

**Beyond #WeNeedDiverseScholars:
The Shared Responsibility of Dismantling Whiteness in Children's Literature Scholarship**

Undoubtedly, children's literature centralizing hegemonic perspectives is widely promoted in scholarly circles. At the same time, research on diverse literature for children and adolescents is often relegated to special issues of journals or themed conference panels; practices which, while superficially promoting voices on the margins, further reinforce perceptions of diversity as a niche facet of our field. As a young scholar who studies Latinx children's and young adult literature, I have experienced firsthand the impact of this perception. Inquiries as to the significance of my study of #ownvoices writers in Latinx children's literature reveal the degree to which whiteness is presumed to be central in scholarship.

Children's literature scholarship reifies white privilege, tokenizes research on diverse children's literature, and marginalizes minority scholars. However, academia can and should play a leading role in dismantling white privilege in our scholarly endeavors. Scholarship like the recent #WeNeedDiverseScholars forum in *The Lion and the Unicorn* and the refiguring of the CFP for this conference demonstrate a paradigm shift in our field. As Phillip Serrato explains, these motions can "help effect a shift in how Latino/a children's literature"—as well as other diverse children's literature—"is regarded and handled" within scholarly spaces (para. 12). Because of my minoritized subject position, my research is almost always embedded within theoretical constructs linked to Otherness and marginalization—but the onus should not just be placed on those like me to study and critically engage with marginalized scholars, theorists, and texts. This presentation encourages scholars to ask how whiteness (and cis-gendered heteronormativity, able-bodiedness, etc.) is centered or privileged in their scholarship. For example, scholars should reflect on the theorists or other scholars they cite—are they using sources by privileged and marginalized people in equal measure? In posing these questions and modeling alternatives to the dominant paradigms in our field, I demonstrate that progress in equalizing children's literature study is not just a shared responsibility, but is vital to the forward momentum of children's literature scholarship as a whole.

Work Cited

Serrato, Phillip. "Working With What We've Got." *The Unjournal of Children's Literature*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2014. <https://childlitunjournal.com/2014/02/12/working-with-what-weve-got-by-phillip-serrato/>