

INDEPENDENT PRESS AWARDS: DIVERSITY IN YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE

AWARDS FROM 2010-2019

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Zachary Lynn Vietz

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**Title**

Independent Press Awards: Diversity in Young Adult Literature Awards  
from 2010-2019

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**By**

Zachary Vietz

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The Supervisory Committee certifies that this *disquisition* complies with North Dakota  
State University's regulations and meets the accepted standards for the degree of

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SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE:

Dr. Amy Gore

---

Chair

Dr. Suzanne Kelley

---

Dr. Alison Graham-Bertolini

---

Approved:

April 16, 2021

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Date

Dr. Adam Goldwyn

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Department Chair

## **ABSTRACT**

While researching small presses and young adult book awards, I concluded independent press awards would be awarding more diverse young adult literature than large, well-known book awards. To find data-backed support for this conclusion, I investigated the diversity of fiction young adult book awards by comparing demographic data between three well-known book awards and three independent book awards from 2010 to 2019. Ultimately, my dataset did not prove my original thesis correct and instead the data showed large awards awarded more diverse young adult fiction than independent awards. By exploring the rise of young adult literature and its importance to the literary marketplace, classrooms, and librarians, I show the need for increased awareness and scholarly engagement with independent presses and their book awards.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

While working at North Dakota State University Press and engaging with the contemporary marketing practices of a small, academic publisher, I became immersed in the young adult genre and the growing voices from readers, librarians, and teachers clamoring for titles by diverse authors and featuring equally diverse characters. Broadly, most literary and publishing scholars know of the Big Four publishers (previously five before the merger of Penguin/Random House and Simon & Schuster) and their equivalent awards such as the Pulitzer Award, Caldecotts, and others, but few have vested interest in titles coming from independent publishers and the independent book awards focusing on promoting their works. While there has been research surrounding how the Big Four publishers and their dominant marketing shape the literary marketplace and subsequently books that reach the public's hands, little research has gone into how independent publishers and awards are fighting for their share in the literary marketplace. Along with fighting for market share, no research has been done on how independent book awards shape up in terms of diversity compared to their large award counterparts.

When a consumer walks into any corporate bookstore, or browses through an online retailer's stock of books, they will notice a large presence of young adult literature (YAL). Most of this literature is coming from one of the four large publishing houses or their imprints and subsidiaries, and often are serialized and marketed directly to the young adult demographic. These corporatized and marketed environments are as much part of the literary marketplace as anywhere else. To have their books stand out in online and retail stores, publishers need a way to denote why consumers should pick their titles over others, and book awards are a prime way to denote legitimacy on inspection. Therefore, it is a necessity to properly engage with the



marketing and publishing practices that are delivering literature to a highly impressionable and young audience. As mentioned, one marketing tool for publishers is book awards, and my research will start an investigation into YAL from large book awards and compare it to their smaller, independent counterparts.

### **1.1. Research Question**

At the beginning of my research, my dataset intended to answer the question of whether small book awards are better meeting the needs of a diverse literary marketplace compared to large book awards, and by proxy see who is publishing more diverse, award-winning YAL. I chose to focus on award-winning fiction YAL from both small and large awards as one way to start investigating the level of YAL diversity coming from publishers. With research limited into the quality of independent book awards and independent publishers, specifically on how independent awards measure up in terms of diversity compared to their larger counterparts, my dataset addresses this gap of knowledge regarding the literary marketplace. In addition, analyzing award-winning fiction YAL from small and large awards will create grounds for further scholarly engagement with independent publishers and awards. While researching independent presses and awards, I concluded that many, including myself, believed small publishers are making better strides than large publishers regarding diverse literature. However, my dataset did not support my original theory of small press awards having more diverse, fiction YAL. Instead, the data demonstrated the opposite: YAL from large book awards were categorically more diverse than YAL from independent book awards. Due to the surprising results of my dataset, I speculate that while independent presses are perceived as better meeting the needs of a diverse literary marketplace, the greater commercial abilities of large presses and the greater amount of critical engagement large presses and awards have received from scholars

over time has resulted in their greater ability to publish diverse young adult fiction. My analysis provides examples on how and where to expand the dataset and discusses further why discrepancies in diversity may be present between small and large publishing awards.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

To properly contrast and compare large and small book awards, I selected the following six awards to review and compare over a ten-year period from 2010-2019. Information for the background of awards comes from their respective websites.

### 2.1. Large, Well-Known Book Awards

- The Michael L. Printz Award for Excellence in Young Adult Literature

The Michael L. Printz Award is put on annually by the American Library Association (ALA) and awards what they consider to be the best books written for teens, based “entirely on literary merit,” yearly. In addition to the winners, the Printz Committee will honor up to four other books they also feel “represent the best writing” in YAL. The winning announcements are made during the ALA’s Youth Media Awards, alongside an event each year at the ALA Annual Conference (Young Adult Library Services Association).

- Los Angeles Times Book Prize (a part of the Los Angeles Times Festival of Books)

The Los Angeles Times Book Prize has been ongoing since 1996, awarding not only writers but “poets, artists, filmmakers, musicians, and emerging storytellers.” Over the course of its development it has become part of The Los Angeles Times Festival of Books and is billed as “the largest event of its kind in the United States” (Festival of Books).

- National Book Award

The National Book Awards, awarding books since the 1950s, is the core of the National Book Foundations “national vision, with educational and public programming across the country.” Slowly expanding its literary categories and prestige over the years, a recent 2017 *New York Times* article counted this award among “the world’s most prestigious literary

prizes” such as the Man Booker Prize and the Noble Prize for Literature (National Book Awards).

## **2.2. Independent Publisher Book Awards**

- Independent Publisher Book Awards (IPPY Awards)

The Independent Publisher Book Awards started in 1996 started as a way to bring together “all members of the independent publishing industry.” In recent years, they have expanded to include other worldwide independent authors and presses who produce titles for English speaking readers. Their goal is to bring to attention to the many excellent small press published titles every year and those “who exhibit the courage, innovation, and creativity to bring about change in the world of publishing” (IPPY Awards).

- Independent Publishers Association Benjamin Franklin Awards (IBPA Benjamin Franklin Awards)

The IBPA Benjamin Franklin Awards are looked at as “one of the highest national honors in independent publishing.” There are fifty-six categories and the awards are judged by 160 library, school, and publishing professionals. The award is unique in-so-far as they share the judging cards with authors and publishers so they can receive feedback on their titles directly (IBPA Benjamin Franklin Award).

- Indie Book Awards

The Next Generation Indie Book Awards, hosted by Indie Book Awards, is one of “the largest international awards” for small presses and authors. The awards are in their fifteenth year and their goal is to “recognize and honor” the best small publisher books in over seventy categories. The Indie Book Awards organization collaborates with the Independent Book

Publishing Professionals Group and Marilyn Allen of Allen O'Shea Literary Agency (Indie Book Awards).

### **2.3. Project Limitations**

Both large and small book awards were chosen based on having at least ten years of book awards and having an award dedicated to YAL. The independent book awards were chosen due to their exclusion of large publishing houses and imprints, and general acceptance in the independent publishers market as reputable awards. Due to the large amount of independent press awards, I chose three awards with longevity in the field, had YAL awards going back to 2010, and award rules specifically excluding books from large publishers and their imprints.

My gathered data is focusing on only fiction YAL and excluding nonfiction titles. This is because the large book awards did not distinguish between fiction and nonfiction titles, while every independent book award did so. If all independent award nonfiction titles were included, it would nearly double the available data for independent awards compared to large awards, creating a skew in the analysis. Another reason for excluding nonfiction titles was due to a title being historical, following multiple people's true lives, or otherwise made it too difficult to properly categorize within the data I was gathering. I also only gathered data on the winning titles in all book awards excluding the finalist titles due to project constraints.

Data on diversity in the bounds of this project refers specifically to the ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender of both authors and their main character(s). Information on author diversity came from multiple places: directly from the author, the publisher provided information, and/or other publicly available data. Information for character diversity was provided by the author and publishers description of the book, blurbs, summaries, and reviews. When looking at gender and sexual orientation specifically, I went with author and publisher

provided information. Regarding sexuality, any author or character sexual orientation not heteronormative is recorded as LGBTQ. In the case any of the above information could not be reliably interpreted from publicly available information, it is recorded as an indeterminate data point.

### **3. LITERATURE REVIEW**

This literature review defines YAL and the young adult demographic, current literary market trends, and highlights scholars in literary and publishing studies crucial to my own work. While going through previous research on book awards and publishers, I noticed the lack of research into independent publisher book awards. I came across many scholars critically engaging with children's literature book awards, such as Melanie Koss and her colleagues' engagement with the Caldecotts and Kenneth Kid's exploration of the Newberry Awards, but there is a clear vacuum in academic research surrounding independent press awards. I seek to build on previous work in children's book awards and start opening young adult book awards to the same critical engagement scholars denote to children's book awards.

YAL as a genre itself has seen rapid growth in not only the share of the literary market, but also with scholars who realize the ability of YAL to positively and negatively impact the young adults who are reading it. The impact of YAL builds off previous research by Sims Bishop and her concept of literature acting as doors and windows into other lived experiences, offering children and young adults a glimpse into another way of life (Bishop 1990). This has multiple benefits for the development of a child and young adult and can help build empathy for those who are different than themselves. The importance of literature to children and young adults makes it critical to engage with organizations awarding YAL, and coding for diversity is one way to start the conversation.

#### **3.1. Young Adult Literature, and Large and Small Presses**

Working with YAL, it is important to have a definition of what scholars and publishers consider YAL. Throughout my research I came across more generalized definitions before coming across Chris Cowe's work "Young Adult Literature: What is Young Adult Literature?"

in which he charts the evolution of the YAL genre from the 1960s to the articles publication in 1998. Interjected with his own personal experiences going from school-to-school pitching YAL, Crowe describes what he finds to be a young adult, which is “a person old enough to be in junior high or high school, usually grades seven through twelve,” largely 12–18-year-olds. Crowe then goes on to define YAL as such:

[L]iterature for young adults as all genres of literature published since 1967 that are written for and marketed to young adults. Of course, everyone who works with teenagers knows that many young adults read books marketed above (William Shakespeare, Joseph Conrad, John Grisham) and below (Dr. Seuss, Jon Scieszka, Shel Silverstein) books marketed exclusively to teenagers, but YAL restricts itself to literature intended for teenagers. (121)

Both above definitions for young adults and YAL tracks within my own publishing experience, the American Library Association, and book awards large and small. As we can see from Crowe’s work, and by looking at the vast amount of young adult literature in the market, the genre is not explicitly tied to a certain time or place, and most broadly has a 12–18-year-old main character and the tropes they deal with are often concerns related to that age range. Moving forward, when I use the terms young adult and YAL, I am working from Crowe’s definition.

There also needs to be clarification on what I am referencing as a small and large publisher. A small press, also referred to as independent or indie publishers, is a press who either makes less than \$50 million per year or publishes on average less than 10 titles per year (Sullivan). Most university presses fit into this description. I am not referencing Amazon’s self-publishing service or any other self-publishing services when speaking about small presses. When talking about large publishers, this refers to the now recently renamed Big Four



publishers, who are Penguin/Random House, Hachette Book Group, Harper Collins, and Macmillan. Simon & Schuster previously rounded out the list to make five large publishers, but it is currently being absorbed by Penguin/Random House, leaving even less room for competition between the big presses (Steger). Large publisher imprints are also included when talking about the Big Four publishers.

### **3.2. The Rise of Young Adult Literature**

From Chris Crowe's article, we can see the emergence of YAL is historically recent, but that does not mean the conversations and books themselves have not rapidly grown. A great place to start the discussion here is an article published in 2000 from Marc Aronson titled "The Myths of Teenage Readers." Aronson, reminiscing of his time as Black junior editor at a large press, expressed his dissatisfaction with the publishing executive's outdated views of teenage readers and the content they would engage with and enjoy. Aronson lamented the myths pervading publishing houses and took up the task to dispel multiple outdated and incorrect beliefs large publishing executives held about teenage readers, such as "teenagers don't read," teenagers read "only adult books," and other such statements (5).

However, even with this frustration, Aronson admits that his "finger waving" at publishers may even then be a bit outdated. He points to the growing popularity of young adult content in "television, music, magazines" and also brings up the recently minted of the American Library Association's "Mike Printz" medal and the LA Times Book Prize creating an award for YA fiction (5). Aronson goes on to compliment the reading and engagement of teenagers by noting that when they "get to books, and get to talk about them, the results are amazing... When they read and talk, our most firmly held myths simply evaporate" (9). What Aronson's essay expresses is the exasperation of those in the publishing at the turn of the century who, realizing

YAL's potential to engage with young adults, struggled to convince large publishers to give YAL a more defined, prominent position in their operations.

Bringing the conversation around to more recent engagement with YAL, a speech from 2016 by Michael Cart, a columnist and reviewer for *Booklist*, author or editor of twenty-three titles, including works relating to YAL, provides a great deal of contemporary context. In his speech for the Ezra Jack Keats Lecture titled "Young Adult Literature: The State of a Restless Art," Cart takes time to move through a brief history of YAL, the state of the genre, and how publishers large and small approached YAL. The start of this speech moves through the early young adult novels, starting with what most scholars and industry professionals consider the first two young adult novels published in 1967: S. E. Hinton's *The Outsiders* and Robert Lipstye's *The Contender* (1).

Following the success of these two novels, the 70s saw what is considered the "first golden age" of young adult novels, where the industry saw a rapid proliferation of single-issue, "problems of the moment" novels which rapidly declined in popularity. In the 80s, with the popularity of mass-marketed romance paperbacks in the foreground, YAL followed suit with mass amounts of forgettable romance and horror titles. However, gifted writers such as Francesca Lia Block, Cynthia Voigt, and Gary Paulsen also rose to prominence during this time among all the other paperbacks being pushed into the market (Cart 3-4). The first half of the 90s was considered the slow "death" of the genre mainly due to the declining teenage population and the loss of school and library purchasing power. This loss in purchasing power for schools lead to a decline in demand for hardcover titles and saw "the market changed from being 80 to 90% institutional to only 50-60%." The literary marketplace for YAL, at this juncture, turned to large

retailers such as Walmart and Barnes & Noble (Cart 4). As we can see, the early rise of the young adult genre covered a lot of ground rapidly.

The latter half of the 90s saw a remarkable recovery in the young adult market, which is attributed to a returning rise of a teenage population and super bookstores realizing the potential of the growing market and adapting to it. In the end, most of the credit goes to librarians who simply would not let the genre die, holding conferences and other events to draw attention to YAL (4-5). With the early 2000s came the world-wide popularity of *Harry Potter*, and more teenagers and older adults picking up YAL. This time also saw the advent of online ordering, digital marketing, the rapid growth of published young adult books, and problems with diverse representation. Ultimately, what we can take away from Cart and Aronson is the value YAL has in its “capacity for fostering, in its readers, understanding, empathy, and compassion by offering vividly realized portraits of the lives – exterior and interior – of individuals who are unlike the reader” (12). Since its inception in 1967, YAL has become integral to not only the commercial aims of publishers, but also to a literary marketplace seeking diverse, artistic, and relatable content for young adults to foster a habit and love for reading and stepping outside their lived experiences.

### **3.3. The Importance of Diversity in YAL**

One problem plaguing the publishing industry, historically and contemporarily, has been the lack of diverse author and character representation in terms of gender, ethnic, religious, and/or sexual identity diversity. There are two articles from differing areas of the publishing industry I will briefly go over here to highlight the ongoing conversations and position them alongside recent publishing statistics from the Cooperative Children’s Book Center (CCBC) and

the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). These statistics paint a bleak picture for the balance of diverse YAL in relation to the demographic make-up of classrooms in the U.S.

The first article comes from a 2014 *New York Times* opinion piece from Walter Dean Myers, an award winning YAL author. Myers specifically takes aim at the lack of Black stories being published and cites a 2013 study from the CBCC where “of 3,200 books published in 2013, only 93 were about black people” (Myers). In this article, while describing his own struggles growing up in Harlem, NYC, Myers relates how literature brought him out of a depressive spiral and laments the lack of diversity in children’s literature because “books transmit values. . . What is the message when some children are not represented in those books?” If children and young adults are not exposed to diverse YAL, it does a disservice to all students and takes away their ability to grow as individuals. In Myers case, he asks how Black children and young adults are “going to get a sense of who they are and what they can be” if there is not literature to help them realize it (Myers 2014). Additionally, if there are not enough books about Black children and other BIPOC, students of other ethnicities will not have a fully formed view of those different than themselves.

Myers’s call echoes the same of other scholars and in the wider publishing industry such as Shoshana Flax, assistant editor of the *Horn Book Magazine* at the time of the article’s publication in 2018. In “Devoted to Diversity: Publishers with a Purpose,” Flax speaks about being critical of large publishers and their imprints, saying pointedly “it’s no secret that mainstream publishing has gaps to fill” regarding diversity. She notes “books published about people of color and First/Native Nations are disproportionately low” and authors of these groups are “even lower in number” (23). Throughout the article, Flax does point to certain large publishing house imprints that are genuinely publishing diverse titles. While progress has

undoubtedly been made, large publishers are often pushing the need for diversity onto their smaller imprints. This leaves some titles potentially languishing in a sort of limbo, where the author and title may not be getting the attention it deserves. In many ways, Flax and Myers are asking the same thing of publishers: publish with diversity in mind. In this case, having diverse characters is not the only goal but also diverse authors as well.

Looking at statistics to solidify the lack of diverse YAL, the CCBC puts out data every year on the diversity of children and young adult books. In 2018 the CCBC received a total of 3716 books from small and large presses and of those books only 848 were written by minority authors. This comes out to only 23% of books in 2018 being by non-white authors (CCBC 2020). Data on books by and about Black, Indigenous and People of Color published for children and teens was compiled by the CCBC located at the School of Education, University of Wisconsin-Madison. One caveat with the CCBC's data is they do only report on books sent to them, so there could be differences in a larger snapshot of diversity representation. However, the CCBC is widely considered by scholars and industry professionals to be a reliable window into the diversity in published children and young adult titles.

This measure of diversity coming up to only 23% of titles is a disservice to minorities who are trying to find literature representing themselves, and to schoolteachers and librarians who want diverse literature for their classrooms. This point is further solidified by looking at the demographic breakdown of U.S. classrooms provided by the NCES. At the time of writing, 2018 is the most recent non-projected statistics and provides recently verified demographic information. In 2018 the NCES found that in the age range of 5 to 17-year-old students enrolled in public schools, White students numbered about 23.6 million and minorities made up the other half at 26.6 million students. The breakdown of minority students is as follows: 13.6 million

Latinx students, 7.6 million Black students, 2.6 million Asian students, 2 million biracial students, 484,000 American Indian/Alaska Native students, and 184,000 Pacific Islander students (NCES 2020). What this tells us is that if we put all the k-12 aged students in a fictional classroom, minority students would make up over half the class. By not having diverse literature that speaks to minorities' lived experiences, we are failing at least roughly 50% of the students in classrooms, and arguably not providing enough appropriately diverse YAL for all students who can benefit.

The importance for young adults to have diverse YAL in the classroom was first brought to attention by Sims Bishop's impactful concept of literature acting as windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors to other lived experiences and avenues for personal growth for readers. The summary of Bishop's three main concepts comes from scholars Nancy Johnson, Melanie Koss, and Miriam Martinez in their work "Through the Sliding Glass Door: #EmpowerTheReader":

1. "Literature serves as a mirror when we see some facet of ourselves—physical, cultural, or emotional—reflected back" (571).
2. "When books function as windows, readers see people, experiences, or worlds removed from their own" (572).
3. "Books that serve as sliding glass doors are somewhat akin to a window experience but with a key difference: The reader is changed by the book" (572).

Keeping in mind the above concepts, it is clear how important literature is for not only the development of a child but also a young adult. Reading needs are different for a child compared to a young adult, but just because they may be beyond children's literature does not mean they are ready or even interested in adult books and topics. YAL has risen to fill this gap in literature, and since the importance of literature to personal development is known, we need to be critical

of the amount of non-diverse YAL, especially with the diversity of U.S. classrooms. In this regard, teachers and librarians have been on the front-lines of the fight for diverse YAL and they have done a lot of groundwork in attempts to source quality, diverse YAL.

### **3.4. The Need for Diverse YAL in Classrooms**

Continuing with Johnson and her colleagues work, they sought to “address the need for thoughtful reflection and knowledgeable action” related to how teachers bring books into their classroom, specifically expanding on Bishop’s concept of a sliding glass door in tandem with Rosenblatt’s and Freire’s work (569). Part of this reflection is a focus on who is reading the titles in a classroom, how to effectively empower these readers, and what teachers can do to facilitate these changes and discussions. These scholars start by analyzing classroom diversity statistics from 2016 to highlight the readers in their classroom at the time of publication:

The 2016 National Center for Education Statistics (NCES; Hussar & Bailey, 2016) revealed that 48.7% of the students in U.S. public school classrooms are white, non-Hispanic, a percentage projected to decrease by 5% by 2024. NCES also projects that the Hispanic student population will increase by 28%, the Asian/Pacific Islander student population by 18%, and the population of students of two or more ethnicities by 38%. Concurrently, NCES anticipates a decrease of 8% in American Indian/Alaskan native students, whereas the black student population is expected to remain the same. (570)

The data also shows that first time English learners are a sizeable portion of students in U.S. public schools with the NCES estimating them to be around 4.5 million students or roughly 9.3% of the student population (570). With the White student demographic projected to be diminishing by 2024, there is now even more importance on ensuring diverse young adult titles are reaching schools. Even more pointedly, with the growth of first time English learners in classrooms, there

is clear backing for the need of diverse titles which will engage these students and help their peers see them in a more fully informed manner. These statistics further encapsulate the need for literature to be diverse to properly empower readers in the classroom and provide stories which can truly act as windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors.

The positive and negatives of how YAL is used in classrooms is best exemplified by Christine Haeffner, coordinator of library media services for Lincoln Public Schools in Lincoln, Nebraska. Haeffner talks about the MOSAIC committee tasked with curating a diverse selection of books for all their K-12 students. The formation of the committee was prompted by seeing the lack of diversity of YAL and the disservice it was doing to students of color. Haeffner laments that “with thousands of titles published yearly for children and young adults and with limited resources in terms of time and funding, it is a challenge for educators in schools and libraries to know how to best develop multicultural collections” (32). This speaks to the struggle schools, the public, and academics face when trying to sort through the prodigious amount of YAL: there is simply too much, and a single person could not possibly wade through all the YAL published yearly to find proper diversity in titles. To help schools and consumers navigate the large number of YAL published every year, we must critically engage with the tools they are using such as best seller lists, industry and consumer provided lists, and book awards. While it is unreasonable to go through each young adult book published every year, it is manageable to interrogate the lists and awards that are doing the job of filtering books for teachers, librarians, and academics, and we see this occurring in the formation of the MOASIC Committee.

As far as discussion of YAL currently in classrooms, scholars like Wendy Glen call to our attention the problematic literature being sold to young adults. As Glen discusses in her article “Gossiping Girls, Insider Boys, A-List Achievement: Examining and Exposing Young



Adult Novels Consumed by Conspicuous Consumption,” it is important when critically engaging with a book to pay attention to publisher and market forces at play in parallel with a book’s narrative and characters. Glen pushes out further than just focusing on a book’s contents and she looks to include, or at least bring attention to, how the stories represented in these problematic titles pushed a narrative the large publishing houses want, and often are serialized to ensure following titles will sell quickly. Novels produced in this way are being marketed explicitly towards an age range which has arguably not developed the critical reading skills necessary to identify and engage with problematic content outside the classroom (40). While Glen reserves her call to critical engagement in the classroom, by moving beyond the classroom and critically investigating the differences between large and small book awards, we can make better informed decisions on which organizations and institutions are importing cultural significance to problematic titles for young adults. Since school systems and others in the literary marketplace semi rely on lists and other organizations to curate YAL, it only makes sense these lists and awards would be the next step for investigations into diversity to prevent the issues Glen experienced in her classroom.

### **3.5. Large vs. Small Publisher Market Share**

Before I discuss how small and large publishers navigate the literary marketplace, it is important to understand how much of the market they respectively hold. When looking for market data, it became clear gathering the data myself was unfeasible. There is a paywall behind data from *Publishers Landscape* and Statistica, both which hold enormous amounts of financial information about the publishing industry. Additionally, when researching the amount of YAL published every year, there was not an easily verifiable source to back up such publishing claims without the cross reference of industry data. In an article from 2016 published online by *Book*

*Business* from author Thad McIlroy, a publishing consultant since 1988, determines, with as much accuracy as possible, the market share of what was the Big Five publishers at the time. He concluded the following market share percentages: Penguin/Random House at 37%, HarperCollins at 17.5%, Simon & Schuster at 11.7%, Hachette at 9%, and no estimate for Macmillan due to it being a privately held company. The author assumes a 5% market share in lack of their data, so in totality the large publishing houses as of 2016 controlled statistically around 63% of the current publishing marketplace. However, due to the large nature of some corporations who own these large publishing houses, the author estimates their market share could be closer to 80% in 2016 (McIlroy). These statistics illustrate a market dominated by the large publishing houses and their imprints. The implications this has on how the market is utilized by both large and small publishers will be discussed later.

### **3.6. Large and Small Publisher Marketing**

Seeing how large the big publisher's market share is, it is important to consider the marketing tactics utilized by both sizes of press to understand how they may be influencing the awarding process. One scholar who opens the conversation about the current state of producing and marketing books in the digital era is Brian F. O'Leary in his 2011 article "Context First: A Unified Field Theory of Publishing." O'Leary expands the concept of how people think about the physical book in a digital world, and laments how publishers have treated the digital side of publishing as derived or secondary. In the process of describing how presses should adapt to the digital side of publishing, he makes relevant points about how consumers search for and interact with literature on the internet.

The main crux of O'Leary's argument for increasing awareness of digital means of producing and marketing books is how the readers themselves are looking for books. He states

that publishers “treat readers as if their needs can be defined by containers” and what O’Leary means by containers is the book itself, or rather the form the book comes in (213). Publishers are focusing on the book itself, the cover, the content, and often neglecting how a book may appear in digital forms via eBooks, buying and selling only chapters of a book, and other instances. However, O’Leary argues consumers, in our now digital world, often “search for an answer. . . a spark that turns into interest and perhaps a purchase” (213-14). What this means is readers are often searching for certain types of books, and perhaps at times not an explicitly named book itself. A reader may want a book on wellness, so they search for wellness books generally, and they come across an online retailers link, a book list, or blog, and a purchasing decision is made from there. Through this example we can see how publishers and consumers are often playing a sort of digital dance on search engines and online retailers to buy and sell books. This dance means there is ever more importance to online YAL awards and lists. If a consumer is searching online for diverse, award-winning YAL, the lists will have prominence and influence. Additionally, if a consumer has limited monetary funds, they may be more apt to choose literature with the appearance of quality, such as award-winning titles.

While O’Leary argues both small and large publishers are falling into lack of digital engagement, a 2018 article from Margret Beditz provides a bit more of a tepid response to E-commerce. In “The Dynamic Landscape of Marketing Children’s Books,” Beditz looks specifically at children’s literature, which the authors consider ages 0-18 in the context of the study, and how traditional ways of marketing are being paired with digital. While it is important to make materials accessible and understandable to children (children’s tv commercials, cover design), making sure marketing is also appealing to adult gatekeepers is also needed to ensure sales. Publishers large and small need to make sure their marketing plan is considering how both

adults and children interact digitally and how to best support digital with traditional. Ultimately, what these scholars posit is a mix of traditional marketing tactics, such as author readings, library lists, newspaper ads, and author engagements, are being best utilized and complemented alongside online methods, regardless of press size and ability (168-69). What O’Leary and Gordon and her colleagues show us is how online methods are not only growing in importance, but as clearly seen with digital advertisements, the growth of Amazon Kindle and other eReaders, the overall digitization of the literary marketplace is not going anywhere and adaption needs to happen. We can see this adaption in previously mentioned blogs and book lists, but more recently with the Covid-19 Pandemic, we are seeing book launches becoming more virtual with Zoom and other virtual conferencing software. More people are also spending time online due to numerous pandemic related reasons leading to an increase in web traffic and web advertising, building on digital publisher marketing trends discussed by O’Leary and Beditz. This further encapsulates the move to an ever-increasing digital world, where lists, awards, and searchability are becoming key to selling books.

The final bit of research comes in the form of examining small Pacific Northwest (US and Canada) publishers to see what their own consensus is on how they compete in the local and national literary marketplace, and what support they can count on. A case study of small press publishing in 2016 by Melanie Bold titled “An ‘Accidental Profession’: Small Press Publishing in the Pacific Northwest” interviewed the managing directors from five publishers from Seattle and Portland, and Vancouver, BC. Alongside these interviews, Bold also compiled a condensed history of small press publishing to put these interviews into a contemporary national publishing context. The findings from this empirical study are illuminating to how small presses view

themselves, their books and authors, and how they can and are competing against large publishing houses.

The important aspects of this article to my own research is in how small publishers exist in the market alongside large publishers. Bold highlights how “small, niche publishers operate within the fringes of the industry,” and have this sort of development and demise cycle, in which the author argues increases the diversity of small publishers in the market. What is meant by development and demise is how small presses pop up, publish as little as one title, and then disappear for various reasons, mostly due to monetary issues. In this way, other small presses can see what their peers are doing to survive, and perhaps pick up the reigns or issues another dropped off, such as publishing titles from a diverse community. Her interviews also show how “the proliferation of digital publishing technology” is eliminating a lot of overhead costs and time, which in the end saves small publishers money and helps them compete. This comes in the form of reduced physical stock due to digital publications, needing less employees to handle books directly, and easier use of online marketing tools. However, it is important to note these same cost-saving measures for small publishers also apply to large publishers. Bold goes on to note the increasingly recognition for quality literature that has at times “penetrated the larger trade market” (85). The following quote summarizes the state of small publishing aptly:

The constant concerns of all of the interviewed small presses were survival and funding. In addition to traditional publishing expenses, such as distribution, marketing, warehousing etc., smaller presses have to contend with high unit costs, per book, as a result of smaller print runs. Consequently, publishing books with expensive production costs, such as cookbooks and children’s books—products that some of the interviewed

publishers published—put pressure on publishers to sell more copies to break-even.

Therefore, capital is at the forefront of small publishers' concerns. (95)

Bold's empirical work breaks open the internal struggles, and victories, of small publishers. Much of the data gathered here, while from the Pacific northwest publishers, is applicable to much of the industry elsewhere. Toward the end of this article, Bold sums up the general state of the publishing industry and what role small publishers are filling. From her evidence, she argues the increasing consolidation (evidenced more recently by the Big Five becoming the Big Four, and even about to become the Big Three at the time of writing) has “resulted in an increased focus on bestselling authors.” What this means is it makes it more difficult for new authors to get published, and here is where small publishers are shining by being “the bulwark of avant-garde literature” and taking chances on “new voices” (99). This trend of small presses focusing on minority stories and marginalized voices, paired with my own independent press experiences and calls similar to Myers and Flax, is what led to my initial reasoning of small awards having more diverse YAL. However, as my data will show, small book awards are not measuring up in diverse literature the same way as small publishers themselves.

Building on small presses being willing to take chances on marginalized authors and communities, it is important to showcase the ways small presses “developed niche markets” for a myriad of issues ranging from women's issues, LGBTQ matters, and “unprofitable markets such as poetry.” Additionally, we have to consider how small press are often utilized by the large publishers as way to pick up new and up-coming authors after small presses put them “into the literary marketplace,” where they fall “into the visibility of larger publishers” (99). Bold closes her article by noting how small and large publishers can exist in the same market in the U.S. due

to the previously mentioned circumstances, and doubly calls for large publishers to support small presses since they are acting, in some ways, as talent scouts (99-100).

Working at a small press, I have grown to be tuned to independent press and independent book awards, and how they strive against the Big Four publishers for their share of the literary marketplace. Not only do small presses and book awards worry about monetary solvency, if not supported by outside funding or a university (and even then, funding is often fleeting or completely absent), they must constantly grapple with how to share their books in a marketplace dominated by large publishing house conglomerates. Not only are there the Big Four publishers directly, but also all their smaller imprints, subsidiaries, media organizations, and general prowess in marketing and the ability to fund it. This means small publishers and book awards need to fine-tune their focus to compete, and that means knowing the market, knowing how to use digital publishing tools, and knowing how to compete with the constant marketing pressure from large publishing houses. Unlike larger publishing houses, small publishers cannot rely on an imprint to bolster the diversity of their published authors and characters, do not have the reliance of best-selling authors, and don't have the same monetary resources, as examined in Bold's research on small publishers.

Altogether, small and large publishers are connected in obvious and not so obvious ways in the literary marketplace. While large publishers do control anywhere from 60-80% of the marketplace, small publishers are still in the market carving out niche markets and supporting minority voices and books. The proliferation of digital tools for publishing and marketing are enabling all publishers to better market their titles. And as we can see from O'Leary and Beditz, these digital tools are still evolving and shaping publishing trends. With the world learning to also operate in a global pandemic, we are seeing tools such as reading lists, blog, library, and

otherwise, are rising to even more prominence in helping consumers find all kinds of literature, YAL included. The next section will discuss how publishers utilize book awards to better market titles and impart a sort of cultural authenticity, and why we should be wary.

### **3.7. Fiction YAL and Book Awards**

Books awards are often used to signal cultural significance in the marketplace, with awards acting to provide legitimacy and prestige in a shared cultural space, in our case the literary marketplace. We see these ideas explored and conceptualized in James English's book *The Economy of Prestige: Prizes, Awards, and the Circulation of Cultural Value*. English is quick to point out he does not wish to evaluate book prizes in terms of their positive and negatives, but rather seeks to build a framework to view the cultural and market apparatuses behind the scenes of prizes and leaving the critical investigations up to the reader and other scholars. English gives the following description of book prizes of all shades and is central to my own work:

From the vantage assumed here, prizes are not a threat or contamination with respect to a field of properly cultural practice on which they have no legitimate place. The prize is cultural practice in its quintessential contemporary form. The primary function it can be seen to serve—that of facilitating cultural ‘market transactions,’ enabling the various individual and institutional agents of culture, with their different assets and interests and dispositions, to engage one another in a collective project of value production—is the project of cultural practice as such. (26)

From English's work we can see where the desire is to properly engage with book awards and prizes, although the conversations English folds into his own and others who build on his work seem to revolve around historically important awards such as the Caldecotts and Pulitzers. While



English's work does not specifically take into consideration YAL and independent book awards, I believe his framework for viewing prizes as a cultural "market transaction" enabled by the agents of culture - in my case independent book awards - is applicable for my own research.

The term cultural market transactions is referring to the process by which agents of culture, such as publishers, authors, and judging committees, collectively decide what art (literature) is worthy of value and denotes the literature as art. In this way, book awards become a cultural practice, and English concludes awards and prizes are not innately good or bad, but are influenced by the agents of culture who are participating in the cultural market transaction. By viewing book awards in this manner, it highlights the need for critical engagement of what cultural views and ideology are being traded within these awards. Those in the literary marketplace cannot trust all agents of culture to be impartial and without their biases, and one way to engage in research of these agents is by compiling data about the books they award. If we follow logic and apply it to YAL, then awards are part of the artistic transaction taking place to denote culturally relevant and important titles for consumption. While English's arguments are taking place mainly in the realm of artistic literary production and how it has shaped prizing and vice versa, Kenneth Kidd takes these theories and applies them more pointedly to children's literature.

Kidd, in his work "Prizing Children's Literature: The Case of Newbery Gold" seeks to bring English's idea of the cultural market transaction and push it into the bounds of how it affects children's literature awards. Just as Kidd justified looking critically at children's literature book awards, I propose we do the same with YAL, and looking at diversity over an array of large and small awards is key to starting this conversation. Kidd states it is important that "analysis of prizing must consider the institutional and disciplinary dimensions of distinction," and while in

his case it is referring to academic influences, I posit book awards, as a cultural market influence, are acting as an institutional dimension of distinction, and independent book awards are a response to the overwhelming authority given to larger awards (184). Just as Jeremy Rosen and Wendy Glen put forth, market forces outside academics and the classroom are at play, and attention needs to be paid to exactly how this is shaping YAL being produced and propagated. Rosen has done a lot of work bringing English analysis specifically to publishing, and ultimately his expansion on how genre and genre theory is utilized by publishers will be central to the justification of my own data analysis.

Building further on English's concept of book prizes as a cultural market transaction, what is key to my justification of examining YAL book awards is Jeremy Rosen's building onto traditional genre theory in his article "An Insatiable Market for Minor Characters: Genre in the Contemporary Literary Marketplace." He proposes it is critical to also consider how genre functions as an aspect of the literary marketplace:

There are substantial analytic rewards to a literary history that considers genre, not as a formal or aesthetic imperative alone, but as a mechanism in the chain of production. To understand the cultural significance of a genre and its function in both the marketplace and symbolic Economies, we must supplement our reading of the politics of form as expressed within literary texts, with attention to the social and political effects of the way those forms circulate. (159)

How this distills into my own research is if publishers and books awards are agents of culture denoting importance to titles, then it is important to know the aims of these agents of culture. If publishers are starting to look at genre as more than a way to categorize the literature they publish, in this case young adult, then we must see how they are commercially using the genre to

their own benefit. This also partly responds to the earlier discussion of Glen's call for paying attention to the aims of publishers alongside the contents of the title. If YAL is being utilized as a marketing function by publishers, then it will have effects on the contents of the title.

In Rosen's aforementioned work, his thoughts on how genres are being adapted and utilized by publishers specifically to market titles speaks to my own work. The genre of minor-character elaboration, the process by which a minor character from well know literature is extracted and given its own story, is what Rosen uses as a "case study of how cultural producers" deploy popular generic forms to trade "on the prestige of the literary canon while accommodating voices from the margins." This is important to pay attention to because it allows publishers to "simultaneously exploit both the timeless value of the classics and ostensibly oppositional political energies" (144). Far from seeking to diminish the serious aims of this genre and its works, such as the *Penelopiad*, Rosen uses it to showcase "how nominally literary purposes— dialogue, critique, homage, imaginative play—are entirely compatible with the commercial aims of publishers" (149).

Bridging this concept from minor-character elaboration and traditional genre theory, it can be adapted to viewing YAL in the same light. Publishers have utilized the YAL much in the same way Rosen shows minor-character elaboration genre is used; they saw its rising popularity and did not want to miss out on the wave of YAL purchases. The question becomes is YAL being produced by publishers simply playing to commercial aims, or is it truly diverse, relevant work? Quality YAL can be produced for commercial aims and be diverse, but often, as I discussed with Wendy Glen's work, YAL being published for financial reasons will often be written in a way detrimental to the quality of the title. While not all YAL, or novels generally, are top-of-the-line literature, we should be interrogating how large and independent book awards

and publishers are utilizing the young adult genre. If publishers are looking to only make a profit with YAL, then monetary reasons are at the forefront of publication instead of the quality of the literature, and this will cause the proliferation of more problematic YAL.

Moving forward with Rosen's idea of viewing genre not only "as a formal or aesthetic imperative alone, but as a mechanism in the chain of production," I propose it can be applied to the young adult genre and book awards in the same manner. Rosen's usage of genre theory is applied to the minor-character elaboration genre and notes how "publishers are increasingly drawn to all forms of genre fiction, and in this milieu minor-character elaboration has proven particularly attractive to producers and consumers alike." Rosen ends up calling for attention to be paid to large, corporatized institutions which are mass producing literature and saturating the literary marketplace (158-159). It is important we remember literature does not exist in a vacuum from market forces and capitalism, and it simply does not appear in our classrooms and on our bookshelves. While literature is often considered within these socioeconomic contexts, there has not been enough discourse around how the young adult genre, and book awards catering to this genre, are shaping the kinds of literature reaching young adults and what mechanism institutions are using to put these works in front of them, potentially even book awards.

I will recall here the earlier conversation with Flax's article about the calls for increased diversity from large publishers, and previously discussion about the large market share of the Big Four publishers. When companies control such a large portion of the market, they inherently have an advantage in terms of marketing and consumer control. Part of interrogating the control large publishers have over the marketplace is to look at books being awarded; after all, publishers are agents of culture and as large publishers are also corporate and capitalist, being

aware of their commercial aims is paramount to verifying the integrity of awards they are submitting books to.

The final piece of scholarship I wish to bring into the discussion here is a previous work on interrogating young adult book awards and book lists for their lack of diversity. The research done here is important, but they do not consider YAL award-winning titles outside of the large awards, rendering more importance to my own research. The study is a 2011 article “Are All Lists Created Equal? Diversity in Award-Winning and Bestselling Young Adult Fiction” by Casey Rawson. Rawson set out to interrogate how well award-winning YAL, and the lists they were found on, were providing diverse books. Rawson relegated her research to 248 unique titles from 2000-2009 and put her diversity findings into context within overall U.S. demographics.

Why these award-winning young adult books and booklists were being examined was because of the troubles librarians were having sourcing YAL. This speaks to the same struggles the librarians of the MOSAIC committee faced when previously discussing Haeffner’s work. Rawson’s research concluded all three lists of YAL could do better in terms of diversity representation, but found the list of bestselling titles “included the lowest percentage” of diverse representation while the award-winning list had the best representation (Rawson 2011). The caveat, however, being neither bestseller list nor award-winning list were shaping up to the demographic makeup of the United States. This means while diversity had increased over time in both awards and lists, the number of titles did not proportionally relate to U.S. demographics. This falls in line with the previously mentioned CCBC and NCES data.

What Rawson’s study showcases in alignment with Glen and Haeffner is the paramount struggle of teachers and librarians who are dedicated to finding and promoting diverse literature, and how they have been fighting this battle for diverse YAL for a long time. Proper attention has

been given to children book awards over the years, with the importance of literature acting as mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors in the forefront when doing so. In recent years, scholars are starting to utilize the same critical lens applied to children's books and awards for their YAL counterparts. If children's literature has the power to positively shape a child's mind and introduce them to ways of living outside their own, it is only logical that YAL would be the next staging ground for providing young adults with diverse literature to continue acting as mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors. Alongside the growing diversity in U.S. demographics and the students who are reading in classrooms, now is the best time to be critically engaging with YAL wherever it may be found.

## 4. EXPLORATION OF DATA

My data gathering resulted in investigating 59 books, 25 books from large publisher book awards and 34 books from independent book awards. The results I gathered from my research are, in the end, not supportive of my original idea purporting independent publisher awards are better tuned to literary diversity. Of the 34 fiction YAL books awarded from 2010-2019 by large publishers, we can see in the table below 59% of the books awarded are by white authors, with white main characters coming in at 50%. Asian, biracial, Black, and Latinx authors make up the other 41% of titles awarded, and 50% of main characters. There are more non-white main characters than authors due to some titles having more than one main protagonist in the form of multiple narratives intertwining. The largest represented minority group from the large book awards were Black author's and main characters, followed by a tie between biracial and Latinx authors, with Asian authors least represented. One title was repeated three times in the large book awards but only coded one time to preserve having completely unique data points.

Table 1. Large Publisher Award Percentages

Large Publisher Awards 2010-2019		
	Author	Character(s)
Asian	13.64%	10.71%
Biracial	9.09%	14.29%
Black	9.09%	14.29%
Latinx	9.09%	7.14%
Native American	0.00%	0.00%
White	59.09%	50.00%
Indeterminate	0.00%	3.57%

On the other end, the independent press awards are overwhelming white in both author and character representation at 86% and 83% respectively. Of Minority ethnic representation, there is a single Black author who wrote the only Black character. There are also two instances

of main characters who were Pacific Islander and Afghan. However, the author of the Pacific Islander character was written by a biracial man with unstated background, and the story with an Afghan main character was written by a White female. There were 8% indeterminate character and author diversity data in the independent press awards and 3% indeterminate characters in large press awards due to there being a lack of information about award winners in the following forms: three authors who wrote with an alias, defunct author webpages, lack of publisher provided information, and main characters whose ethnicity was explicitly not mentioned or able to be determined. You can find more information on the numerical breakdown of both awards in the tables located in the Appendix.

Table 2. Independent Publisher Award Percentages

Independent Publisher Awards 2010-2019		
	Author	Character(s)
Asian	0.00%	0.00%
Biracial	2.78%	0.00%
Black	2.78%	2.78%
Latinx	0.00%	0.00%
Native American	0.00%	0.00%
Pacific Islander	0.00%	2.78%
Afghan	0.00%	2.78%
White	86.11%	83.33%
Indeterminate	8.33%	8.33%

When looking at gender, across all awards we are seeing predominately female authors and nearly even male and female main characters. The stats show large book awards having female authors and characters at 60% and 48% respectively, followed by the independent presses with 74% and 61%. Broadly, there are more male main characters than male authors due to narratives containing multiple male protagonists. Alternatively, we saw more female authors than female characters due to some female authors writing male main characters.



Table 3. Large Publisher Sexual Identification Percentages

Independent - Sexual Identification		
	Author	Characters
CIS	88.57%	91.89%
LGBTQ	11.43%	8.11%

Table 4. Large Publisher Gender Percentages

Large - Gender		
	Author	Characters
Male	39.13%	51.85%
Female	60.87%	48.15%

Regarding LGBTQ authors and characters, we are seeing a lack from both book awards. From large presses we are seeing 17% and 16% author and main character respectively and from small presses the percentage comes in at 11% and 8%. Most books coming from both large and small awards are from authors and characters with a predominately straight sexual identity. Both have the trend of more inclusion as far as sexual identity in authors and characters is appearing in more recent years.

Table 5. Small Publisher Sexual Identification Percentages

Large - Sexual Identification		
	Author	Characters
CIS	82.61%	83.87%
LGBTQ	17.39%	16.13%

Table 6. Small Publisher Gender Percentages

Independent - Gender		
	Author	Characters
Male	25.71%	30.95%
Female	74.29%	61.90%

## **5. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS**

My data resulted in interesting conclusions and points to my initial ideas of how independent book awards are awarding diverse literature being wrong. Over the past ten years (2010-2019) of young adult book awards, my data shows majority white centric author and characters being awarded from both books awards. However, the number of white authors and characters coming from independent book awards surpassed those coming from large book awards by nearly 30% in both author and character ethnic diversity. From large awards we see 59% of books by white authors with 48% white main characters. This is closer to the NCES data on U.S. schools demographic makeup than the independent awards 86% and 83%. From this statistic here we can clearly see while there is still room to improve for both awards, large awards are making better strides.

Speaking on gender, my data shows a majority female author and character presence in awarded young adult fiction, and an extreme lack of LGBTQ author and characters. While it seems in large YAL awards there is an increasing amount of diversity, independent awards were lacking and overall there is more work to be done to improve the diversity of both large and independent YAL awards. As previously discussed, the overall diversity of classrooms across the U.S. is increasing, and there needs to be not only diverse children's literature, but diverse YAL as well. Librarians have an almost insurmountable task of sorting through all the fiction YAL published every year and being critical of YAL awards is one way to help.

There are a few reasons why we may be seeing overwhelming white writers being awarded by independent book awards. There may be submission diffusion happening due to the number of categories present in independent book awards. Often, as we see with the large awards chosen for this study, there is only one or perhaps two YAL categories, resulting in large awards

having many submissions for a single award. To contrast with the small book awards chosen, they will have multiple categories that YAL can fit into, such as: New YA Author, LGBTQ, and splitting fiction and nonfiction YAL. It is important to also point out there are large and small awards who specialize in literature from certain diverse groups, which may be more appealing to diverse authors. These reasons can cause a skewed analysis coming from independent book awards, which can only be accounted for by expanding the dataset appropriately to account for these differences and possibilities. It is important to remember here finalist in all book awards being excluded, which may also potentially have provided more diversity statistics.

Additionally, small publishers are often more willing to take risks on new and upcoming authors before they may potentially move onto large publishers. This could act as a foil to independent book awards, where if an author knows they have a quality, diverse title, they will shoot for the large book awards over the independent book awards. An author could potentially not even know about these small awards and be looking for the prestige of a larger award. Another thing to consider here is that while independent book awards will typically refuse submission from the Large Four publishers and their imprints, the large book awards will not make such a distinction. Naturally, this opens the large book awards for vastly more submissions than independent awards. It is also important to consider how much pressure has been applied to large publishers and awards, while much of the same critical pressure regarding diverse representation has not been directly applied to independent awards.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Generally, my data is limited by the scope of a master's thesis, and only by a more thorough examination of independent press awards can we get a true picture of why fiction YAL awards are seemingly lacking in diverse representation. A more robust and encompassing dataset needs to be gathered and examined to make a more pointed and informed critique of independent book awards attempts at YAL diversity. To create a more robust dataset, I would like to see a comprehensive study done explicitly on reputable independent book awards, coding for diversity in all their YAL categories. We have yet to see a case study on independent book awards and having such a dataset would enable scholars to fully critique move engagement in this area forward.

It is also important to remember there are a multitude of small presses who are devoted to publishing and promoting diverse literature. Just because these books may not be gaining accolades or publicity, does not mean they are not being published and read. While press awards large and small are utilized by librarians, schools, and other public entities to sift through the massive amounts of literature published every year, they are in the end just lists; they do not represent the full diversity of books being published every year, and the lists curation are undoubtedly affected by the intended use of the list and personal biases of the list creator.

I also am openly comparing the best in YAL awards, with prestigious backgrounds and judging processes, to their independent counterparts, so there may be a general difference in types of literature submitted and differing judging process. This is not to say that small awards do not have as thorough judging process or small publishers are not capable of great literature as well. Scholarly engagement with awards has targeted large book awards and left independent publishers to their own devices, and my data showcases why we need to be looking just as

critically at independent awards as large awards. With book and authors from small presses and awards being part of the literary marketplace, they justly deserve our attention and critical engagement with these young adult awards can only strengthen them. If those who are engaged and invested in the development, growth, and quality of independent book awards do not do the scholarly work required to improve, then we will not see these awards get the credit they deserve, or alternatively the deserved critique. Such engagements can only strengthen the independent publishing scene and justify externally their importance to the literary marketplace.

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## APPENDIX. SUPPLEMENTARY NUMERICAL TABLES

Table A1. Numerical Large Award Ethnicities

Large Awards Numbers 2010-2019		
	Author	Character(s)
Asian	3	3
Biracial	2	4
Black	2	4
Latino/a	2	2
Native American	0	0
White	13	14
Indeterminate	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>28</b>

Table A2. Numerical Large Award Sexual Identification

Large Awards Numbers Sexual Identification		
	Author	Character(s)
Straight	19	26
LGBTQ	4	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>31</b>

Table A3. Numerical Large Award Gender

Large Awards Numbers Gender		
	Author	Character
Male	9	14
Female	14	13
<b>Totals</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>27</b>

Table A4. Numerical Independent Award Ethnicities

Independent Awards Numbers 2010-2019		
	Author	Character(s)
Asian	0	0
Biracial	1	0
Black	1	1
Latino/a	0	0
Native American	0	0
White	31	30
Pacific Islander	0	1
Afghan	0	1
Indeterminate	3	3
Totals	36	36

Table A5. Numerical Independent Award Sexual Identification

Independent Awards Numbers Sexual Identification		
	Author	Character(s)
CIS	31	34
LGBTQ	4	3
Totals	35	37

Table A6. Numerical Independent Award Gender

Independent Awards Numbers Gender		
	Author	Character
Male	9	13
Female	26	26
Indeterminate	0	3
Totals	35	42