

Library collection – “The total accumulation of books and other materials owned by a library, cataloged and arranged for ease of access, often consisting of several smaller

collections (reference, circulating books, serials, government documents, rare books, special collections, etc.)...” (Reitz, 2006).

Library media specialist (LMS) – “A librarian trained to deliver library services to students in a school library media center on a walk-in basis or at the request of the classroom teacher. In addition to managing daily operations, the library media specialist supports the curriculum through collection development, teaches research and library skills appropriate to grade level, assists students with reading selections appropriate to reading level, helps classroom teachers integrate library services and multimedia materials into instructional programs, establishes standards of behavior for the library, and assists students in developing information-seeking skills and habits needed for lifelong learning....Synonymous with (*school*) *librarian*” and school library media specialist (SLMS) (Reitz, 2006).

Online catalog – “A library catalog consisting of a collection of bibliographic records in machine-readable format, maintained on a dedicated computer that provides uninterrupted interactive access via terminals or workstations in direct, continuous communication with the central computer...” (Reitz, 2006).

School library – “A library in a public or private elementary or secondary school that serves the information needs of its students and the curriculum needs of its teachers and staff, usually managed by a school librarian or media specialist. A school library collection usually contains books, periodicals, and educational media suitable for the

grade levels served...” (Reitz, 2006). Synonymous with (*school*) *library media center (LMC)*.

Secondary school – “A school that is intermediate in level between elementary school and college and that usually offers general, technical, vocational, or college-preparatory curricula” (*American Heritage Dictionary*, 2000). For purposes of this study, secondary schools were identified by using the State of New Jersey’s Department of Education Web site.

Self-censorship – For purposes of this study, self-censorship is defined as the process by which a library media specialist consciously or subconsciously does not select a particular title for his/her collection out of fear that it be deemed inappropriate for his/her patrons.

Selection – “The process of deciding which materials should be added to a library collection...” (Reitz, 2006).

Young adult (YA) – For purposes of this study, young adult is defined as an adolescent 12 to 18 years of age.

Young adult book (YA book) – “A book intended to be read and enjoyed by adolescents 12 to 18 years of age. Also refers to a book intended for adults but considered suitable by reviewers and librarians for mature ninth- to twelfth-grade readers” (Reitz, 2006). For

purposes of this study, a young adult banned book is one that appears on either or both of the ALA *Hit List* publications.

Assumptions and Limitations

This research project was limited to the library media centers of traditional public high schools in Gloucester County, New Jersey. One vocational school was not included in the study due to its atypical curriculum. Of the titles that appeared in the ALA *Hit List* publications, only those that were still in print (as of December, 2006) were included.

It was also assumed that the titles listed in the ALA *Hit List* publications were ones that should be part of a high school library media center's collection. While the researcher made no attempt to ascertain the financial situations of each library, it was assumed that the titles included in the study would be a necessary staple in any secondary school library.

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CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

Freedom to Read

Over the years, students' rights have been debated all the way to the United States Supreme Court. While numerous infringements on their rights still occur every year, it has been determined that students must be afforded the same civil liberties as adult citizens. In the 1969 ruling of *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District*, the United States Supreme Court upheld the rights of students in a school setting. It declared that "neither students nor teachers shed their Constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate....Students in and out of school are 'persons' under the Constitution. They are possessed of fundamental rights which the state must respect" (Bellows, 2005, p.3).

Because they believe "that free communication is essential to the preservation of a free society and a creative culture," the ALA created the *Freedom to Read Statement* (ALA, 2006b, ¶ 6). This statement affirms the rights afforded in the First Amendment; the first three propositions are included here:

1. It is in the public interest for publishers and librarians to make available the widest diversity of views and expressions, including those that are unorthodox, unpopular, or considered dangerous by the majority.
2. Publishers, librarians, and booksellers do not need to endorse every idea or presentation they make available. It would conflict with the public interest for

them to establish their own political, moral, or aesthetic views as a standard for determining what should be published or circulated.

3. It is contrary to the public interest for publishers or librarians to bar access to writings on the basis of the personal history or political affiliations of the author. (ALA, 2006b, ¶ 9, 11, 13)

In addition to this document, freedom of information is also protected by the ALA *Library Bill of Rights*, which states that “materials should not be excluded [from a collection] because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation” and “should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.” The *Library Bill of Rights* further declares that “libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment” (ALA, 2006c, ¶ 2, 4).

Censorship

The act of censorship leads to a precarious, slippery slope. Censorship comes in many forms and from all directions. It may be blatant and overt, or it may be subtle and nearly undetectable. It may affect just one student, or it may affect an entire student body. Yet it does not matter where and how it originates. Censorship creates a ripple effect, and can place everyone’s civil liberties in jeopardy. As John Stuart Mill wrote in *On Liberty*:

If all mankind minus one, were of one opinion, and only one person were of the contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person, than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind.

Were an opinion a personal possession of no value except to the owner; if to be obstructed in the enjoyment of it were simply a private injury, it would make some difference whether the injury was inflicted only on a few persons or on many. But the peculiar evil of silencing the expression of an opinion is, that it is robbing the human race; posterity as well as the existing generation; those who dissent from the opinion, still more than those who hold it. If the opinion is right, they are deprived of the opportunity of exchanging error for truth: if wrong, they lose, what is almost as great a benefit, the clearer perception and livelier impression of truth, produced by its collision with error. (ALA, 2006a, ¶ 4)

According to the *The 100 Most Frequently Challenged Books*, the top three reasons, in order, for challenging library materials are as follows: (1) the material is considered to be “sexually explicit,” (2) the material contains “offensive language,” and (3) the material is considered to be “unsuited to age group” (ALA, 2006a, ¶ 5).

According to the ALA, approximately 30% of challenges come from educators, “the people who are charged with fostering critical thinking skills within our children.... They are obliged to protect intellectual freedom” (Bellows, 2005, p. 7).

Selection vs. Censorship

While some may refer to the difference between selection and censorship as a simple matter of semantics, those in the field of library and information science know that, although there may be some gray area, there is a clear distinction between the two. The *Online Dictionary for Library and Information Science* defines censorship as “prohibition of the production, distribution, circulation, or display of a work by a

governing authority on grounds that it contains objectionable or dangerous material...”

Selection, on the other hand, is “the process of deciding which materials should be added to a library collection” (Reitz, 2006).

Yet, the end result of both censorship and selection is the same – the absence of a work from a library collection. So is there really a difference between censorship and selection? As Lester Asheim noted in what he deemed to be a far-fetched analogy, “...a man who has his leg amputated in order to save his life is in a different situation from a man who has his leg amputated by a sadistic doctor who performs the operation through psychotic compulsion rather than scientific requirement. The end result is the loss of a leg in each case...and the ‘victim’ of the loss knows the difference” (Asheim, 1953, p. 2).

Semantically, it is quite simple: “censorship” is negative, while “selection” is positive. The term “censorship” has a negative connotation because it implies a negative attitude toward library materials. A censor looks for reasons to reject a book and seeks out objectionable material. “Selection,” on the other hand has a more neutral, or perhaps even a positive, connotation. A selector searches for reasons to keep a book and seeks out its virtues and strong points (Asheim, 1953).

So, while the end result is in fact the same, the motives are different. A good majority of the general public would agree that the selection process in a library is necessary in order for the institution to remain afloat financially. Yet should a citizen feel that materials are being censored and that the LMS has taken the privilege of deciding what is and is not appropriate, he/she may consequentially feel victimized.

While selection is deemed a necessity, censorship is not. LMSs are heavily restricted by two factors: limited space and finite budgets. No school library media

center can ever hope to have enough money to buy and enough space to house every book ever published. As a result, one of the most important duties of a school librarian is to select the most practical materials for his/her library. Yet it is not just the financial and spatial concerns that affect his/her decision. “The librarian also feels an obligation to select in terms of standards – and there are some books that he would not buy even if money [and space] were no problem” (Asheim, 1953, p. 3). However, it is important to note the following:

The exclusion of a book because it does not fit the library’s mission does not constitute censorship. This is merely part of the selection process. When a school library media specialist begins building a collection by thinking about what to exclude, he/she has left the realm of selection and entered the world of censorship. (Bellows, 2005, p.7)

Self-censorship

Because LMSs may fear retribution for keeping controversial titles in their collections, some choose to censor themselves by not selecting such titles. This passive, often silent, form of censorship is known as self-censorship. As defined by Dillon and Williams, self-censorship is “a secret practice [that is] the least obvious but arguably most powerful and pervasive form of censorship which is informal, private, and originates with the decision maker” (Coley, 2002, Review of the Related Literature, ¶ 1).

Challenges to library materials can be rather stressful for the LMS involved:

Whenever a work is challenged, a great deal of emotional, psychological, social, and professional pressure can be placed on the school library media specialist

(SLMS) who selected, and now must defend, the material. Because of the degree of stress inherent in these situations, many SLMSs may choose not to add controversial items to their library's collection. (Coley, 2002, Abstract, ¶ 2)

Many school librarians feel a lack of professional support from administration and worry that they would be left to fight a censorship battle alone (Freedman & Johnson, 2000/2001). So, when it comes to making selection decisions, many SLMSs ask themselves whether the work is worthy of a strong defense should a challenge arise (Reynolds, 1999).

Self-censorship can be difficult to identify. The same factors that play a part in the selection process may also be used as an excuse to justify an act of self-censorship. While budget constraints and space limitations are legitimate concerns, they may be used as a smokescreen to avoid purchasing controversial materials. On the same note, SLMSs can always fall back on the explanation that a certain title is of inadequate quality or is not published by a reputable source, for example, in order to keep it off the shelves (Reynolds, 1999).

Often, such acts of self-censorship are subconscious; were an outsider to ask the SLMS about a particular title that is absent from the collection, he/she would most likely spout the reasons listed above (in addition to various others) as to why it is not included (Bellows, 2005). "...the question that librarians have to ask is whether certain materials are not being purchased primarily because of fear that their purchase will be challenged. If so, self-censorship is at work" (Reynolds, 1999, ¶ 4).

As a part of their guide to intellectual freedom in libraries, the New York Library Association created a self-censorship quiz consisting of twelve yes/no questions, including these five:

- Has your library ever not purchased materials because a review or publisher's catalog indicated that it was for "mature readers," has explicit language or illustrations, or might be controversial?
- Has your library ever not purchased a popular book because it might be unpopular with parents or pressure groups in the community?
- Has your library ever sequestered potentially controversial materials so that patrons are required to request them?
- Has your library ever not purchased magazines, videos, rock or rap music, or books because "they are so popular" they might be stolen?
- Has your library ever not purchased a popular recording because of controversial lyrics or cover art?

The quiz indicates that an affirmative answer to any of the twelve questions is a sign that the library has violated the *Library Bill of Rights* and that some form of censorship has occurred (NYLA, 1996, p.31).

I Hadn't Meant to Tell You This: A Case Study

Realistic young adult (YA) literature is an often-targeted genre in school libraries. The subjects, ranging from sex, drug abuse, suicide and many other objectionable topics, can be scandalous enough to raise a few eyebrows and maybe even provoke a challenge.

Yet the reason such titles are so popular is because they offer a realistic view of teenage life. For many students, these books are their companions, their mentors, and their escape. Controversial YA literature “can demonstrate to young people that they are not the only ones facing the problems in their lives, that there are effective strategies for problem-solving, and that it is possible to rehearse certain aspects of life through vicarious experiences” (Coley, 2002, ¶ 6).

In a study conducted by Freedman and Johnson, the novel *I Hadn't Meant to Tell You This* (Woodson, 1994) was read aloud to a group of fifteen middle school teachers and was read by a group of eleven middle school students. After being exposed to the text, both groups were asked to reflect through discussion and writing. The reaction of the teachers, when compared to the reaction of the students, made it evident that many educators would not hesitate to self-censor (Freedman & Johnson, 2000/2001).

I Hadn't Meant to Tell You This is the story of a powerful friendship that develops between two young girls, Marie and Lena. The story delves into issues of race, socioeconomic status, sexual abuse, parental loss, and isolation (Freedman & Johnson, 2000/2001). The book was chosen in part due to the racy themes and in part due to its award-winning reputation. While both groups saw the novel as controversial, the middle school girls recognized this as part of the book's importance. However, the teachers saw the controversies around the issues of racism and sexual molestation as necessitating self-censorship (Freedman & Johnson, 2000/2001).

Reading the book was a positive, influential experience for most of the students who participated in the study. According to Freedman and Johnson:

Reading *I Hadn't Meant to Tell You This* created for the 11 girls an emotional and intellectual space where they could examine their feelings about race, class, and gender relationships across visible and not so visible cultural boundaries. It pushed all of the girls to think about their assumptions and attitudes toward others. By reading and discussing *I Hadn't Meant to Tell You This*, the participants had the opportunity to hear perspectives with which they were unfamiliar. This reading event provided the opportunity for “ideal experimentation” – vicarious experience where they could try out different lives. (Freedman & Johnson, 2000/2001, *I Hadn't Meant to Tell You This: A Case in Point*, ¶ 17)

While the overall teacher response to the book was positive, a number of them deemed it too controversial. One went as far as to say, “I don't believe I would use this book because of all the controversy.” Another asked, “Would my administrator support it? Probably not. He seems to be a genuine coward....” With just one exception, all of the teachers surveyed were willing to self-censor this book because of its powerful themes, despite the fact that these themes are what made the book so influential to the young adults who also read the novel (Freedman & Johnson, 2000/2001, *Students and Teachers Disagree*, ¶ 10-11).

Review of the Research

To date, the majority of research concerning censorship and self-censorship in school library media centers falls into one of two categories: “surveys used to measure librarians and teachers [sic] attitudes about censorship and self-censorship, and research

that examines OPACs to determine rates of collection of books dealing with controversial topics” (Bellows, 2005, p.8).

As previously mentioned, the results of the study conducted by Freedman & Johnson (2000/2001) indicated that teachers were inclined to self-censor if they believed a book to be too controversial, particularly if they felt that they would not be supported by their administration should an issue arise. Although the teachers acknowledged the worthiness of *I Hadn't Meant to Tell You This*, they felt that the inherent dangers involved in teaching the book seriously outweighed its value as a piece of realistic young adult literature (Freedman & Johnson, 2000/2001).

In another research project, conducted in 2004, Moody surveyed 151 public librarians randomly selected from Queensland, Australia. Through the use of an online questionnaire, she asked their opinions on issues of censorship and controversial materials. Moody explained, “A key factor in the design of the questionnaire was the desire to not only identify stated attitudes towards the topic but also to attempt to determine actual professional behaviours, as the two do not always relate strongly” (Moody, 2004, Questionnaire Design, ¶ 1). The words “censor” and “censorship” were not used in the questionnaire in an attempt to ensure accurate responses on the part of the librarians. Moody presented the respondents with a list of possible materials for purchase and a brief description of each. They were asked to react to each title individually by expressing whether they would purchase the material, purchase and label it, purchase and restrict it, or not purchase it (Moody, 2004).

Moody found that “only 28% of participants stated that they had, at some point in their career, found their personal beliefs to be at odds with their professional role with

regard to the handling of controversial materials,” (Moody, 2004, Conflicts with Personal Values, ¶ 1) yet 83% of respondents choose not to purchase at least one of the items on the selection list.

In addition, the results showed that 68% of respondents rejected items that contained instructions for conducting illegal activities such as bomb and drug-making. Some librarians objected to the illegality of the subject matter, while others felt that including these items in their library collections would violate government regulations (Moody, 2004). Overall, Moody’s findings indicated that, although the librarians claimed to oppose censorship, they did not completely reject it.

Coley’s study, conducted in 2002, examined the library catalogs of one hundred public schools in Texas. He searched for twenty well-reviewed young adult books that were found to have controversial material. Coley determined that self-censorship was being imposed when a school had less than 50% of the twenty selected books. When using this benchmark as a guide, Coley found that over 80% of the schools surveyed were employing some form of self-censorship (Coley, 2002).

Coley chose his method – an analysis of title ownership through examination of the school’s OPAC – in order to avoid the subjectivity of questionnaires and interviews. The twenty book titles were selected based on their controversial content. Then, in order to ensure that the included books were ones that a library media center should own, each was also required to meet at least two of the following criteria:

1. Six or more reviews in book review resources commonly used by SLMSs for collection development

2. Highly Recommended or Starred reviews from professional organizations or journals noted for their expertise in the field of YA literature
3. Awards for which the book or its author was nominated, or which they won
4. Placement on a list of recommended books for SLMSs by an organization noted for its expertise in YA literature. (Coley, 2002, Selection of Books, ¶ 1)

Coley chose such a method to avoid the pitfall of past studies which had no benchmark for determining which titles to include on their search lists. All books with copyrights before 1996 were excluded in order to eliminate the variable of out-of-date and out-of-print books (Coley, 2002).

Coley found that none of the one hundred schools sampled owned all of the books included on his search list. Eighteen schools owned none of the books. Based on the criteria established, Coley found that 82% of the schools investigated employed some form of self-censorship (Coley, 2002).

Summary

It is essential that LMSs provide their patrons with the most appropriate and most comprehensive materials. Yet it is possible that censorship and self-censorship may be hindering the development of library collections in public high schools. This study, designed similarly to Coley's (2002), examined the online catalogs of traditional public high schools in Gloucester County, New Jersey for signs of censorship/self-censorship.

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CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Overall Design and Justification

The purpose of this study was to determine the existence of commonly banned or challenged young adult books in the library collections of traditional public high schools in Gloucester County. A significant lack of such books may be a sign that censorship or self-censorship has hindered the development of the collection, thereby robbing students of their freedom to read.

It is essential that young adults have access to books that are of interest to them, regardless of any controversy that may surround such titles. Yet the results of a study conducted by Freedman & Johnson (2000/2001) indicated that teachers were inclined to self-censor if they believed a book to be too controversial. The ALA has taken a firm stance on censorship and self-censorship in its *Library Bill of Rights*, which states that “libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment” (ALA, 2006, ¶ 4).

For this study, the researcher completed a review of OPACs in thirteen traditional schools in Gloucester County that were designated by the State Department of Education as public secondary schools (State of New Jersey, 2006). A compilation of the titles defended in ALA’s *Hit List: Frequently Challenged Books for Young Adults* and *Hit List for Young Adults 2: Frequently Challenged Books* served as the guideline for selecting book titles. The ALA *Hit List* books were chosen specifically because they focused

solely on young adult titles, thereby eliminating the need for the researcher to classify books as “children’s literature” or “young adult literature.” Once the researcher had determined that each of the selected titles was still in print, the schools’ online catalogs were searched in one of three ways - by remote access, through JerseyCat, or during a school visitation.

A total of forty-six titles were included in the *Hit List* publications. After removing duplicate titles, only thirty-seven remained. According to the Web site *Bowker’s Global Books in Print*, all thirty-seven titles were still in print at the time of the research.

Research Questions

1. Of the titles selected for this study, which existed in selected high school library media center collections?
2. Which of the titles selected for this study existed in the highest and lowest number of library media center collections?
3. What characteristics of the high schools were related to the highest/lowest number of titles included in this study?

Population and Sample

This study involved the libraries of public high schools in Gloucester County, New Jersey, as identified by the State of New Jersey’s Department of Education Web site (State of NJ, 2006). Excepted from the study was one vocational high school due to its atypical curriculum. In total, thirteen library catalogs were examined for thirty-seven young adult fiction titles (see Table 1). These titles were selected after compiling a list of

Table 1: Books Included in Catalog Study

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn Mark Twain
Am I Blue? Coming Out from the Silence Marion Dane Bauer
Annie on My Mind Nancy Garden
The Arizona Kid Ron Koertge
Athletic Shorts: Six Short Stories Chris Crutcher
The Autobiography of Malcolm X: As Told to Alex Haley Malcolm X and Alex Haley
Baby Be-Bop Francesca Lia Block
The Catcher in the Rye J. D. Salinger
The Chocolate War Robert Cormier
Christine Stephen King
The Clan of the Cave Bear Jean Auel
The Color Purple Alice Walker
A Day No Pigs Would Die Robert Newton Peck
The Drowning of Stephan Jones Bette Greene
Fallen Angels Walter Dean Myers
Flowers in the Attic V. C. Andrews
Forever Judy Blume
Go Ask Alice Anonymous
The Great Santini Pat Conroy
Grendel John Gardner
The Handmaid's Tale Margaret Atwood
Heartbreak and Roses: Real Life Stories of Troubled Love Janet Bode and Stan Mack
I Am the Cheese Robert Cormier
I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings Maya Angelou
Killing Mr. Griffin Lois Duncan
Lord of the Flies William Golding
Of Mice and Men John Steinbeck
The Outsiders S.E. Hinton
The Perks of Being a Wallflower Stephen Chbosky
The Pigman Paul Zindel
Running Loose Chris Crutcher
Shade's Children Garth Nix
Slaughterhouse-Five Kurt Vonnegut
Speak Laurie Halse Anderson
The Terrorist Caroline Cooney
The "What's Happening to My Body?" Book for Boys Linda Madaras with Dane Saavedra
The "What's Happening to My Body?" Book for Girls Linda Madaras with Dane Saavedra

the books presented in the ALA publications *Hit List: Frequently Challenged Books for Young Adults* and *Hit List for Young Adults 2: Frequently Challenged Books*. Once the list was compiled, the researcher ensured that each of the titles was still in print by using the online database *Bowker's Global Books in Print*.

Variables

The main variable in this study was the existence of the selected titles in the online catalog of each library. Three additional variables were the enrollment size of each high school, the size of each book collection, and the total expenditures per student. Finally, the various curricula used in each school was another variable.

Data Collection

Data were collected from February through March 2007. During this time, the researcher searched for the selected titles in three ways. First searched were the high school library Web sites that offered remote Web access to their catalogs. Next, the researcher used JerseyCat, a statewide interlibrary loan database. Finally, if results could not be obtained through either the first or second method, the researcher obtained permission to visit the library in order to search the OPAC. The researcher organized the data by entering the results into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. The data were analyzed to determine to what extent censorship/self-censorship was playing a part in the collection development of selected secondary school libraries.

Reliability and Validity

The method used to collect data was determined to be reliable after a pretest was administered to one school in nearby Camden County, New Jersey. Additionally, the methodology was reviewed by Dr. Marilyn L. Shontz, thesis advisor.

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CHAPTER IV

DATA ANALYSIS

Procedures and Methods

Before gathering data from individual school libraries, the researcher compiled a list of the titles defended in the ALA publications *Hit List: Frequently Challenged Books for Young Adults* (1996) and *Hit List for Young Adults 2: Frequently Challenged Books* (2002). Thirty-seven titles were included in the study (see Table 1), and each of these titles was checked for its availability using the Web site *Bowker's Global Books in Print*. Each of the thirty-seven titles was determined to be in print as of December, 2006.

Next, the researcher searched the online catalogs of all thirteen traditional public high schools in Gloucester County, New Jersey. The researcher gathered data through on-site visits, remote access to online catalogs, and the *JerseyCat* database. A total of 481 titles searches were performed. As results were obtained, the researcher recorded the data on a checklist.

An additional guideline was added to the procedures originally presented in Chapter III. As the titles were searched for in online catalogs, non-English language books and audiobooks were not included in this study.

Statistical Analysis

The researcher compiled the data in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. Only descriptive statistics were reported.

Results

Research Question 1: Of the titles selected for this study, which existed in selected high school library media center collections?

Of the thirty-seven young adult titles used for this study, each was held by at least one of the selected school libraries. Two of the titles - *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and *Lord of the Flies* - were held by all thirteen of the selected libraries (see Table 2). Nine of the high schools held at least fifty percent of the selected titles, while the remaining four high schools had less than fifty percent (see Table 3).

Research Question 2: Which of the titles selected for this study existed in the highest and lowest number of library media center collections?

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn and *Lord of the Flies* were the only titles held by all thirteen of the selected libraries. *The "What's Happening to My Body?" Book for Boys* was held by only one.

The most titles held by any individual library was thirty-four (Deptford High School) and the least was twelve (West Deptford High School). The average number of titles held was 23.8. The median number of titles held was 24, and the mode was 25 (see Table 4).

Table 2
Number of Libraries Holding Each Title

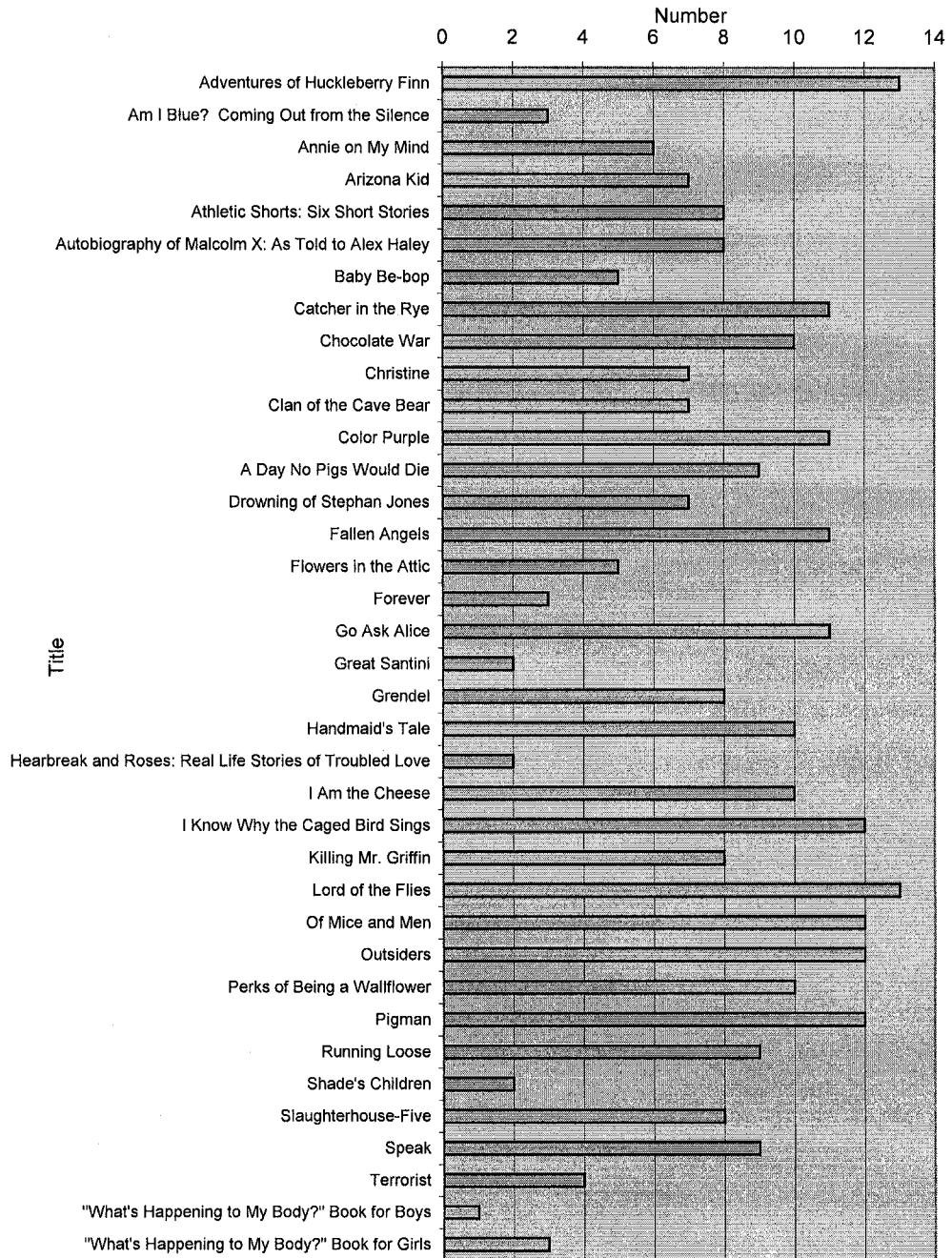


Table 3
 Percentage of Titels Held By Each Library

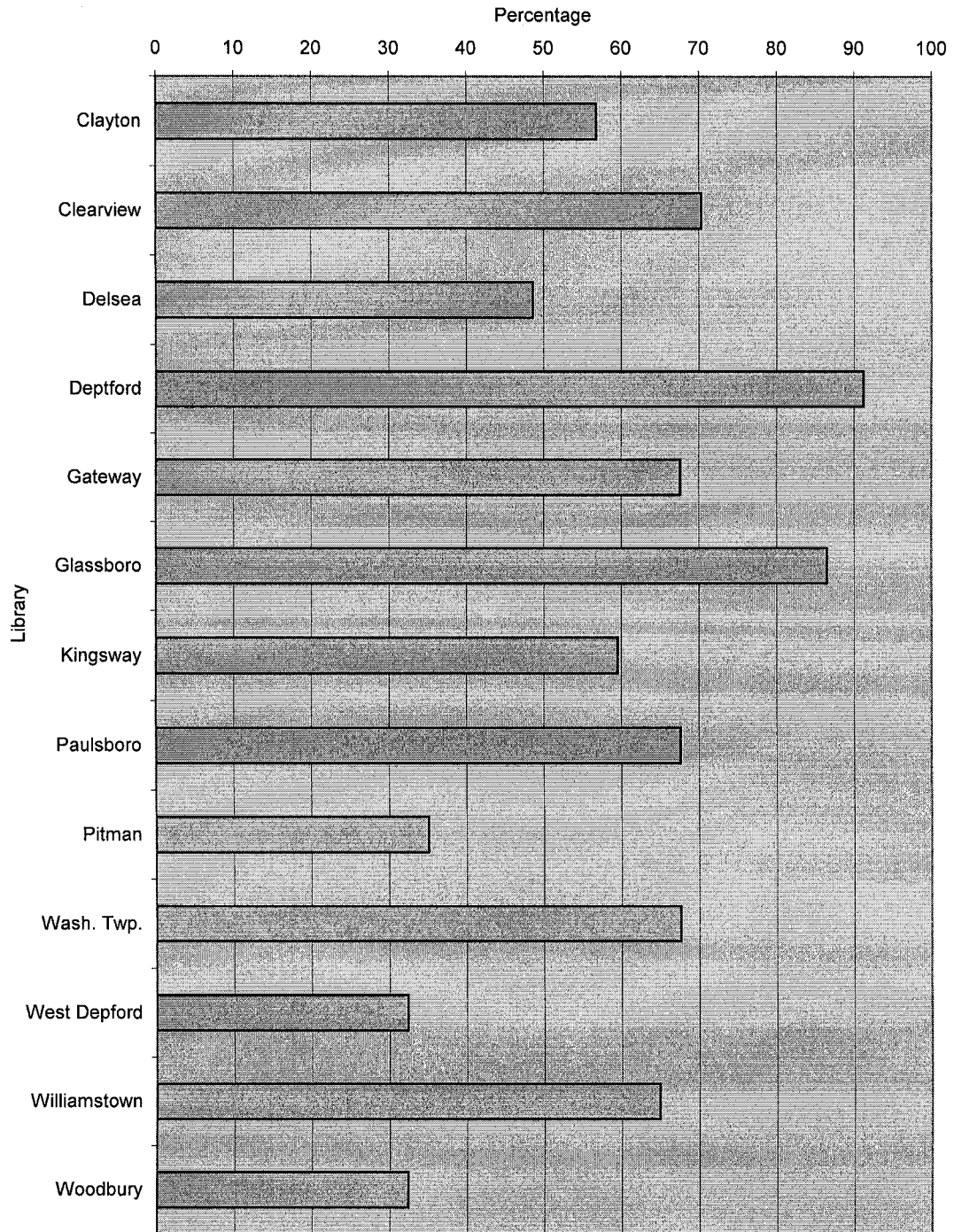
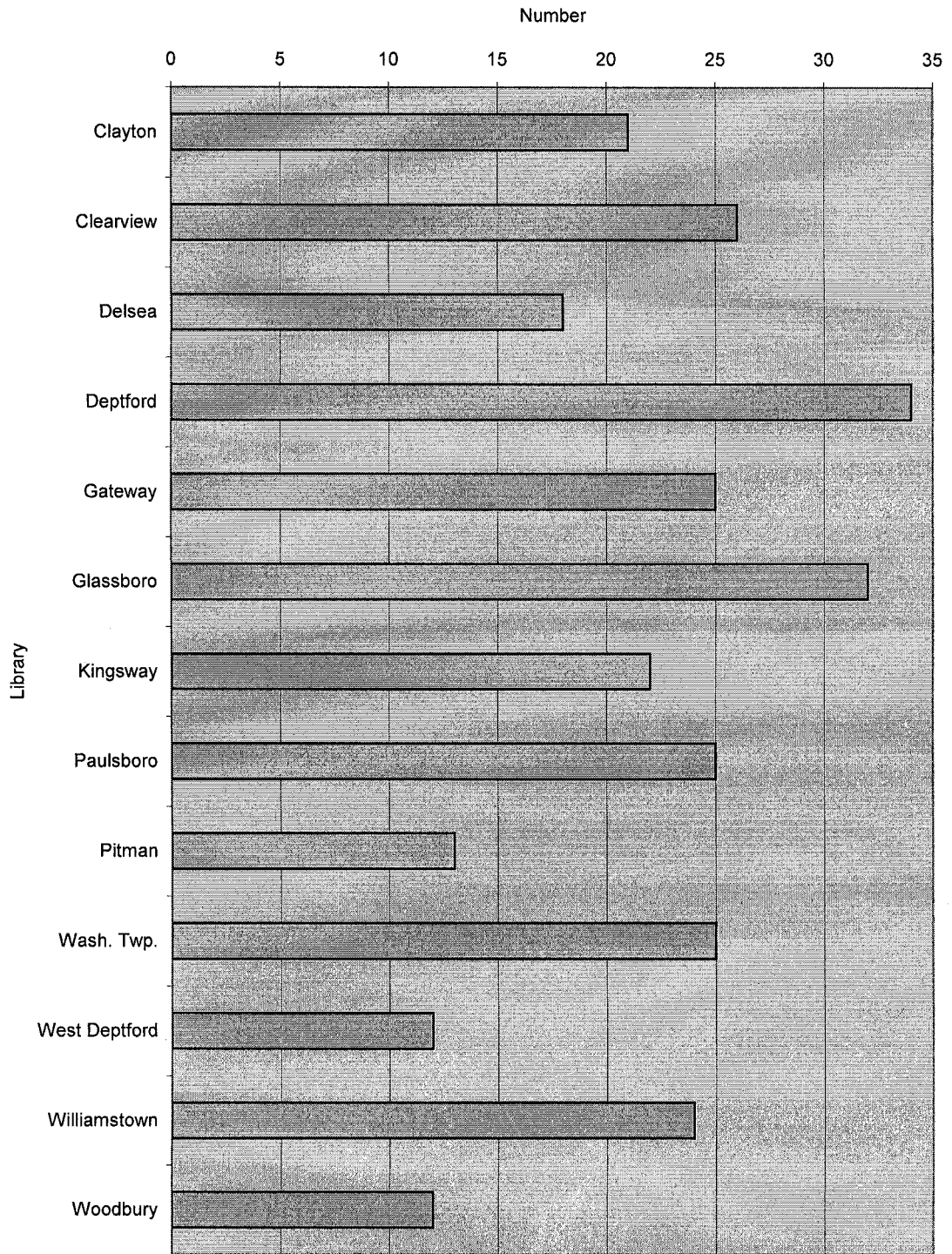


Table 4
Number of Titles Held By Each School Library



References

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CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

It is essential that young adults have access to books that are of interest to them, regardless of any controversy that may surround such titles. The purpose of this study was to determine the existence of commonly banned young adult books in the library collections of traditional public high schools in Gloucester County. A significant lack of such books may be a sign that censorship or self-censorship has hindered the development of the collection, thereby robbing students of their freedom to read.

The researcher searched the OPACs of thirteen traditional public high schools for thirty-seven predetermined titles. The titles that were searched for were selected by compiling the titles listed in the ALA publications *Hit List: Frequently Challenged Books for Young Adults* (1996) and *Hit List for Young Adults 2: Frequently Challenged Books* (2002). The researcher obtained data in three ways: through remote access to the online catalog, through the *JerseyCat* database, and through on-site visitations. A total of 481 title searches were completed. The results of the study indicated that some form of censorship may have occurred in four of the thirteen libraries.

Interpretations of the Results

Research Question 1: Of the titles selected for this study, which existed in selected high school library media center collections?

All of the books were represented in at least one of the thirteen selected high school libraries. Nine of the thirteen schools held at least 50% of the thirty-seven selected titles, while the remaining four schools fell under the 50% mark.

According to the guidelines set by Coley in his 2002 study of public high school library catalogs in Texas (as described in Chapter II), self-censorship was being imposed in the four schools having less than fifty percent of the selected books. The remaining nine schools, each holding at least 50% of the selected titles, did not show clear evidence of self-censorship, according to Coley.

Research Question 2: Which of the titles selected for this study existed in the highest and lowest number of library media center collections?

The most represented titles, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and *Lord of the Flies*, were each held by all thirteen of the selected libraries. These titles are considered by many to be classics, and are often a part of a high school's English curriculum, which may have added to their inclusion. The most underrepresented title, *The "What's Happening to My Body?" Book for Boys*, was held by only one library. This book, which "covers the body's changing size and shape, hair, voice changes, perspiration, pimples, the reproductive organs," and sexuality, includes topics that some may deem inappropriate for a school media center (Amazon, 2007, ¶ 8).

Interestingly, *The "What's Happening to My Body?" Book for Girls* existed in five of the libraries, while the male version, *The "What's Happening to My Body?" Book for Boys* existed in only one. One would think that these books would be purchased in tandem, yet there were five times as many of the female book than the male book.

Research Question 3: What characteristics of the high schools were related to the highest/lowest number of titles included in this study?

No pattern was found among schools with high results, nor among schools with low results. The researcher expected to find a correlation between the number of books held and enrollment or between the number of books held and total cost per pupil, yet none was found. According to the 2006 *New Jersey School Report Card*, the two schools with the highest number of selected titles had an enrollment of 1,175 and 701 and a per pupil total expenditure of \$10,924 and \$12,320, respectively. Contrastingly, the two schools with the lowest number of selected titles had an enrollment of 1,111 and 428 (grades 9-12 only) and a per pupil total expenditure of \$10,437 and \$13,618, respectively (State of New Jersey, 2006).

Significance of the Results

The results of this study should be of great interest to all high school libraries and especially to the thirteen high school libraries included in the research. Since those who make purchasing decisions may be unaware of the presence of self-censorship, examining the results of a study such as this one may provide insight into the limitations of a particular library collection.

Protecting the intellectual rights of students should be at the forefront of a media specialist's duties. According to the ALA's *Freedom to Read Statement*, the LMS must ensure that she provides students with "the widest diversity of views and expressions," regardless of any conscious or subconscious objections she may have about them (ALA, 2006a, ¶ 9).

Conclusions

The results of this study indicated that students at certain Gloucester County high schools did not have access to an acceptable selection of potentially controversial materials. This may be the result of censorship, self-censorship, or a combination of the two. When using Coley's 50% requirement as a guideline, the four high schools in this study holding less than half of the thirty-seven selected titles were determined to be employing self-censorship. The media specialists of these schools must consider their duty to "challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment" when selecting materials (ALA, 2006b, ¶ 4). Should they still be concerned about adding controversial materials to their collections, LMSs may consider writing or reevaluating a board-approved selection policy in addition to a board-approved policy for dealing with challenges.

Recommendations for Further Study

School media specialists may choose to execute their own informal bibliometric studies at any time by searching for other frequently challenged titles, as determined by the American Library Association or another group. Another study may investigate the number and types of challenges that each of the school libraries has handled within the

past ten years. Library media specialists may also consider searching their catalogs for specifically themed books, such as gay/lesbian titles, multicultural/multiethnic titles, and religious titles. They may choose to use award lists, such as the Coretta Scott King Book Awards or the Pura Belpré Awards, to guide their studies.

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APPENDIX
RESULTS OF CATALOG STUDY

**APPENDIX A
RESULTS OF CATALOG STUDY**

	Clayton	Clearview	Delsea	Deptford	Gateway	Glassboro	Kingsway	Paulsboro	Pitman
Adventures of Huckleberry Finn	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Am I Blue? Coming Out from the Silence	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
Annie on My Mind	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0
Arizona Kid	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	1
Athletic Shorts: Six Short Stories	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	0
Autobiography of Malcolm X: As Told to Alex Haley	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	0
Baby Be-bop	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	0
Catcher in the Rye	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Chocolate War	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
Christine	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0
Clan of the Cave Bear	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0
Color Purple	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
A Day No Pigs Would Die	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1
Drowning of Stephan Jones	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	0
Fallen Angels	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Flowers in the Attic	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0
Forever	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
Go Ask Alice	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Great Santini	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Grendel	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	0
Handmaid's Tale	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0
Hearbreak and Roses: Real Life Stories of Troubled Love	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
I Am the Cheese	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Killing Mr. Griffin	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0
Lord of the Flies	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Of Mice and Men	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Outsiders	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Perks of Being a Wallflower	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Pigman	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Running Loose	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0
Shade's Children	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Slaughterhouse-Five	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1
Speak	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0
Terrorist	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
"What's Happening to My Body?" Book for Boys	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
"What's Happening to My Body?" Book for Girls	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	21	26	18	34	25	32	22	25	13

**APPENDIX A
RESULTS OF CATALOG STUDY**

	Washington Twp.	West Deptford	Williamstown	Woodbury	TOTAL
Adventures of Huckleberry Finn	1	1	1	1	13
Am I Blue? Coming Out from the Silence	0	0	0	0	3
Annie on My Mind	0	0	1	0	6
Arizona Kid	1	1	0	0	7
Athletic Shorts: Six Short Stories	1	0	1	0	8
Autobiography of Malcolm X: As Told to Alex Haley	1	1	1	0	8
Baby Be-bop	1	0	0	0	5
Catcher in the Rye	1	0	1	0	11
Chocolate War	1	0	1	0	10
Christine	1	0	0	0	7
Clan of the Cave Bear	0	0	1	0	7
Color Purple	1	1	1	0	11
A Day No Pigs Would Die	1	1	0	0	9
Drowning of Stephan Jones	0	0	1	0	7
Fallen Angels	0	1	1	1	11
Flowers in the Attic	0	0	1	0	5
Forever	0	0	0	0	3
Go Ask Alice	1	1	1	1	11
Great Santini	0	0	0	0	2
Grendel	1	0	1	0	8
Handmaid's Tale	0	1	1	1	10
Hearbreak and Roses: Real Life Stories of Troubled Love	0	0	0	0	2
I Am the Cheese	1	1	1	0	10
I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings	1	0	1	1	12
Killing Mr. Griffin	1	1	0	0	8
Lord of the Flies	1	1	1	1	13
Of Mice and Men	1	0	1	1	12
Outsiders	1	0	1	1	12
Perks of Being a Wallflower	1	0	1	0	10
Pigman	1	1	1	1	12
Running Loose	1	0	1	0	9
Shade's Children	1	0	0	0	2
Slaughterhouse-Five	1	0	1	0	8
Speak	1	0	1	1	9
Terrorist	1	0	0	1	4
"What's Happening to My Body?" Book for Boys	0	0	0	0	1
"What's Happening to My Body?" Book for Girls	0	0	0	1	3
TOTAL	25	12	24	12	