Kennesaw State University

DigitalCommons@Kennesaw State University

Summer 7-24-2019

Cracked Windows, Broken Mirrors, and Closed Doors: A Critical Content Analysis of African American Children's Books

Tiffany World
tworld@students.kennesaw.edu

Recommended Citation

CRACKED WINDOWS, BROKEN MIRRORS, AND CLOSED DOORS:

A CRITICAL CONTENT ANALYSIS OF

AFRICAN AMERICAN CHILDREN'S BOOKS

by

Tiffany World

A Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for the

Degree of

Doctor of Education

in

Early Childhood and Elementary Education

In the

Bagwell College of Education

Kennesaw State University

Kennesaw, Georgia

2019

DEDICATION

To my family-Howard, Capricious, Charisma, Zion, Isaiah, Kyng & Nina. I pray that you understand that you are my inspiration and the main reasons why I do what I do. I hope that I am able to lead by example. I want you to know that I love you immensely, you matter, and that you can accomplish anything that you set out to do. Always work hard, keep God first, and be the best "you" that only you can be.

.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To my committee, Dr. Sohyun An, Dr. Raynice Jean-Sigur, Dr. Camille Sutton-Brown-Fox, Dr. Neporcha Cone, and Dr. Sanjuana Rodriguez. I admire you and are honored to have such dynamic scholars to serve on my committee. Thank you for the countless hours you spent reading my work and providing feedback. A special thanks to my acting Chair, Dr. Sanjuana Rodriguez, for really stepping up and working tirelessly with me during this dissertation process.

To my family, particularly my Mom, Dad, Aunts, and Uncles for your love, encouragement, and support. A special thanks to my Mother-in-Love for the countless prayers and encouragement. To my children, Capricious, Charisma, Zion, Isaiah, and Kyng, I can't thank you enough for the love, encouragement, and support that you have shown over the years. You all endured many sacrifices during this process. To my granddaughter, Nina, thanks for inspiring your Dr. Oma.

And finally, to my husband Howard-You are my biggest supporter! I could not have done this without you. You have carried your weight and mine for many years as I completed this journey. You cooked, took care of our children, and drove me to every class and meeting. Your constant love and support sustained me and gave me the strength to keep going. You would not let me give up! You always believed in me! Thank you! We did it!

Hallelujah! God is Good!

ABSTRACT

There is a current shortage of culturally responsive African American children's books. Culturally responsive literature provides a positive influence on children of all races and researchers have indicated that picturebooks that are diverse and culturally responsive can affirm cultural and social identities (Crowley, Fountain, & Torres, 2012). The purpose of this study was to examine how the life experiences of African American families are currently being depicted in recently published children's literature. This study employed a qualitative research design to explore the topic of African American families in children's literature. The study examined how African American families are represented in the illustrations and texts. Two research questions on African American life experiences and family culture were used to guide this study:

1. How are life experiences of African American families represented in children's picturebooks submitted to the Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC) in 2017?

2. How are African American characters and cultures portrayed in the illustrations and/or texts?

I applied the critical race theory as a conceptual tool for analyzing how race and racism have been systematized and supported. Findings from this study indicate that the most prevalent life experiences found among the literature were the church, family, and music. Findings also indicate that the picturebooks did not represent a wealth of experiences that are present in African American families. Findings also indicate that the selected picturebook subset did not have enough culturally responsive books in the collection. Implications for families as well as teachers are included.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Many significant events and experiences have motivated and led me to this particular venture. Growing up a poor, Black, girl in a relatively small town and attending small schools have inspired me and continues to mold me into the woman that I am becoming every day. As I reflect over my life's experiences, my perspectives of my 'world,' and the world around me, I am reminded that there is still more work to be done in "teaching and reaching" all students.

My Vignette

It was a busy Thursday morning in October 2017. I remember because I was working on writing the agenda for a grade level meeting. I was sitting in my classroom working during my planning time. The Art teacher at my school (sweet, young, White woman) comes to my class during my students' activity time. She does not have her own classroom, so she travels from class to class to conduct her art lessons.

I had just really begun to think about using critical literacy for my study, but I was still a little unsure. Yes, the need for critical literacy was there, but was it really appropriate for my young students? As I sat working in my classroom, I listened as the art teacher began to talk with the students about her lesson and read aloud. I was not familiar with the book, but the title *My Many Colored Days* by Dr. Seuss captured my attention. In this story, a child is describing how he feels on different days. The tone and vibe change with every feeling and color. She came to a point in the story that really struck a nerve with me. Her voice and demeanor changed from vibrant to depressing. "Some days, of course, feel sort of Brown. Then I feel slow and low, low down." I immediately looked up and across the room at my students' expressions. How was this affecting my Brown students? As a person of color, I really felt like the words of that book were offensive and culturally unresponsive. It made me feel embarrassed and uneasy. Knowing that

the words of this story made me feel uncomfortable, I could only imagine the message being sent to my students. She kept on reading, her voice changing with every color and mood. By this time, I could not wait to hear what it was going to be like for the "Black day." Finally, she gets to that part, "Then come my Black days. Mad and loud. I howl. I growl at every cloud." This is when it hits me. Something has to be done! We, as teachers of young children, have to be mindful of the messages that we send and equally as mindful of the messages that are being conveyed by the literature that we share with students. What was seemingly a fun and carefree art lesson and a fun book by a beloved author, has really provoked me to change the way I see literature.

I do not want my students to feel inferior because of the color of their skin, age, gender, poverty level, etc. They must learn to think critically about literacy, have critical discussions about literacy, and know how to find their own voices. Sometimes that may mean analyzing very popular and world-renowned works of literature. Some Dr. Seuss books have been recently critiqued and criticized for being racist. Recently, librarian Liz Phipps Soeiro (2017) rejected the ten Dr. Seuss books that were gifted to her school by First Lady Melania Trump. Librarian Soeiro asserted that Dr. Seuss illustrations are "steeped in racist propaganda, caricatures, and harmful stereotypes." Additionally, scholar Phillip Nel's new book, *Was the Cat in the Hat Black? The Hidden Racism of Children's Literature, and the Need for Diverse Books*, also addressed the systemic racism and oppression in literature and education (Nel, 2017). I did not really know how to handle that situation at the time, because I do not believe that she meant any harm by it. However, now I am ready to take action so that no child feels that "I must be slow and low down because I'm Brown or mad and loud because I'm Black. After all, my teacher read it in a book."

Statement of the Problem

As an African American educator, I began to consider the selection of books that are made available to all of my students. I noticed that many books did not reflect the diversity of lives and cultures of culturally and linguistically diverse students. Currently, a shortage of African American children's books that are available to students in the classroom exists. There may be many reasons for this, such as a lack of funding to buy new books, an oversight to the attention to detail when ordering new books, culturally unresponsive classroom teachers, or difficulty in publishing books that reflect diverse experiences.

One major reason for a shortage may be that some people choose to treat all students the same as those considered to be in the "dominant" group rather than celebrate the differences that each unique child brings to the classroom. This notion only diminishes the value placed on the lives and experiences of those who are part of a minority group. This is an extension of what is going on in the United States during the current Trump administration. It seems that racism is becoming emboldened both implicitly and explicitly. People of color are still seen by some as inferior and treated as less than human.

According to a recent report by the Pew Research Center (2016), more African Americans have been incarcerated recently than in the 1960s, African Americans are paid only 82 cents on the dollar compared to their White counterparts, fewer African American graduate college, and African Americans are less likely to own a home. Furthermore, recently there has been increased shootings of African American males by the group of people who are supposed to serve and protect humanity. Herein lies the problem: minority communities, particularly African Americans, are undervalued in our society. African Americans in the United States continue to struggle in the quest to attain the American Dream. Mercado's (2016) report suggested that it

would take African Americans 228 years to attain the same generation of wealth as normal White U.S. citizens. This does not include the rich, but rather average to middle-class White individuals. Therefore, the process of closing both the economic and literacy gaps between Whites and non-Whites is important. To educate all students appropriately, students must be presented with books that depict diverse lifestyles, opportunities, and experiences in addition to books that only focus on the status quo (Boyd, Causey, & Galda, 2015). Moreover, children's texts may serve as windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors by offering insights, reflections, and new perspectives (Bishop, 1990; 1992). By critically looking at current children's literature and recognizing where we are as a nation, we can begin moving forward to make sure that no child feels inferior in the classroom due to his/her dark skin.

Theoretical Framework

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a theoretical framework that I employed for this study. CRT emerged from the work of critical legal scholars after the Civil Rights Movement and is now employed by scholars in various fields of education (Kumar, 2014). The major tenets of CRT include: (a) Racism is prevalent in the United States; (b) intersectionality of race, class, gender, and sexuality as focal points in the analysis of inequality; (C) the lived experiences of people of color enduring racism as a source of knowledge, and (d) Whiteness as a form of property (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000).

CRT provides conceptual tools for examining how race and racism have been institutionalized and upheld. Some scholars suggest that CRT should be used as an analytical instrument to look closely at educational inequality that is deep-seated in our society (Ladson-Billings, 1998, Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2006; Luna, 2016). An essential principle of CRT is that

racism is endemic, institutional, and systematic. Likewise, racism is not an anomaly but rather a necessary way of organizing society (Lac, 2017; Sleeter, 2017; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). Current research indicated that CRT helps people push beyond a phony analysis of disconnects between educators and diverse students in schools (Sleeter, 2017). In short, educators and researchers have used CRT to recognize how labels, such as at-risk, tend to promote a deficit view of students from some racial and ethnic backgrounds (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Shapiro, 2014; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

Race and education have always been, and will most likely continue to be, an essential component in the way opportunities for learning have manifested in U.S. schools and learning institutions (Howard & Navarro, 2016). As a result, my study of African American children's literature is grounded in the CRT framework. My research study aims to challenge dominant racial discourse practices by closely examining this type of literature in an effort to highlight the racial divide as it pertains to ideas of "color blindness," stereotypes, and meritocracy (Crenshaw, 2011; Parker, 2015).

There is a definite need for educational inclusion for a number of marginalized groups such as African American, Latinx, Asian American, Native American, the poor, or women (Donnor, 2011; Howard & Navarro, 2016; Leonado, 2013; Spring, 2006). Using CRT, my study critically examined various children's literature for themes, culturally responsiveness, and implicit /explicit racism while promoting and advocating for relevant multicultural texts that seek to "reflect" the lives of all students, specifically, African Americans. Understanding the racial injustices and oppression that many people of color face in the United States, as it pertains to education in the United States, is a significant component of my study, which examines how African Americans are being represented in current children's literature. Therefore, CRT

(Ladson-Billings, 1998; Lasdon-Billings & Tate, 1995) was utilized as the main analytical frame in this critical content analysis. CRT allowed me to critically examine and challenge the dominant racial ideology that has disguised the self-interest, power, and privilege of dominant groups in our society (Carbado, 2013; Crenshaw, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Lopez, 2003; Parker, 2015;).

Employing Critical Race Theory enabled me to recognize and identify any blatant or implied assumptions, stereotypes, and ideologies presented in the children's picturebooks (Braden & Rodriguez, 2016; Milner, 2008). The intent of this study was to validate, support, and promote the complex families and communities of African Americans. As an African American educator and researcher, I understand that there is still work that needs to be done in a society in which "Whiteness" is often treated as superior while people of color are treated as inferior (Braden & Rodriguez, 2016; Hill, 2017; Sleeter, 2017; Winograd, 2011).

Purpose and Significance of Study

The purpose of this study was to critically examine how the life experiences of African American families are currently being depicted in recently published children's picturebooks. The focus of this study was to provide a critical content analysis of children's picturebooks written by and/or about African Americans, which were submitted to the Cooperative Children's Book Center in 2017. I sought to explore cultural representations, emerging themes, misrepresentations, caricatures, and stereotypes regarding African American Children's Literature.

These points are addressed by first discussing the guiding theoretical framework Critical Race Theory (Ladson-Billings, 1998). I also reviewed concepts relevant to African American Children's Literature. Then, I described the following key factors that shape one's perspectives

on African American Children's literature: (a) the overview of statistics on diverse literature, (b) the "We Need More Diverse Books" Movement (1990), (c) African American children's books in the classroom, (d) African American analysis and history, (e) African American families, and (f) intersectionality and poverty. Finally, a review of African American families in children's literature using critical content analysis to analyze diverse literature is presented along with a section on windows, mirrors, and doors (Sims-Bishop, 1990).

Research Questions

This qualitative study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How are life experiences of African American families represented in children's picturebooks submitted to the Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC) in 2017?

2. How are African American characters and cultures portrayed in the illustrations and/or texts?

Limitations of the Study

To closely examine African American children's literature submitted to the CCBC in 2017, the researcher used a qualitative study using critical content analysis. A limitation of employing a critical content analysis is interpretation. Readers of this study may interpret the selected texts differently from the critical content analyst. Rosenblatt (1995) argued that meaning is constructed from the active engagement between the reader and the text. Likewise, Krippendorff (2004) contended "a text does not exist without a reader…" (p. 22). As an African American, my perspective could potentially be subjective. My intentions are to conduct my study and present my findings in a clear and concise manner.

Another limitation of this particular study is the size. This study is relatively small in scope as compared with similar studies. This study only focused on children's picturebooks with significant African American content and characters. These books were written in the United States and submitted to the CCBC in 2017. These factors narrow the scope, restrict the study, and omit numerous amounts of good quality children's literature.

Review of Relevant Terms

The terms that are relevant to this study include Critical Content Analysis, Critical Race Theory, Critical Pedagogy, diverse, family, African American Children's Literature, social injustice, praxis, inequitable, inclusive texts, poverty, intersectionality, dominant group, culturally responsive teaching, and culturally relevant education.

African American. People with total or partial ancestry from Black racial groups of Africa. An individual with a self-stated definition is also taken into consideration (Landrine & Klonoff, 1996).

African American Children's Literature. Refers to children's literature written by and/or about African American people, who are a group of the U.S. population who identify as African American or Black (Cooperative Children's Book Center [CCBC], 2019).

Critical Content Analysis. Critical content analysis is a type of research methodology for analyzing texts and defining and interpreting written works within a society (White & Marsh, 2006). This is accomplished by coding and identifying themes or patterns within a text (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Researchers modify content analysis to facilitate the study of their research questions and create a variety of methods for analyzing the written artifacts (Krippendorff, 2004).

Critical Pedagogy. A dynamic framework that focuses on empowering people of all classes, races, and genders, through non-traditional educational practices. Critical Pedagogy allows individuals from groups that are considered marginalized to access resources to create more opportunities at the individual and/or group level (Freire, 1970).

Critical Race Theory. CRT is a theoretical perspective that focuses on the appearance of how race and racism are expressed throughout the dominant culture. CRT researchers seek to understand how people who are oppressed under systematic racism are affected (Delgado, & Stefancic, 2012, 2013).

Culturally Relevant Teaching. A pedagogy based on a teacher's cultural competence skills at teaching students within a multicultural environment (Diller & Moule, 2005).

Culturally Responsive Teaching. A method of teaching that focuses on the student's cultural identity and experiences that are affected by identity (Diller & Moule, 2005).

Diverse. A diverse culture is one that is complex and includes the knowledge, beliefs arts, morals, laws, and customs and behaviors of a member of society that may include minority cultures within a larger dominant culture (Tylor & Seymour-Smith, 1986).

Dominant Group. A group that holds disproportionate control over the system of value and reward in a particular society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2013).

Family. From a sociological perspective, families are defined as a type of social institution with the purpose to establish and structure systems of social behavior, in which these behaviors are implemented with the purpose to achieve specific goals (Andersen & Taylor, 2009; Newman, 2009).

Inclusive Texts. Refers to texts that are culturally representative of diverse groups within a multicultural environment (Bland & Gann. 2013)

Inequitable. Refers to a disproportionate amount of resources given to the dominant group over other groups, which is relevant to the discussion of inequitable historical, social, political/economic policies, beliefs, norms, and values (Freire, 1970).

Intersectionality. This term refers to the idea that certain features of an individual's identity do not directly define their categorization of group membership (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). As such, one cannot predict an individual's values, beliefs or identity based on factors such as nationality, religion, gender, race, and sexuality.

Picturebook. Refers to a book that is typically for children, and the content is conveyed through the use of words and pictures. Books in this category are usually 48 pages or less, illustrated on most pages, and not divided into chapters (CCBC, 2019).

Poverty. The state of being extremely poor (Ringen, 1988).

Praxis. To apply, engage, exercise and practice ideas (Tylor & Seymour-Smith, 1986).

Social Injustice. Refers to when people who belong to categories of race and gender are often unfairly treated or targeted for discrimination (Young, 2000).

Traditional Family Structure. A family consisting of a mother and father figure (McCaffrey, 2013).

Summary

Scholars affirmed the importance of all readers needing a rich and diverse diet of books that reflect the various ethnic, cultural, socioeconomic, and linguistic groups that make up multiple voices, lives, and perspectives around the world (Boyd, Causey, & Galda, 2015). Therefore, I conducted a qualitative study using critical content analysis to explore African American children's picturebooks written by and about African Americans in the United States.

These books were written and submitted to the CCBC in 2017. I looked for any emerging themes, misrepresentations, cultural representations, caricatures, and stereotypes.

The CCBC noted that there is a need for more diverse books. They offered promising news that they have been given magnificent books by authors and illustrators who have written children's literature that gives children, who are not White and middle-class, picturebooks that "offer affirmation, visibility, and insight into the world in which they live" (Horning, Lindgren, & Schliesman, 2014). Furthermore, diverse literature offers White children an opportunity to see different perspectives of their world (Boyd, Causey, & Galda, 2015). With all of the discrimination, racial profiling, and social injustice against people of color, I am committed to using this study to provide a critical analysis of African American literature to determine if this literature adequately portrays their lives, families, and culture of African Americans in children's picturebooks submitted to the CCBC in 2017.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

In a time when there is increased mandates and top-down curricula, there is also an increased need for educators to analyze their school contexts in an effort to create meaningful learning opportunities for students (Riley, 2015). In doing so, educators begin to humanize education in their classrooms. As a researcher and educator, I seek to provide all students with an education that is relevant, rigorous, and humanizing. Numerous areas in education need to be addressed, restructured, and reformed. These areas include unequal access, race, gender, and class biases, inequalities in spending, class size, resources, facilities, teacher preparation programs, teacher accountability, and high stakes testing (Darling-Hammond, 2006).

All children have a right to learn. W.E.B. DuBois (1970) said, "Of all the civil rights for which the world has struggled and fought for 5000 years, the right to learn is undoubtedly the most fundamental…" (p. 230). If educators are to create a 21st Century school system in which all learners have equal access to high-quality education, schools must become good places for teaching and learning (Darling-Hammond, 2006). This is a very powerful and important statement. My passion as an African American teacher drives me to seek out ways in which I can improve the current educational system. I begin by examining some of the dehumanizing practices of biased literacy instructions.

Recent research argued that education must include programs and opportunities that nurture and support successful outcomes for all students. To accomplish this goal, it is imperative to have educational reform at both the individual and organizational levels (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Fisher & Frey, 2007; Harsh & Mallory, 2013). Janks (2010) stated:

Our pedagogic habitus is formed by years spent in school as students, by the teachers

who taught us, the books we have read, the education departments and schools we have

worked in and the colleagues we have worked with. It is embodied in the way we talk to

children, where we position ourselves in the classroom, how we stand, what we do with

our eyes, and how we expect students to comport themselves. Our embodied practices are

bound up with ingrained beliefs about education and what we value in students. We have

to want to change and we have to work at it. (p. 201)

With that said I believe educators should strive to provide all students with a quality education

that they have a right to and deserve. Studies indicate that this type of education is student-

centered, engaging, rigorous, culturally responsive, and relevant (Bennett, 2008; Darling-

Hammond, 2006; Fisher & Frey, 2007; Harsh & Mallory, 2013; Kuby, 2013).

In this literature review, the following sections include; an overview of statistics on

diverse literature, reviewed the "We Need More Diverse Books" movement (1990), African

American children's books in the classroom, African American analysis and history, African

American families, and intersectionality and poverty as these are key factors in shaping one's

perspectives. Lastly, I reviewed African American families in children's literature and using

critical content analysis to analyze diverse literature and windows, mirrors, and doors (Sims-

Bishop, 1990).

Culturally Responsive Teaching/Learning

Culturally responsive pedagogy requires that educators carefully consider what they are

teaching in an ethnically responsible context (Paris & Alim, 2017; Milner, 2016). This pedagogy

is grounded in teaching to a multi-cultural group and offers students authentic information about

different ethnic groups (Gay, 2000). Gay (2000) stressed there are six principles to culturally

responsive teaching;

1. Validation

2. Comprehension

3. Multidimensional

4. Empowering

5. Transformative

6. Emancipatory

Culturally responsive educators will help students "learn to apply new knowledge generated by

various ethnic scholars to their analyses of social histories, issues, problems, and experiences"

(Gay, 2000, p. 35). Sleeter (2011) noted that "culturally responsive pedagogy is not only about

teaching but is also a political endeavor directed toward equity and justice" (p. 19). This is in line

with some of the central features of culturally responsive pedagogy; cooperation, community,

and connectedness (Gay, 2000). Whitaker and Valtierra (2018) indicated that educators that are

culturally responsive will "interrogate the underlying causes of achievement difficulties of

various culturally diverse students" (p. 13). This type of learning encourages and enables

students to discover their own voices and to become active in shaping their own learning.

Overview of Statistics on Diverse Literature

Historically, African Americans have been underrepresented and/or misrepresented in

children's books (Huyck, Dahlen, & Griffin, 2016; McNair 2010; Moller, 2016; Sims, 1980,

1990, 2012). Moreover, most of the scholarly attention given to African American children's

books in the 1970s and 1980s were focused on critiquing the visual and verbal representations of

the Black characters in those books (Sims, 2012). One of the most significant and frequently

cited studies was conducted by Broderick (1973). This seminal work analyzed over 100 years (1827-1967) of children's fiction that included representations of Black characters. Broderick confirmed the same historical patterns of racism, stereotypes, and caricatures that had been identified in an earlier study conducted by Brown (1933) 40 years prior to Broderick's (1973) study (Sims, 2012). Rudine Sims-Bishop conducted a study in 1980 to analyze the existing children's fiction books that were contemporary and inclusive of Blacks. She looked at books published from 1965 to 1979. In that 14-year timespan, Sims-Bishop (1980) was able to locate 150 books. The three categories that were formed are social conscience, melting pot, and culturally conscious books. Those readings became the basis and foundation of her first book, *Shadow and Substance: Afro-American Experience in Contemporary Fiction* (Sims, 1980).

Rudine Sims-Bishop's work continues to be cited by researchers when examining African Americans children's literature. Researchers seeking to challenge the norm and to transform the way people of color are represented in the world continue to use Bishop's plethora of work as a catalyst and springboard for similar studies and praxis. As an African American researcher, I found the implications of her study to be very insightful and relevant to my own study. Consequently, Sims-Bishop's work addresses, values, and promotes the need for diverse literature, more specifically literature in which African Americans can see reflections of themselves and their positions in texts. While at the same time, providing opportunities for students of what some consider a dominant race to experience texts of races and cultures, other than their own. Her work also acts as seminal work related to my field of study.

The number of African American students in U.S. schools in 2014 was 15.5% (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2017). However, African American students remain to be underwhelmed and underrepresented in children's picturebooks (Boyd, Causey, & Galda, 2015;

Huyck, Dahlen, & Griffin, 2016). With that said, there is an opportunity and a need to critically look at how this particular group of students could possibly be better represented in the books they see and read in their schools (Boyd, 2003; Boyd, et al., 2015; Galda, Sipe, Liang, & Cullinan, 2013; McNair, 2016). This critical content analysis focused on African American inclusive texts and how African American families are represented in the children's picturebooks published in 2017. Inclusive texts are multicultural/ diverse literature. These books are inclusive in nature and aim to celebrate diversity. These books make room for multiple voices and perspectives, particularly those who have historically been excluded and disenfranchised (Bishop, 2012; Boyd et al., 2015; McNair, 2016).

According to the Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC), an annual compilation of books published in the United States, only 59 of the 3,400 (1.7%) books received in 2016 were picturebooks about African Americans. Of those 59, only 28 were written and/illustrated by African Americans and only 17 of those actually had African American cultural content (Horning, Lindgren, & Schliesman, 2016). More recent data are now available. There were about 3,700 books submitted to the CCBC in 2017. Of those books, 340 children's books had significant African or African American content and/or characters and 100 were written and/or illustrated by African Americans (Horning, Lindgren, & Schliesman, 2017). Table 1 shows data of the children's books received by the CCBC over the past two decades. These books are by and about people of color and, more specifically, African American children's books.

Table 1

Data of the Children's Books Received by the CCBC

Year	Number of Books Received at CCBC from the US	By African Americans	About African Americans
2017	3,700	100	340
2016	3,400	94	287
2015	3,400	108	270
2014	3,500	85	181
2013	3,200	69	94
2012	3,600	69	119
2011	3,400	79	123
2010	3,400	102	156
2009	3,000	83	157
2008	3,000	83	172
2007	3,000	77	150
2006	3,000	87	153
2005	2,800	75	149
2004	2,800	99	143
2003	3,200	79	171
2002	3,100	69	166
2001	5,000-5,500	99	201
2000	5,000-5,500	96	147
1999	5,000	82	151
1998	5,000	96	188
1997	4,500-5,000	88	216

Note: Data for Children's Books Received by the CCBC (CCBC, 2019).

We Need Diverse Books Movement

Regardless of school demographics or age of students, it is imperative for educators to think about the ways in which all students will be engaged in meaningful reading opportunities. The "We Need Diverse Books" Movement (2014) was dedicated to putting more books featuring diverse characters into the hands of all students. The notion of needing books that relate to people of color is not new. Educators such as W.E.B. Du Bois, Charlemae Hill Rollins, Effie Lee Newsome, and Rudine Sims-Bishop acknowledged the importance of children, Black children, in particular, having access to books for and about them to read (Boyd, Causey, & Galda, 2015; McNair, 2016; Moller, 2016).

Educators have been and will continue to play a major role in ensuring students are exposed to diverse literature in their classrooms. In short, "the implementation of culturally diverse literature in classrooms occurs when teachers make it happen" (Boyd, Causey, & Galda, 2015, p. 380). In other words, teachers have a responsibility to take the initiative to create atmospheres that are thick and rich with literature from a variety of racial and cultural backgrounds when creating classrooms that are conducive to rigorous and relevant literacy lessons.

African American Children's Books in the Classroom (Practice)

Inclusive school environments and restorative practices promote academic success leading to positive life outcomes (Wilson, 2014). When we focus on observable events, we gain an understanding of the not-so-obvious literacy practices that involve feelings, values, power, and cultural ways of using literacy (Bloom, Carter, Christian, Otto, & Shuart-Faris, 2005; Kuby, 2013). McNair (2016) asserted that books have various potentials. They entertain, promote a love for learning, and inform while affirming students' identities, values, perspectives, and history.

However, recent research illustrated the 2016 diversity in children's books to include only 7.6% African/African American compared to 73.3% of their White counterparts. Moreover, this particular research indicated that 12.5% of the books published were about animals, trucks, etc. (Dahlen, 2017). This research sheds light on the representation discrepancies of diversity in children's books that were recently published in the United States. This infographic prompts researchers and educators to look closely at how this may affect students.

One study conducted examined students in grades first through fourth (Oslick, 2013). This study explored students' reactions to a criminal justice issue using picturebooks. The aim of the study was to build a bridge between what students know about the criminal justice system and what they learn using diverse children's book. The story *This Sunday Coming* (Russell-Brown, 2009) was read to students. This story is about a 9-year old Black girl whose mother is in prison. This story helps to validate the experiences of children to let them know that others have been in their situation and have survived.

Sims (1990) argued that multicultural literature can be like mirrors, windows, and doors. Literature needs to be a mirror so that children can see themselves in books, a window so that they can learn about others, and a door to question and critically think about issues of social justice (Botelho & Rudman, 2009). The findings of this study indicated that students learned about one another, read text with feeling, became more understanding and tolerant, and responded with perceptions, associations, and affection (Oslick, 2013). Engaging elementary age students in critical literacy lessons, using diverse books, can provide multicultural experiences in which all students can benefit from the authentic, rich, and transformative discussions that result from these types of teaching practices.

Another study (Gardner, 2017) examined the perceptions of Black representations in literature and other visual mediums. The study included five focal families with children ages six to eleven years old. The findings of this study suggested that African American children must understand that some book representations reflect on "dark mirror" of the Black race. Negative representations about how Black people look should be properly critiqued while embracing identities and cultural practice (Gardner, 2017). This study is helpful when looking closely at the stereotypes and misrepresentations of Blacks in children's books.

The above studies primarily focus on the use and the practice of incorporating African American children's literature in the classroom. However, their findings are directly related to my study. These studies indicated and/or suggested how African Americans are represented in children's books often have a significant impact on Black children (Botelho & Rudman 2009; Gardner, 2017; Oslick 2013; Russell-Brown, 2009; Sims, 1990). It is my belief that every child should be able to find books in his/her classroom that represent him or her in a meaningful and genuine manner.

African American Literature Analysis and History

The genre that we now know as African American children's literature took shape in the late 1960s (Bishop, 2012). Bishop (2007) conducted a study and published a book entitled, *Free within Ourselves: The Development of African American Children's Literature,* to explain the historical developments of African American children's literature. She looked closely at books written by African Americans and traced that progression from its roots to the end of the 20th century. Her research found that many books published in the 19th century and the first several years of the 20th century portrayed Black characters as inferior beings and subjects of ridicule. Bishop (2012) made the assertion, "there is a difference between writing to someone and writing

about someone" (p. 6). This assertion proves true. The books that present African Americans in a negative way were less likely written for Black children to read for pleasure and enjoyment.

The first publication for Black children was written by the renowned scholar and activist, W.E.B. Du Bois (1920). His book entitled, *The Brownies' Book*, was, in fact, a magazine written for Black children. This magazine was written not only to entertain but to affirm Black children's self-worth and to teach them about their history and the contributions Black people have made. After all this time, African American literature has been and continues to be written with a purpose (Bishop, 2012). Modern African American literature is that which has been published since 1965, is purposed to fill a void, and makes certain that Black children would be seen. Moreover, Black writers wanted to tell their own stories and illustrations. This goes back to making that distinction in writing to or about someone (Bishop, 1990, 2012; Brooks, 2006; McNair, 2003).

Many of the traditional and contemporary classic children's books are written by White authors. Very few texts written by African Americans or other groups have been deemed classics (Harris, 1990; McNair, 2010). McNair (2010) suggested that classic children's book written by people of color should be read right alongside classics written by Whites. There are quite a few definitions of the term *classic* based on experts in the field of children's literature. However, for this study, a classic is a book written after 1950 with a literary style and theme that endures through the ages (McNair, 2010). McNair collected and analyzed data in efforts to call attention to the various classic children's books written by people of color. She categorized these books into three groups: (a) literary innovations, (b) universal experiences, and (c) breakthrough. McNair's (2010) research also provided a list of books and suggestions to help teachers and librarians become familiar with select African American children's literature. This type of

fieldwork provided valuable information to educators seeking to provide all children with diverse books rich and thick with authentic classic themes.

African American Families

The African American family is diverse in color, size, shape, social class, and structure, and cannot be minimized to fit a particular box (McNair, 2012; Revell & McGhee, 2012; Vereen, 2007). However, for this study, the term African American family is used to describe a group of the U.S. population who identify as African American or Black. There are several definitions of the term family. From a sociological perspective, families are defined as a type of social institution. A social institution includes established and structured systems of social behavior, in which these behaviors are implemented with the purpose to achieve specific goals (Andersen & Taylor, 2009; Newman, 2009).

Beyond the discussion of how families operate to meet society's needs, a family can also be a strong cultural symbol (Newman, 2009). In the context of the United States, for example, the typical U.S. family conveys a symbol of decency, in which the family conveys both wholesomeness and even innocence (Newman, 2009). The popular rhetoric surrounding family values, which assumes that the traditional family involves married parents and children, also perpetuates this label to associate with political agendas (Newman, 2009). For my study, I employed the definition as a household unit (Laslett & Wall, 1972), with a network of kin (Hareven, 1978), and a structure with a system of statuses, roles, and processes (Newman, 2009; Teachman, Polonko, & Scanzoni, 1987).

The definition of a household unit as it relates to its shape and size has been attempted by the Cambridge Group (Laslett & Wall, 1972), which had primarily researched the family household as it relates 18th and 19th century England. Nonetheless, several models for the

household unit have been described. According to Laslett and Wall (1972), the contemporary understanding of the household unit is informed by our perceptions of families within preindustrial Europe.

Historian Frederic LePlay distinguished three types of families: the patriarchal, the stem, and the unstable (Sussman, Steinmetz, & Peterson, 1999). Features of the patriarchal family include community, lineage, authority, and tradition. The stem family is a particular version of a patriarchal family that includes three generations and whose authority rests in the oldest generation (Mitterauer & Sieder, 1982). The third model is the unstable, or nuclear family, which is created when two people are married and dissolves when one person passes away. The nuclear family is presented as fleeting because it does not contain features that continue a successful multigenerational patriarchal or stem-family model (Sussman et al., 1999). Historians argued that because of constraints ranging from age of marriage, number of living children, and length of life, nuclear families are commonly regarded as a structural given regardless of whether it is classified as a social construct (Sussman et al., 1999).

Strong kinship networks are described by Hareven (1978), as those close in geographic proximity and those who undertake similar types of work (particularly where one local industry is exceptionally popular in the employment market), those with similar occupational statuses, similar traveling patterns, and low opportunity for social mobility. Teachman, Polonko, and Scanzoni, (1987) noted that the definition of a family may emerge (or dissolve) among people linked by blood and economic interdependence. African American families, in particular, are often linked by economic interdependence and friendships throughout multiple generations. Additionally, within the life-course developmental model, families are generally constructed as having a number of predetermined stages:

1. Marriage

2. Child Bearing

3. Child Rearing

4. Dissolution via the death of a spouse

Within this life-course perspective of African American families, an African American's own life-course development is often associated with the life-course development of other individuals who are associated within the family (Teachman, Polonko, & Scanzoni, 1987).

The African family structure was altered during the years of slavery in the United States. The structure of the African family commonly has strong and solid foundations that are built upon several generations of family and community (Revell & McGhee, 2012). In Africa, marriages are more than just a union between two people, but rather two families that support and promote kinship relationships (Georgas, 2003; Revell & McGhee, 2012). However, slavery in the United States caused disruption of the foundational structure of the African families, communities, and country. Furthermore, this disruption continued among African American families when families were torn apart by plantation owners (Bibb, 2009; Georgas 2003; Revell & McGhee, 2012).

As a result of the disruption brought upon the African American family structure, some researchers have formed ideas that the African American family functions at a deficit, is unstable, is at risk, and is in a continuous state of chaos and confusion (Cain & Combs-Orme, 2005; Moynihan, 1965; Vereen, 2007; Williams, Auslander, Houston, Krebill, & Haire-Joshu, 2000). This view in which African American families are seen at a deficit tends to identify race as the key component/focus, and is likewise viewed through a lens in which European American middle-class set of beliefs, values, and structure are the standard (Cain & Combs-Orme, 2005;

Williams et al., 2000). This type of frame of reference only serves to dehumanize and minimize

the strengths and distinct characteristics of the African American family and further perpetuates

the myths, stereotypes, and disadvantages that African American families regularly encounter

(Bibb, 2009; Cain & Combs-Orme, 2005; Georgas, 2003; Revell & McGhee, 2012; Vereen,

2007; Williams et al., 2000).

Conversely, while African mothers and fathers were being ripped away from their

families and sold and/or traded by their owners as property with little to no regard for keeping

these families intact, the African family demonstrated resiliency (Revell & McGhee, 2012).

Despite these events, African American families did their best to maintain their family structure

while living in slave shacks and in Free states. Having survived slavery, African Americans

families continued to be burdened by the oppressive nature of deeply rooted racism that stems

from generations of hate and systemic prejudices in the United States (Bibb, 2009; Revell &

McGhee, 2012). Some of these systemic racial, social, and economically inequities have altered

the family dynamic of African American families (Bibb, 2009; Bishop, 2012; Hill, 2017; Revell

& McGhee, 2012; Vereen, 2007).

According to Staples (1991), the African American family lifestyles and arrangements

are quite unconventional. Research indicated that about 75% of Whites marry, while only 58% of

Blacks marry. Furthermore, 62% of African American births are non-marital births compared to

25% of their White counterparts (Dye, 2005). These statistics are important to note because

research indicates that children raised in single-parent homes are three times more likely to suffer

from poverty, lack of positive male role models in the home, unstable living conditions, etc.

Both, African and U.S. African American families fight to progressively and regressively give

meaning to the family unit and structure (Amoateng, Richter, Makiwane, & Rama, 2004; Hill, 2017; Revell & McGhee, 2012).

In the early 2000s, there were 36,179,355 people reported as being African American in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). At that time, there were more than 10 million African American children (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). Various elements such as poverty, race, education, etc. tend to have lasting impacts on African American families. According to seminal research (Fisher, 1950), "education for a democratic family living is being increasingly recognized as vital to our democratic society" (p. 516). Since education is a vital part of family living and society, at-large, African Americans have a role in children's literature. Bishop (2012) noted that African American families definitely have a story to tell and these stories need to be told.

Intersectionality/Poverty

It has been about 240 years since the United States has celebrated its independence. Yet, according to Asante-Muhammed, Collins, Hoxie, and Nieves (2016), it will take almost that long (228 years) for the average African American to accumulate the same amount of wealth as their White counterparts. Having said goodbye to one president, Barak Obama, and hello to a new president, Donald Trump, many people of color are experiencing poverty and unequal access now exacerbated by emboldened racism on many fronts (Hill, 2017). As an African American woman, I argue that in many ways African Americans are still a long way from being free. African Americans seem to have been forced to trade one form of oppression (slavery) for another (oppression). The movement for Black Lives (M4BL, 2013) began with a tweet #BlackLivesMatter that has built a forum for Blacks to speak up against the disparities between

White and Black citizens. Current researcher and theorist Guy Standing (2011) offered an explanation for wealth disparities seen globally and coined the term *precarity*.

Precarity (Standing, 2011) is an unfolding group or class of people denied the security and protections such as a living wage, unionization, opportunities for advancement, etc. This theory suggested that in order to address and solve the issues associated with precarity, political leaders must embrace and promote policies that are inclusive and sensitive to the precarious class, such as providing a basic income and other like measures (Hill, 2017; Standing, 2011). While poverty is not a product of being Black, researchers have indicated that Black U.S. citizens have suffered worse than White working class counterparts and tend to have significantly fewer job/labor protections (Kropp, 2002; Moreno, 2006; Perea, 2011; Standing, 2011). Hill (2017) suggested an intersectional approach that acknowledges the various degrees of marginalization of the precarious class of peoples' identities. Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991) inspires us to make the experiences of marginalized people a focal point as a means to create solutions for oppressive institutions and systems. Based on the current research and my own life experiences, I believe that poverty must be addressed in African American families.

Many educators have seen (from personal experience and/or observation) the effects of poverty on education. Likewise, many will attest to the harsh reality of the negative effects of the home lives on many students living in households that are from low socioeconomic (SES) families. Murnane (2007) argued that children living in poverty are more likely to leave school without the necessary skills it would take to earn a decent living in our ever-changing economy. Several researchers affirmed that these children tend to be disadvantaged, dis-privileged, and oppressed (Dozier, Johnston, & Rogers, 2006; Freire, 1970; Janks, 2010; Kuby, 2013; Murnane, 2007; Webb, 2010,). These children typically face many systemic barriers which can grossly

impact their lives causing a delay, regression, or tragic end to their overall academic, financial, and social success. Some of these barriers include: being treated as denizens rather than citizens, being paid lower wages, being denied equal access to education and health care, being racially profiled, and being violently attacked and/or killed by police officers., Researchers have noted the emphasis given to the school to prison pipeline and African American's having their voices suppressed for far too long (Bishop, 2012; Howard & Navarro, 2016; Hill, 2017; Sleeter, 2017). Based on this current research, these areas/barriers need to be critically examined and addressed to better understand and help all students, especially students of color.

There is a significant amount of children living in poverty in the United States. In fact, the U.S. Census Bureau (2008) stated that 20.2% of children in Georgia live below the poverty level. That is even more than the national average. More recent data from the U. S. Census Bureau (2014) stated that the national poverty rate is 14.8%. Consequently, children under 18 have a poverty rate of 21.1%. Poverty has been considered one of the primary social-environmental risks to families and is most prevalent in families that have younger children (Garbarino & Ganzel, 2000).

Educators should be aware of this statistic and how it relates to teaching children, especially in public schools. This may help teachers develop empathy and caring attitudes towards the students they serve. Additionally, it may work to inspire teachers to create culturally responsive classroom environments in which these students can learn and thrive (Bennett, 2008). Instead of sugar coating and avoiding addressing poverty and its effects on teaching and learning, educators may find it more beneficial to confront this issue (through critical literacy approaches) in an effort to reach all of the students who are affected by poverty and deplorable living conditions every day.

Research has shown poverty influences the development of students in several ways (Howard, Dresser, & Dunklee, 2009; Williams & Crocket, 2013). Findings indicated that poverty correlates to the stress and distress of students, poor health, and academic achievement. Studies revealed that 83% of students from low-income families cannot read proficiently by the time students enter 4th grade. (Feister & Smith, 2010; Hutchison & Reinking, 2011; Williams & Crockett, 2013). Subsequently, O'Hara (2006) conducted a study and found that parents that are professionals and have higher incomes have children with a vocabulary of about 1,100 by age three, but their counterparts from families on welfare only know about 525 words. Unfortunately, research also shows that many preservice teachers and in-service teachers do not clearly understand the effect of poverty on students' learning and even on their own teaching (Bennett, 2008). As a result, many teachers rely on stereotypes of students living in poverty (Gorski, 2012). These stereotypes typically put students at a disadvantage in terms of power, privilege, and access to an equitable education. Therefore, the implications of these studies suggested teachers should be taught in pre-service training and through experience on how to work with families living in poverty.

The focus and implications of my study aim to provide teachers and researchers a frame of reference to use when trying to address the needs of students who may be dealing with these types of issues. As a person who has grown up in poverty and faced many challenges, I understand how it can negatively impact a student's life, but I also understand that these disadvantages do not have to dictate one's life.

African American Families in Children's Literature

African American children's literature displays African American's struggles, victories, failures, and successes in their quest across the landscape of the United States. These stories

endeavor to let children know where they come from and to help them understand and appreciate how far we (United States) have come (Bishop, 2012). Recent studies detailed how texts with African American families are used to help African American students to see themselves in the world.

Slavery and emancipation, the process of being set free, were the basis for the Civil War (Halpern, Lago, & Dal Lago, 2002, 2008). Because many families were separated during and after emancipation, historians still point to a gap in genealogy and memory regarding African American families. This gap is one that represents a long, ongoing historical project (Edge, 2017) that predates the civil rights movement. Since the emancipation, it has never been adequately addressed how to adequately account for the measures and steps involved with freedmen and freedwomen to reunite with their families.

Therefore, throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, opportunities to maintain and preserve African American family values and relationships have been represented by Black family reunions (Edge, 2017). Investigations into memory work examine what individuals decide to remember or forget, and how they commemorate these important events. As new technology associated with genealogy emerges, historians and families may recover collective ancestral experiences that further affect how people perceive themselves, their own legacies, and opportunities (Edge, 2017).

In terms of literacy development, books give children the opportunity to view themselves and others on the page and educators believe that this experience is critical for children of all cultures to view themselves in books (McNair, 2014). Bishop (1990) stated:

Books are sometimes windows, offering views of worlds that may be real or imagined, familiar or strange. These windows are also sliding-glass doors, and

readers have only to walk through in imagination to become part of whatever world

has been created or re-created by the author. When lighting conditions are just right,

however, a window can also be a mirror… Reading then becomes a means of self-

affirmation and readers often seek their mirrors in books. (p. ix)

Ten African American families with children (in grades kindergarten through second

grade) attended five monthly workshops at a local church. The program design used the

"Call Me MISTER" (Mentors Instructing Students Toward Effective Role Models),

which is an evidenced-based teacher-recruitment program to increase the number of

elementary school teachers from diverse cultural backgrounds with a special emphasis on

African American males (McNair, 2014). The program found that many African

American children were able to fill a deficit in readily available history and knowledge

about African American culture that influenced the title for the article, "I Didn't Know

There Were Black Cowboys".

Over the course of five months, each family received more than 50 books, which

represented a large variety of genres (such as nonfiction, fantasy, fiction, poetry), and

included a balance of female and male main characters. By the end of the program, the

families had increased the amount of reading time completed in their homes and reported

that they spent more time thinking about the content of the books within the program than

other books that had been purchased in the past (McNair, 2014).

Additionally, the participating families began to share the books within the

community. For example, one participant lent the books to a cousin's daycare and parents

began to borrow them, as well. As a result of participating in the African American

literature program, parents began to gain more knowledge about how race and culture are

presented within children's literature and also about books that are written by and about African Americans in general (McNair, 2014). For example, one participant noted:

> I didn't even think about race because you just don't realize there are books
>
> out there…about us, by us. And now I'm trying to look for them, and I try
>
> to look for some of the authors. Like last week they had a book fair and I
>
> was just looking through some of the books they had, and I noticed there
>
> weren't any of those authors listed, and I would have ever noticed that
>
> before. (McNair, 2014, p. 67)

Using Critical Content Analysis of Diverse Children's Literature

Numerous researchers have critically examined various facets of diverse children's literature and have found the emergence of common themes, authentic representations and/ or misrepresentations, and a plethora of other complex elements (Braden & Rodriguez, 2016; Brooks, 2017; Hefflin, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Meier, 2015; Sims, 1990; Smith-D'Arezzo & Musgrove, 2011). Even so, there seems to be an extremely finite amount of researchers who have studied the representations of African American families in current children's books.

Providing students with books that represent them in an authentic and accurate manner could: offer students opportunities to make real and relevant connections, act as windows and mirrors, promote healthy conversations, and affirm self-worth and identity (Botelho & Rudman, 2009; Braden & Rodriguez, 2016; Brooks, 2017; Brooks & McNair, 2015; Galda, 1998; Meier, 2015; Riley, 2015; Sims, 1990). Sims-Bishop (1990, 2012) suggested that it is not just beneficial for Black and Brown children to see themselves in books, but other children suffer when they lack opportunities to see diverse groups in the stories they read. In short, Sims-Bishop (1990,

2012) asserted that books are mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors in which all students can address the social, racial, and cultural issues they face in their own life's experiences.

African American children's texts continue to evolve and change as society continues to shift in the United States. As a result, African American children's texts need to be examined frequently (Bishop, 2012). To this point, I plan to use this critical content analysis to examine African American children's books which were published and submitted to the Children's Cooperative Book Center (CCBC) in 2017.

Current research by Braden and Rodriguez (2016) is one body of work that is relevant to my study. Braden and Rodriguez (2016) wrote a critical content analysis of Latinx children's books. This work critiqued the representation of Latinx characters in 15 picturebooks that were published and submitted to the Children's Cooperative Book Center (CCBC) in 2013. Their findings indicated that, (a) English is privileged in texts, (b) superficial references to cultural artifacts are present in most books, (c) traditional female roles are evident, and (d) authors situated books within a utopian society (Braden & Rodriguez, 2016). This study is relevant to my critical content analysis of African American children's literature as it serves as a frame of reference to the body and a mentor text for my particular research interest and study.

Other researchers have taken an interest in evaluating African American inclusive children's literature using critical content analysis. One study conducted by Brooks and McNair (2015) examined representations of Black girls' hair in African American children's books. These researchers employed a critical content analysis of six picturebooks about hair. Brooks and McNair (2015) underscored three significant points:

1. Sharing children's literature that speaks to the realities (mirrors and windows) of all students is important (Bishop, 1990).

2. It is crucial to make connections between culture and schooling (Hefflin, 2002, Ladson-Billings, 1995).

3. The sociopolitical nature of African American children's books about Black hair is an important theme that runs throughout African American books for both children and adults.

This particular work proved to be a valuable resource for my study on African American children's literature. Another significant study conducted by Brooks (2017) shed light on an award-winning African American Children's book, *The Land* (Taylor, 2001). Brooks used critical content analysis to examine the novel. Brooks' analysis offered a counter-story non-fiction account of the years of Reconstruction.

The analysis provided a narrative that authenticated some of the experiences of numerous mixed-raced people who lived during that time. Brooks used critical race theory (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Lynn & Adams, 2002) as the guiding framework and interpretive tool to examine how Taylor made meanings of land ownership into *The Land*. Brooks' (2017) findings indicated three themes: (a) adoration and inspiration, (b) entitlement and privilege, and (c) freedom and security. Taylor's story inferred a relationship between land ownership and racial identity. The African American family portrayed in the novel fights for their right to acquire land of their own. Brooks used a CRT lens in this critical content analysis of Taylor's non-fiction novel to offer insight regarding issues of race and racism in both the past and the present.

Two professors (Smith-D'Arezzo & Musgrove, 2011) analyzed the representations of Africans/African Americans in picturebooks. These two professors employed a critical content analysis to examine representations of Black children in picturebooks. Using three critical perspectives: critical literacy, cultural and social reader-response theories, these two professors

examined 23 picturebooks that are Black-inclusive texts. This study was conducted to find out what stories were being shared and how adults with different racial and cultural backgrounds interpreted them. Of the 23 books examined by these two professors, only 10 different stories emerged from the texts. Subsequently, hidden messages were found embedded in the texts. Some of the common themes found were 20th-century oppression, happy or unhappy Black families, and slavery. Smith-D'Arezzo and Musgrove (2011) also found that their different cultural and racial backgrounds affected the interpretation of the stories. The implications of their work offered insight on how to examine texts critically and offered recommendations for teachers' use.

Last, another study conducted by Meier (2015) examined nine biographies and one historical fiction text about 10 African American men and their possible impact on Black boys using a critical content analysis approach. Meier chose books that addressed issues relevant to the lives of African American boys. This study examined the biographies of prominent African American men such as President Barak Obama, Booker T. Washington, and Dr. Martin Luther King. Some of the common themes found were hope, freedom, Black boys achieving in the face of adversity, importance of education, nurturing families, and self-worth. The content analysis of these 10 books served to promote identity, meaning, and agency in young Black boys (Meier, 2015). Likewise, the analysis offered suggestions that would inspire teachers to use African American books to make a difference in the lives of all students all the time.

A study conducted by Pescosolido, Grauerholz, and Milkie (1997) documented the portrayal of African Americans (Blacks) in three sets of children's picturebooks and examined how these portrayals are related to culture, gatekeeping, and conflict in U.S. society. The study was used to interrogate trends that some cultural groups relate to conflict in U.S. society through the use of picturebooks. Brooks' (2006) research study was a qualitative inquiry that used

literary analyses to explore how a middle school case-study class read and responded to "culturally conscious" African American children's books (p. 375). This directly aligns with the premise of my proposed study. Finally, Sipe's (2000) research study described what constituted literary understanding for one classroom interpretive community of first and second graders by analyzing their verbal responses as picture storybooks were read aloud to them. These three studies used content analysis to find trends in children's literature and discovered how that aided children's understandings of the world they inhabit and their own cultural identity. Thus, all three studies are relevant and pertinent to the current research study.

Summary and Implications of Literature Review

This literature review helped increase the understanding of critical content analysis of African American children's books. For my study, I garner from critical pedagogy and critical race theory to study and explore current African American children's literature. I explored the need for books that are more diverse. A lack of diverse literature options may affect students' experiences as they become engaged in meaningful readings of diverse texts in elementary classrooms. I have examined the existing literature on this topic and I have provided a critical synthesis and review of some of the empirical literature, as well. I have also discussed family studies, precarity, and poverty and its effects on education. In addition, I discussed African American literature and the We Need Diverse Books Movement, as these are key components of my study. The following chapter will include information on the methodologies used to complete this study.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Qualitative Design

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore the topic of African American families in children's books. Koss (2015) argued that picturebooks are "written artifacts that convey cultural messages and values about society and help children learn about their world" (p. 32). Books are also a way to assist young children in understanding stereotypes and questioning stereotypes in culture (Koss, 2015). Thus, picturebooks and their content are essential to society and to raising children that are aware of cultures, race, and political climates. Discussions of diversity at young ages can stem from the diversity of literary content, which are powerful learning tools, which enable the world to change. In an effort to conduct a current and relevant study, I have only examined picturebooks written in 2017. I kept my focus on texts with depictions of African American families and cultures. Therefore, it was essential that the content of these picturebooks, published in the United States and submitted to the Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC) in 2017, was written by African Americans or had content about African Americans to analyze for their content.

Qualitative research focuses on meaning, understanding, and overall process (Merriam, 2009). Glesne (2011) stated that qualitative research is used to gain an understanding of social phenomena from the various perspectives of those involved, to grasp and conceptualize their own socio-cultural-political environment, and to transform or make changes in their social conditions. This particular type of inquiry seeks to understand how those involved in the research understand and interpret their world. Qualitative analysis places the human element at the center of the study (Glesne, 2011).

This chapter provides information on the qualitative analysis methodology and further elaborates on qualitative content analysis with specificity as a qualitative approach. This includes a comparison between content analysis and literary analysis. It also provides a contextual overview of critical content analysis and related studies. This chapter includes the research design, processes for data collection and analysis, as well as examples of the coding process for the three research questions. My positionality and subjectivities are included as well as the chapter summary.

Qualitative Content Analysis

Hsieh and Shannon (2005) defined qualitative content analysis as a research method for subjective interpretation of any content and textual data through the process of coding and identifying themes or patterns. The combination of qualitative analysis and content analysis allows for the more nuanced entry point into this case study of qualitative content analysis. Qualitative content analysis is one approach of many within the umbrella of quantitative analysis; it focuses on the unpacking of texts through utilizing social context and the open-ended exploration of research questions. This is a flexible research methodology employed for analyzing, describing, and interpreting the texts of a society (Beach et. al, 2009).

Qualitative content analysis uses a research question applied to a case study in order to develop a criterion of tentative categories that can then be deduced based on broad knowledge, and then reduced to the main categories of analysis and then tested for reliability. This then provides a basis for interpretive analysis of the patterns observed within the decided upon categories. Although this systematic approach intends to provide academic rigor to a highly interpretive field, it is not always appropriate within highly explorative research questions or

situations in which the subject cannot be categorized. It is often these type of studies, which use a combination of qualitative content analysis and another approach (Mayring, 2000).

The approach of qualitative content analysis reflects the interests of the current times. It is used by researchers in a variety of fields including anthropology, political science, library studies, psychology, sociology, education, and management (White & Marsh, 2006). This approach is more humanistic and inductive, rather than the traditional positivistic and deductive. Open-ended questions take the place of hypothesis and educated guesses. The role between a researcher and text differs as I read the text to find patterns and emerging themes. It is dynamic and not static. The study could shift as the data takes a new direction. Krippendorf (2004) called this a *hermeneutic loop*. The key to this type of qualitative research is transferability or external validity, rather than its generalization. This means that findings from one context are important and related to another context.

Qualitative content analysis can be used to understand a variety of texts by generating theories and meanings to explain the data that is extracted through studies such as this one. Because qualitative content analysis allows researchers to map themes and illustrate meanings from the phenomena observed within the literature (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009), I am able to extrapolate both thematic elements as well as more profound, deeper meanings in order to come to a wider conclusion about the society that the literature is situated within.

Qualitative content analysis can be used to engage the text and help researchers gain a full understanding of a literary piece's purpose. Krippendorff (2004) explained that these methods could be used to sample and contextualize research queries. In fact, the process utilized by a researcher who is conducting a study can include finding research questions, analyzing the

text, coding a text, synthesizing coding information, verifying result credibility, and arriving at answers to research questions.

Related Studies Using Qualitative Content Analysis

Many studies focus on children's literature (Braden & Rodriguez, 2016; Brooks, 2009; Martinez-Roldan, 2013; McNair, 2008). However, there are only a few studies that focus on children's picturebooks published in the United States in 2017 that were written by African Americans or have content about African Americans. Examples of these include studies by Iwai (2017), Mabbott (2017), and Moyo (2017). Aside from these studies, there remains a gap in children's literature on the representation of African American families and culture (Robinson, 2018).

This research aimed to fill the identified gap in literature; its purpose was to critically examine and discuss insights on how African American families were represented in the texts chosen for this study. Using critical content analysis, I sought to uncover and unpack any misrepresentations in images/texts, language inclusion, real-world topics, and other barriers that lead to children's misunderstandings of their own identities specifically addressed in the literature (Braden & Rodriguez, 2016). I worked to uncover ideologies and resources to facilitate future conversations around African American picturebooks for children.

Content Analysis

Content analysis is a blanket term that is used to describe different research methods for analyzing, describing, and interpreting written texts and artifacts of a group of people (Johnson, Mathis, & Short, 2017; White & Marsh, 2006). Content analysis refers to a conceptual approach to understanding the meaning of a text as it pertains to a certain theoretical lens (Beach et al., 2009). Content analysis has long been used by many professions to develop an understanding of

different types of phenomenon (White & Marsh, 2006). Researchers use qualitative content

analysis to make sense interpretations within contexts surrounding the texts by making

inferences (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Johnson, Mathis, & Short, 2017; Krippendorff, 2004).

According to Krippendorff's (2004) study, content analysis is best used as a method to

understand literature or texts. There are six main characteristics of the process of a content

analysis as Krippendorff (2004) envisioned it:

1. Development of meaning of a text

2. Texts can only be understood with one perspective at a time

3. Each reader should have his or her own interpretation of the text and should be
   able to use evident from the text to support their interpretation

4. Readers can use other resources to help gain insight into the primary text

5. Researchers should use context as a theoretical framework to analyze the text

6. Texts have no meaning on their own; a reader must attribute meaning to the text
   through interpretation.

These six characteristics, which should appear within the process of a content analysis, allow the

reader/researcher to better understand the literature. Krippendorff's (2004) version of a

conceptual approach to content analysis can be combined with the transactional theory by

Rosenblatt (1994). Reading, according to Rosenblatt (1994), is a transactional process where the

reader interacts with texts and liberates oneself. This process gives a special place to context

analysis and interpretation by the reader. In short, content analysis understood through the lens of

transactional processes allows the reader to gain a better understanding of literature in a

contextual manner.

The "Critical" in Critical Content Analysis

This study uses critical race theory as its foundational theoretical approach. CRT is informed by its predecessor, critical theory; critical theory was developed by Paulo Freire in 1970, who found that literature is socially constructed and readers' perspectives differ (Johnson, Mathis, & Short, 2017). Freire (1970) argued that a critical lens involves "critique (questioning what is and who benefits), hope (asking what if and considering new possibilities), and action (taking action for social justice)" (Johnson, Mathis, & Short, 2017, p. 5). This union of critique, hope, and action is what separates a critical lens from others, and is very pertinent to my study.

The word critical usually signifies a political stance by a researcher, specifically in searching for and using research tools to examine inequalities from various perspectives (Johnson, Mathis, & Short, 2017). Based on Freire's (1970) framework of critical theory, this methodology questions and critiques literature with a specific race-based lens in order to pursue the hope and action which Freire outlines as intertwined with critical theory and analysis. In this study, I explored multiple picturebooks to gain an understanding of the influence of this literature on young children. This critical stance also included questions about trustworthiness of the literature. Critical stances in content analysis can be used to question the truth and the trustworthiness of literature (Johnson, Mathis, & Short, 2017). The implications of this study centered on deconstructing and reconstructing literature in order to understand the ideologies that are being represented in texts focused on African American experiences.

A critical stance questions the concept of truth and how it is presented. It focuses on who is presenting the information and for what purposes. A key focus is of this critical stance is on voice and power. Marginalized, oppressed people are typically the focus of a critical frame (Johnson, Mathis, & Sort, 2017; Luke, 2012). Critical content analysis relies upon how

researchers interpret data, themes, and patterns. Often, by synthesizing this information, phenomena in literature can be better understood. Critical content analysis takes a critical stance by examining and questioning the content found in the literature. Thus, critical content analysis was utilized in this research study. Critical content analysis is not definitively associated with any one specific critical theory or research method (Beach et al., 2009). The same books can be understood in different ways by different people and can be understood differently due to different contexts. In Beach et al.'s (2009) study, researchers showed how different critical theories can be used to review a picturebook. They use the critical multicultural perspectives of Botelho and Rudman (2009) for the representation of individuals of different races in children's literature and the critical race theory of Ladson-Billings (1998) to reveal the assumptions and ideas often represented in children's literature.

African American children's picturebooks were used for this critical content analysis. A picturebook can be read by a group of people and may result in multiple perspectives. Although the content is the same, the results can be different for different people due to perspective and differences in cognition. This study used critical content analysis to explore picturebooks written by and about African Americans in the United States. As an African American, I am aware of personal subjectivities, which could potentially influence the reading and interpretation of the texts. Being African American impacts the way I read the world presented in literature. However, to remain focused on the analysis, I used the tenets of CRT as my framework and guide.

The critical lens utilized in critical content analysis was used to gain an understanding of underlying messages found in the literature. More specifically, I read while using the critical theory frame, reviewed research studies that are related to the subject matter, found theoretical

frames to analyze the literature, examined the texts in the context of theories, and drew conclusions (Johnson, Mathis, & Short, 2017).

Difference between Content Analysis and Literary Analysis

Content analysis and literary analysis are two different concepts that can be united to create a cohesive research study. Hsieh and Shannon (2005) explained that content analysis is a qualitative analysis method, which has three approaches, which can be used to find meaning in content. These three approaches include summative, directed, and conventional approaches (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Conventional content analysis uses coding categories, which are derived from the text. The directed approach uses theory for codes. Finally, the summative analysis approach involves counting keywords. These three approaches "delineate analytic procedures specific to each approach and techniques addressing trustworthiness" (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1277).

Beach et al. (2009) similarly expounded that content analysis helps a researcher find "what a text is about" (p. 130). In fact, Krippendorff (2004) explained that content analysis can be used to increase a person's understanding and can also inform future actions. Therefore, content analysis can be used to understand better the context surrounding a text (Galda, Ash, & Cullinan, 2000). Also, content analysis can be used by researchers to find answers to research questions (Krippendorff, 2004). Thus, content analysis is a useful qualitative tool to evaluate a text.

On the other hand, literary analysis is also a useful tool that can take a variety of forms (Freeman, 2010). Literary analysis uses all three main components of literature: the text, the reader, and the writer (Freeman, 2010). Thus, literary analysis is a useful tool for this research study. The main purpose of the literary analysis is to find how a literature piece fits into society

(Freeman, 2010). The nature of this study is to critically analyze the content of children's literature submitted to the Cooperative Children's Book Center which was written about or by African Americans in 2017. Thus, literary analysis was useful in order to verify thematic elements and other coded items. Examples of these literary elements include literature structure, themes, symbolism, settings, conflict, characters, plot, symbolism, allegories, and metaphors. Thus, this process was used for coding purposes in the course of this study. During the process of literary analysis, researchers often focus on the: who, what, where, when, and why of a story. Although very similar, literary analysis is different from the content analysis. For this study, I conducted a critical content analysis.

Research Design

Two research questions were used to frame a critical content analysis of children's picturebooks submitted to the Cooperative Children's Book Center that were written about or by African Americans in 2017. The study examined how African American families are represented and/or portrayed in the illustrations and texts. The following two research questions were used to guide this study:

1. How are the life experiences of African American families represented in the children's picturebooks submitted to the CCBC in 2017?

2. How are African American families and cultures portrayed in the illustrations and/or texts?

These two research questions framed and guided this critical content analysis.

Criteria and Rationale for Selecting Books

This study only used books submitted to the Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (CCBC, 2018). The Cooperative Children's

Book Center is renowned for its comprehensive and diverse selection of data and statistics of children's books. Each year the CCBC receives about 3,500 children's and young adult books. The CCBC takes great pride in being an established, unique, examination, research, and study library. Also, this study focused on books that were published in the United States in 2017. This criterion was used to make sure that my study was current and relevant.

The 2017 list contained 440 books in various genres and formats. Out of the 440 books written, African Americans wrote only 100 of them and the other 340 were written about African Americans from people of other racial backgrounds. I only focused on children's picturebooks (PB) that have African American characters, families, and children. Due to the nature and scope of this study, I did not look at chapter books or other types of books. Books must also be written in the English language to be used in this study because I only speak English. In short, the books used have significant African American cultural content and characters. This standard provided results that shed light on over a dozen African American picturebooks in the United States in 2017.

Data Collection and Data Analysis Processes of this Study

Data Sources and Sampling

I initially used the 2017 African/African American CCBC log to narrow my focus. First, only books with African American cultural content as identified as such by the CCBC were used. Next, only books that were identified as picturebooks (PB) were examined. These lists were requested through the CCBC. There were 46 books on the list that were identified as picturebooks. I looked up each book online and read a brief synopsis of each of the books. In an effort to not omit and/or overlook any books, I also looked at the illustrations, characters, and read the description of each story. I specifically chose books that featured African American

families. For the purposes of this study, I defined the term family as any combination of an African American family unit that was portrayed within the literature. There were 13 books that met this criterion. I obtained physical copies of each of the books to conduct the critical content analysis for the data collection of this study.

First, I immersed myself in the texts without any expectations in order to familiarize with the texts. I then re-read the texts multiple times (as needed) with a critical frame by using three broad issues (Botelho & Rudman, 2009). Therefore, I examined the chosen texts with the following in mind:

1. Focalization-Whose story is being told? Whose point of view?

2. Social processes of characters-Who has the power? Agency?

3. Closure-How is the story resolved?

I examined each book through the lens of each research question throughout this process. I analyzed books for patterns and emerging themes and extended beyond by utilizing these three tenets. Other studies (Braden & Rodriguez, 2016; Hou, 2013) have taken on similar approaches in their methodologies; both of these studies use critical content analysis to examine children's literature. Braden and Rodriguez (2016) served as a mentor study that captured the essence of my study, in that this study modeled the approach after theirs, particularly how they combined theories such as the critical multicultural perspectives and the critical race theory. The critical race theory was influential throughout the analysis process as the research study used CRT as a lens to examine the portrayal of people of color throughout the identified literature. Wiseman, Vehabovic, and Jones (2019) noted that CRT is important to researchers that recognize "children's experiences are affected by their racial identity" (p. 466). This is in line with my

study and the importance of recognizing the impact of children's literature and how African

American children and children of other minorities see themselves within picturebooks.

There is one significant difference between the two studies. The focus of this study was

on African American's children's literature, while Braden and Rodriguez (2016) focused solely

on Latinx children's books. I also particularly like some of the organizational components of

Hou's (2013) methodology procedures. Hou's (2013) study included book summaries with

pictures in order to contextualize the analysis they were providing for each book. This study took

a similar approach (see Appendix A); the difference in this study is the focus on the

representation of African American families within books, whereas Hou examined the

representation of international travel experiences in children's literature. Using Hou's

organizational approach as a model, this study provided detailed book summaries with pictures

of each book before providing a qualitative critical content analysis in order to contextualize the

discussion.

Coding Process of Qualitative Critical Content Analysis

According to Saldana (2013), coding is just one way of analyzing qualitative data. A code

in qualitative research can be described as a word or short phrase that "symbolically assigns a

summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocate attribute for a portion of language-based or

visual data" (Saldana, 2013, p. 3). I utilized coding processes to analyze the data from my critical

content analysis. Researchers who take a critical stance tend to focus on locating power in social

practices by understanding, uncovering, and transforming situations of inequality embedded in

society (Rogers, 2004). Consequently, as a qualitative researcher taking a critical stance, I used

codes to analyze this study's data.

The following steps were taken in the coding process of my analysis: sampling, coding, and finding themes. Sampling involved reviewing the literature and reading each text thoroughly. Sampling also involved scanning the texts into a coding software program. A guide was use in the sampling process to organize thoughts and record the title of each text, observations, reoccurring phrases, notable elements of illustrations, and other key factors that were relevant to cultural awareness.

To code the texts, I assigned words and phrases to the individual coding categories based on insights guided by my research questions and CRT framework. Textual data, including words and illustrations, was then reviewed systematically to decide which ideas, themes, and concepts fit into the broader categories. Thematic coding was used to code illustrations and texts. A codebook (Appendix C) was made along with a list of what each code meant. Next, open codes were formed as codes emerge from data analysis. A coding chart or table was then used to help organize the data. The codes were then narrowed and refined into categories. Finally, some codes were color-coded and notes were made.

To help with finding themes, I used a qualitative coding software called Dedoose. This web application served as a resource to help with data management, coding, and analysis. This program allowed me to scan each of the picturebooks and to code on the PDFs of the texts. This program also allowed me to code both texts and illustrations within the books. I conducted multiple rounds of coding to ensure that all codes were included. This recursive process involved some collaboration with a colleague familiar with critical content analysis during the initial coding. According to the data tracked in Dedoose, 345 excerpts were coded and 78 different codes were created. Upon completion of this coding process, there were 1,013 code applications.

An example of another critical content analysis study on children's books is Yu-Ying Hou's (2013) study on the representation of global travel within children's literature. Hou focused on portrayals of travel experiences in order to understand intercultural learning and the ways in which readers then understand their own roles and responsibilities within the larger world. Hou used background knowledge on the authors' experiences and beliefs in order to contextually inform her coding categories. This is opposed to this study, which does consider the backgrounds of authors, particularly their racial identity, but it was not a driving factor in categorization. The coding process for this study arose through textual immersion as described in the research process and is thus much more text-based. I created categories of analysis based on patterns in the literature which appeared repeatedly, which were then coded as emergent themes that were analyzed and tested for in the secondary readings.

After completing the initial coding, I began to analyze the codes in an effort to begin to define relationships among the codes. In order to make sense of the codes, I wrote codes in a notebook and then used the Dedoose software to manage the data. I used this data to create categories. I particularly looked for codes that had been applied repeatedly and looked for patterns in the application of codes. For example, I noted that codes related to religion were prevalent in the text. This led me to explore how these codes had been applied and led to the creation of this as a category. I also looked for codes that were closely associated and began to explore those codes more in-depth. For example, I coded for hair, big lips, and skin tone and began to look at how those codes were applied in the text.

Trustworthiness

In this qualitative research study, I endeavored to conduct a trustworthy study by documenting the steps, procedures, and processes of the study (Yin, 2009). The use of

trustworthy practices addresses credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability in this study. First, I used steps to engage each text by employing two processes simultaneously. I looked at each text in relation to the historical and cultural forces that have molded it (top-down) and also examined the linguistic and narrative features of each text (bottom-up) analysis (Johnson, Mathis, & Short, 2017). This dual approach to conducting a critical content analysis helps to establish the credibility of the research study by extending themes and content to the questioning of texts.

Second, I presented the study's finding by using thick descriptions to show that the study is applicable to other situations, circumstances, and contexts. I used scratch notes, margin notes, and descriptive comments throughout the close readings of the texts. This research is both inductive and reflexive (Dyson & Genishi, 2005). I used an audit trail to show every area of data analysis specifically and used it to establish accurate findings thoroughly. Finally, I performed the study in a way that encourages other researchers to examine and review the research and find consistent results.

Researcher's Positionality and Subjectivities

Throughout the research process, it is clear to me that one cannot totally disconnect oneself from personal subjectivities. I acknowledged this and stated a position of knowing and believing that my life experiences help to shape and mold my worldview, ideals, values, and perspectives. All of these inevitably affect the manner in which research is conducted. I position myself as an African American woman who, as a researcher, must be genuine, ethical, and trustworthy. I want all readers of the study to understand that I genuinely care about humanizing education.

Consequently, I recognize personal subjectivities and placed them out in the open. Corrine Glesne (2011) stated, "part of being attuned to your personal views and perspectives is being attuned to your emotions. Instead of trying to suppress your feelings, you use them to inquire into your assumptions and to shape new questions through re-examining previous perspectives" (p. 154). That being said, I believe that, as a researcher, I must understand that personal experiences, emotions, and beliefs set the tone for the type of research conducted.

As an African American woman, I have felt inferior, powerless, and voiceless, at times. I grew up poor and attended a Title 1 school. As a child, I longed to see a self-reflection and a connection of personal culture within books. Children make connections to the characters they view as similar within literature and I was lacking access to that type of connection. Being an African American woman, having to prove oneself often, does affect the way that one acts, talks, thinks, and works with others. I sometimes felt that some of my Caucasian students and parents felt as though I might not be "on their level" because of the color of my skin. I recognize that some parents believe that I am inferior, and it is likely that they are passing these beliefs on to their children.

Knowing that one must find a way to not be limited by beliefs and perspectives is important. I attempted to conduct my critical content analysis without preconceived ideologies. As a researcher, awareness of personal limitations and subjectivities is a very important factor. I am very passionate about education, which is informed by a personal connection. Throughout the study, I was aware of my subjectivities and how those subjectivities impacted the research that I was conducting.

Summary

Critical content analysis was used as a methodology to examine 13 African American children's books as identified and categorized by the CCBC. This section explained how I conducted a critical content analysis in the research study. This section also used related studies that utilized qualitative content analysis to evaluate children's literature. These studies were used to highlight how analyses can be used to understand children's literature. Also, several studies were utilized to understand how theoretical frameworks can be used to analyze children's literature. Book summaries are also included in this chapter in order to help readers become familiar with the texts used in this study. I discussed trustworthiness to ensure the credibility of the study. This chapter also provided explanations of the data collection processes that are used in this study. Lastly, this chapter also thoroughly explains how I used the coding process to organize data into categories. Moving forward, chapter four discusses the findings of my study. I began by providing a summary and pictures of each book being discussed to provide context for the analysis, and then, move into a discussion of the first research question.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents findings that were developed from a critical content analysis of 13 African American children's picturebooks (see Table 2) that were written and submitted to the Cooperative Children's Book Center in 2017. The purpose of this study was to critically examine how the life experiences of African American families are currently depicted in recently published children's picturebooks. The study provides a critical content analysis of children's picturebooks written by and/or about African Americans, which were submitted to the Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC) in 2017.

Using critical content analysis (Utt & Short, 2018) and a critical race theory lens, I sought to explore cultural representations, emerging themes, misrepresentations, caricatures, and stereotypes regarding African American Children's Literature. I began my analysis of the picturebooks by close reading all of the texts while establishing a framework for coding based on critical race theory. Using a CRT lens can help a researcher identify and promote "more inclusive learning opportunities for children who have been silenced or marginalized" and can also help with identifying cultural authentication within literature (Wiseman et al., 2019, p. 466). For this analysis, I focused on the text as well as the pictures in the picturebooks. My study was guided by the following research questions:

Research Question 1. How are life experiences of African American families represented in children's picturebooks submitted to the CCBC in 2017?

Research Question 2. How are African American characters and cultures, portrayed in the illustrations and/or texts?

I used critical content analysis (Utt & Short, 2018) to explore the visual and textual representations of African American families and their life experiences as portrayed as realistic

narratives with significant African American characters and content (Research Question 1). I was particularly curious to analyze how the African American characters were portrayed in the texts and illustrations while focusing on themes that emerged, stereotypes, and misrepresentations (Research Question 2). I present the findings of these analyses, guided by these research questions, below. Driven by the tenets of Critical Race Theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 1992), I explored the depictions of African American families in picture books; I identified the major themes recurring in the 13 picturebooks through a close reading of the texts, coding, and categorizing codes. For the identified themes, I also discuss the cultural authenticity of the representations as compared to the current lives and experiences of African American families. Cultural authenticity has been used as one of the ways to identify if portrayals of different groups are accurate in children's texts (Mo & Shen, 1997). For this study, I am defining cultural authenticity as cultural sensitivity, values, themes, and beliefs presented in a way that is acceptable within that particular social group (Mo & Shen, 1997; Short & Fox, 2003; Yoo-Lee, Fowler, Adkins, Kim & Davis, 2014). In the case of my study, that social group is African American families.

First, I present findings of how the African American families were depicted in the texts. I present findings on the diversity in families and family structures depicted in the picturebooks (Research Question 1). Next, I focused on the findings related to the physical features of the African American characters portrayed in the books, such as facial features, skin tones, and hair texture. As described below, African American hairstyles also emerged as a major component in each analyzed story. Two themes emerged while conducting critical content analyses. These themes focus on religious symbols and Black Girl Magic. I then shift to discuss how African

Americans write about African Americans (Own Voices). Lastly, I present findings as to what

voices are missing from the children's picturebooks that were analyzed as a part of this study.

Table 2

Thirteen Picturebooks Included in Research Study

Title of the Book	Author Illustrator	Own Voices Written by an African American
City Fun	Margaret Hillert	No
Come Play with Me	Margaret Hillert	No
Daddy Played the Blues	Michael Garland	No
Early Sunday Morning	Denene Millner	Yes
Grandma's Tiny House	JaNay Brown-Wood Priscilla Burris	
I am Truly	Kelly Greenawalt Amariah Rauscher	No
I'm BIG Now!	Anthea Simmons Georgie Birkett	No
In the Snow	Elizabeth Spurr Manelle Oliphant	No
In your Hands	Carole Boston Weatherford Brian Pinkney	Yes
Jabari Jumps	Gaia Cornwall	No
Lola Gets a Cat	Anna McQuinn Rosalind Beardshaw	No
The Ring Bearer	Floyd Cooper	Yes
Twindergarten	Nikki Ehrlich Zoe Abbott	No

Research Question 1

How are life experiences of African American families represented in children's

picturebooks submitted to the CCBC in 2017?

Life Experiences

In culturally responsive teaching, Gay (2000) noted that educators can use "cultural

knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse

students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them" (p. 29). Gay

(2000) considered this a validating principle for CRT. Using culturally responsive teaching,

educators can find literature that will help "students of color maintain identity and connections

with their ethnic groups and communities; develop a sense of community, camaraderie, and

shared responsibility" (p. 30).

Church/God as a central. At the center of many cultures are religion and spirituality. In

many African American families, God and going to church is at the center of the family units.

My analysis of the 13 picturebooks revealed that various elements of religion were prominent in

some of the books. Aspects of God and church were embedded in the texts and illustrations. I

coded 38 excerpts related to religious representations during this study.

For example, in *Early Sunday Morning* (Millner & Brantley-Newton, 2017), the entire

story centers around a little girl's first solo in her church's choir. There are several images and

scenes that depict elements of God and church. One scene shows the family standing in front of

their church with their "Sunday" clothes on and Holy Bibles in hand. Emotion coding (Saldana,

2012) helped to describe feelings of joy and happiness that the family feels proudly standing in

front of their church. The big smiles on their faces speak volumes. Another church scene shows a

stained-glass window with a dove and a cross, all of which seem to be representations of God

and/or church. Likewise, another scene shows the pastor standing at the microphone with the choir standing behind him. Both the pastor and the choir are dressed in formal robes.

Another story that has significant representations of religion is *Daddy Played the Blues* (Garland, 2017). In this particular story, these representations are shown in texts, written songs, and illustrations. One scene talks about mama not liking the blues because it wasn't "church" music. Another scene showed an image of the "devil" and references a song about waiting at the crossroads for the devil to come. Lastly, one scene talks about it being Sunday and the whole family went to church. There is a big church with a cross steeple with lots of people going inside.

The story *The Ring Bearer* (Cooper, 2017) featured subtle hints of both God and church. In one wedding scene, the illustrations show the officiant (possible pastor) dressed in clergy attire with what seems to be a bible in hand, standing in the front of the church as light is shining all around him. Another example from this story is the scene in which the newly blended family is together in church with a big glass stained window in the background. Although there were not many representations of God and the church in this story, the images described were significant depictions of religious ties to this African American family.

Lastly, the story *In Your Hands* (Weatherford & Pinkney, 2017) is essentially about a mother asking God to hold her son in His hands. It speaks of a mother reminding her son of the Golden Rule. She prays for his safety and asks God to guide him as he grows up. The text of this story is very religious. One page has "child of God" inscribed in big bold white letters that stand out on the page. It also talks about forgiveness, second chances, and convictions which are largely associated with religious teachings. These prayers of a mother to her son really demonstrate strong religious texts in which the term "God" is used six times.

Family dinner/gatherings. Family gatherings such as Sunday dinners, church events, barbeques, weddings, and parties occur quite often in many African American families (Jarrett, Jefferson, & Kelly, 2010). This time of "food, fun, and fellowship" is an essential element in African American communities. My analysis revealed that family gatherings occurred in several of the picturebooks. For example, in *Grandma's Tiny* House (2017) the illustrations seem to indicate that the entire family is gathered to gather at grandma's house. There are so many scenes showing family gathered around talking, children playing, and around lots of food. The *Ring Bearer* (2017) show family gathered together to celebrate a joining of two families. *Early Sunday Morning* (2017) shows the family gathered together at church. This story also mentions Sunday Dinner. Sunday dinners are typically times when families gather at the matriarch's house to enjoy a delicious home-cooked meal. Lastly, in *Daddy Played the Blues* (2017) the family gets together and go to church. They gather together outside their apartment talking, singing, and playing outdoors. Another scene shows the adults gathered together at a club. Thus, the textual and visual representations in these storybooks aligned well with the prior analyses of African American communities (Jarrett, Jefferson, & Kelly, 2010; Lingren, 2019).

Playing instruments, singing, and dancing. Music features prominently in the lives of many African Americans, either through playing instruments, singing, or dancing. Music provides a sense of agency and individuality and is a key component of many African American communities (Love, 2017). The texts included in this analysis reflected this commitment to and valuing of music. A number of books feature music, instruments, signing, and dancing. For example, in *Early Sunday Morning* (2017) the entire storyline revolves around a girl's first solo performance in her church's choir. She sings and practices leading up to this main event. There are vivid illustrations of her and other choir members singing and moving to the beat of the

music. Another example of music being a major theme is evident in *Daddy Played the Blues* (2017) the title alone mentions playing music. This story showcases a variety of musical instruments. Some of the instruments include a six-string guitar, harmonicas, trumpets, upright bass guitar, singing, and humming. Dancing, tapping of feet are also evident in the texts and illustrations. Other books that include musical instruments, singing, and or dancing include *The Ring Bearer* (2017), *Grandma's Tiny House* (2017), *I am Truly* (2017), *I'm Big Now!* (2017), *Come Play with Me* (2017), *Twindergarten* (2017), and *City Fun* (2017). These books have some form of music and/or singing and dancing in the texts and/or pictures. This finding reveals that music is an important aspect of African American families.

Research Question 2

How are African American characters and cultures, portrayed in the illustrations and/or texts? How frequent are caricatures, stereotypes, and misrepresentations relating to African American families?

Culturally responsive teaching is multidimensional. In order for teachers to do this kind of teaching, the teacher must work hard to gather and analyze materials to locate a wide range of "cultural knowledge, experiences, contributions, and perspectives. Emotions, beliefs, values, ethos, opinions, and feelings" are all examined to ensure that ethnic diversity is reflective of the students being taught (Gay, 2000, p. 31). The following sections are all important factors of consideration for locating appropriate multidimensional resources for diverse student populations.

Diversity in Families

African American families are very diverse in color, size, shape, social status, and structure. African American families are complex and not easily defined (McNair, 2012; Revell

& McGhee, 2012; Vereen, 2007). African American families are more likely to be non-nuclear in composition as compared to their White counterparts (Ruggles, 1995). Non-nuclear families tend to include extended family members in addition to the immediate family members. For this study, I am defining African -American families as those that include members of a household unit who are totally or partially African American and coexist within a kinship and/or a type of family structure (Lingren, 2019; Laslett & Wall, 1972; Hareven, 1978; Newman, 2009; Teachman, Polonko, & Scanzoni, 1987).

Although depictions of family were portrayed in all 13 of the picturebooks, the family structures varied from book to book. This portrayal of the family composition was revealed in the coding of both the texts and the illustrations. Some of the ways in which the African American families are portrayed are as follows: (a) traditional family structures and (b) non-traditional family structures. The traditional family structures included children living with a mother and father. The non-traditional family structures included children living with only one parent.

For this study, I am defining a traditional family structure as that of having a mother and father figure. In the text, I looked for mentions of and dialogue between both parents. I also looked at the illustrations in the texts and noted the family structures that were found in the texts. The following texts included family structures that I categorized as being a traditional family structure: *Early Sunday Morning* (Millner & Brantley-Newton, 2017), *Daddy Played the Blues* (Garland, 2017), and *The Ring Bearer* (Cooper, 2017).

One example of a traditional family structure was found in *Early Sunday Morning* (Millner & Brantley-Newton, 2017), a story in which a little girl (Sarah) is nervous about her first solo performance in the youth choir at her church. She is given advice from her family and

friends. Love and support from her dad give her the confidence to stand up and sing on Sunday morning. There is a strong presence of what might be considered a traditional African American family. In this particular story, the family consisted of a mom, dad, daughter, and brother. This family seems to be very close-knit and supportive of each other. The pictures and text show Sarah's relationship with her family members. The pictures portray this family as sharing important moments together.

Another example of a traditional family is found in *Daddy Played the Blues* (Garland, 2017). In this picturebook, an African American family flees from their home in Mississippi and drives north to Chicago in search of a better life. The protagonist of the story is a girl named Cassie. This story features a family with a mom, dad, daughter, two sons, and an uncle. This family seems close and supportive of each other. Cassie's dad and uncle love to play the blues. They pack up and leave home in search of a better life for their family. Family plays a vital role in this story, as they stick together and risk everything to leave the familiar with only a few personal items and each other. In the story, *The Ring Bearer* (Cooper, 2017), a little boy is feeling a little uneasy about his mom marrying his soon to be stepdad. He is given the responsibility of being the ring bearer. He also warms up to his stepdad and new little sister. He saves the day by catching his new little sister as she falls. This story entails another type of family in which a mom is getting married to a step-dad, and each adult enters the family with a child. This story of a traditional blended family shows that a family unit is built on love and trust, not just by blood or genes.

There are also books that include families that are considered non-traditional families. Examples of books that have a non-traditional family structure are *In the Snow* (Spurr & Oliphant, 2017), a story about a little girl and her mom enjoying themselves on a snowy day and

Jabari Jumps (Cornwall, 2017), a story about a little boy, who, with the support of his father, learns to conquer his fear of jumping off a diving board. Both stories seem to highlight a single-parent family structure, as only one parent is mentioned and/or shown throughout these texts.

In the story *In the Snow*, there seems to be no father, but rather a single mother taking care of her little girl. In contrast, in the story *Jabari Jumps,* the mother is absent from the family. Instead, a single dad takes care of two children. Research shows that many African American families are composed of single-parent structures in which the mother is the primary guardian and/or caregiver (Murray et al., 2001). Overall, the families were portrayed in the texts in different ways and the diversity in family structures is highlighted.

Gaps in the Literature: Grandparents and Younger Parents

When examining these 13 picturebooks closely, I noticed that there are some key elements missing in some of the representations of the African American families. These include: (1) family structures in which the grandparent, particularly the grandmother, is a primary caregiver, and (2) representations of younger parents were not very evident in these books.

Current research indicates that many African American families have a grandparent in the home (Hayslip & White, 2008). However, none of the picturebooks in this study seemed to convey that. A few of the stories highlight the roles of a grandparent. In *Grandma's Tiny House* (2017), the family gathers together at grandma's house. Grandma is the main character, and her family and friends fill her home to capacity and are forced to take the fun outdoors in the yard. While this story highlights the role of a grandparent, the story still appears to include traditional family structures that include a mother and father.

In the book, *I'm Big Now!* (2017) the grandma visits the family. She is pictured playing with the children in only that one scene. Again, this book includes the traditional family structure and therefore does not showcase the role of a grandparent. In the book *The Ring Bearer* (*2017),* a grandfather is shown helping the children practice for their wedding roles. Grandpop is offering advice and support to his grandson, Jackson as he prepares to do his ring bearer job. Jackson is feeling uneasy because he fears tripping down the aisle. Grandpop nudges him to get him going. Jackson notices that Sophie is about to fall. He catches her. Grandpop begins to cheer for Jackson and his mama and Bill cheers, too. In *Early Sunday Morning,* one scene shows what appears to be grandparents walking behind the family while leaving church. Although all these stories seem to show and mention grandparents being involved in the families' lives, there is no real evidence that the grandparents actually live in the homes with their families. The role of the grandparents as being the head of the household or raising grandchildren was missing from the reviewed texts.

Lastly, it is evident that many African American family structures include younger parents (National Survey of Family Growth Data, 2010). However, all of these stories portrayed the parents to be older and mature. Nothing written in the texts or shown in the pictures indicated that any of the African American parents in these picturebooks are in their teens or early twenties. In fact, many of the illustrations show older, more mature parents. For example, in *Early Sunday Morning* (2017), one scene shows the dad with streaks of gray in his hair and beard. The texts and pictures all reveal that they seem settled in their home, church, community, and jobs. Their style of clothing is indicative of people in their thirties. Although the book does not explicitly state the ages of any of the parents, all of these factors imply that they are older.

If most or all of the stories in my study portrayed the African American parents as younger, less mature teens or adults, it would seem a bit stereotypical and demeaning. However, research (National Survey of Family Growth Data, 2010) indicated that many African American families include younger parents. One of the CRT tenets explains that the lived experiences of African Americans is a source of knowledge. So, if a representation of a family unit consisting of teen mothers and young mothers is factual, then it reflects a lived experience that many diverse students can identify with. Therefore, my study revealed that this aspect of one type of African American family structure was missing from the 13 picturebooks that were studied.

Physical Features

While reading through the stories, I coded the pictures and words. Reflecting on one of the main tenets of CRT, that racism is prevalent and considered normal in today's society, I used the lens of critical race theory for coding. Part of racism is judging individuals based on stereotypes, so while I was coding I noticed that some of the physical features of the African American characters stood out and would be stereotypical to many African Americans. I paid close attention to facial features, skin tones of characters, and hair texture of the African Americans portrayed in these children's books. I looked at how these physical traits were represented and/or misrepresented in the picturebook characters.

Facial features. Facial features emerged as key in the illustrations of all 13 books. Characters displayed multiple emotions, including happiness, sadness, and nervousness. Along with emotions, the facial features themselves were coded. These features were often portrayed as either exaggerated or building off of a stereotype, such as big eyes, big noses, wide hips, and big hair. For example, several of the characters are depicted with very large eyes. The book *I'm Big Now!* (Simmons & Birkett, 2017) was one of the texts that showed the main character with very

large eyes. *I'm Big now!* (Simmons & Birkett, 2017) is about a little girl who has a new baby brother. The baby is getting all of the attention, so the little girl begins to act like a baby, too. However, she is reminded that she is a big girl now. She gets love and support from her parents and grandmother.

Likewise, in the story *In the Snow (2017)*, a young girl and her mother spend time together playing in the snow. The African American characters in this story have very big eyes. Other physical features that are displayed in this story are the daughter's big hair and the mom's big, wide hips. The book *Come Play with Me* (Hillert, 2017), is an early reader story about a little girl who plays in a variety of ways. The portrayal of African Americans in this story shows them featured with big eyes, big noses, and big hair. All of these exaggerated features attributed to African Americans in the texts are stereotypical. Although, some of the exaggerated features are in fact part of African American features, the prevalence of these features in the text is problematic. The use of these exaggerations in the texts revealed that the picturebooks perpetuate stereotypical physical features that have been attributed to African Americans.

The same stereotypes can be discerned from the illustrations accompanying the stories *Daddy Played the Blues* (2017)*, City Fun* (2017) and *Lola Gets a Cat* (2017). *Daddy Played the Blues (2017)* is a story about a family who uses music to boost their spirits and as an outlet to bring them together in difficult times. This story portrays African Americans with big eyes, noses, and lips all of which a stereotypical facial features of African Americans. *City Fun* (2017) is a story about to girls taking advantage of all the opportunities to have fun in their city. The African Americans in this story are also shown to have large eyes, noses, and lips, too. Lastly, *Lola Gets a Cat* (2017) is a story about a little girl named Lola who wanted to adopt a pet cat. She has to learn how to take care of a cat before her mom and dad allow her to take one home. In

this story, many of the characters have big noses. Consequently, illustrations in these particular books continue to propagate stereotypes about African Americans.

Skin tone. African Americans uniquely vary in skin tones from very light or fair tones to very dark or Blackish tones. A single family can be composed of a mixture of light, medium, and dark skin complexions. Unfortunately, this seemingly extraordinary aspect of variety on skin tones is often used as a way to judge people of color. It sometimes drives a wedge among African Americans, dividing an entire race of people from not only the world but also each other, in what is known as colorism. Colorism or shadeism is a form of discrimination based on complexion/skin color in which people are treated differently and/or unfairly and pre-judged based on assumptions and associated social meanings attached to skin color (Blake et al., 2017; Webb, 2015; National Conference for Community and Justice [NCCJ], 2019).

In conducting my analyses, I found that several of the books depict the African American characters with light skin tones and fair complexions (see Appendix C). The texts in this sub-set of books about African Americans do not represent the diversity in African American skin tones that ranges from light skin tones to dark skin tones. There are texts in which the characters are depicted in a way that makes them seem like they could be part of other races. For example, in the story *In the Snow* (2017), a mother and daughter are playing outside in the snow. The little girl in the story has very fair skin, rosy cheeks, and long wavy brown hair. In the story*, I'm Big Now!* (2017), multiple characters have very light skin. *In Your Hands* (2017) is a story that shares a mother's prayer to her son. The illustrations in this picturebook are very monolithic in nature. All the characters look the same, and no distinct skin tone is represented. The two bi-racial twin siblings in the story *Twindergarten* (2017) have a very light (almost White)

complexion. Nothing about them besides their curly Black hair even seems to indicate that they are half African American.

Lastly, in *Lola Gets a Cat* (2017), Lola has an African American mother and a White dad. The only difference between the way Lola and her mother and other characters are portrayed is that her skin is a lighter shade of brown and she has black curly hair. CRT challenges the idea of colorblindness and race neutrality. When illustrating differences in skin tone to represent all diverse populations, a neutral palette is not a true representation that minority students can identify with. However, three out of the 13 books did show a variety (light, medium, and dark) of African American skins tones of the characters: *Early Sunday Morning* (2017), *Grandma's Tiny House* (2017), and *The Ring Bearer* (2017).

African American Hair

One vital aspect of African American culture is hair. All 13 picturebooks studied had a significant portrayal of African American hair. Hair textures, hair care products, hair accessories, and a variety of hairstyles were evident in the coding of the illustrations. In *Early Sunday Morning* (2017), hair is showcased throughout. The characters' hairstyles are contemporary and very realistic. The mom has flowing locks, while the dad has a short temp-fade. There is one scene in which the daughter is sitting in front of her mom on pillows getting her hair done for church. Care hair products such as hair serum, combs (with some teeth missing), brush, and a tub of hair bows truly depict a routine hair combing session for African American young girls. There is another scene of her brother getting a fresh cut in a barbershop. The picture portrays a realistic depiction of a little African American boy getting his hair cut. Troy is sitting in the barber's chair with the black cape around him. The older barber (Harvey) is holding the electric clippers and behind him is a shelf full of barbershop products and accessories. There is even black hair on the

floor around the chair from Troy's cut. The barber is telling Sarah what she has to do to right before she sings. In this book, African American hair is celebrated and showcased throughout. Another example of African American hair as a focal point is a scene from *Grandma's Tiny House* (2017). The illustrations show nine aunties gathered together chatting in the den. Each of the nine ladies has their own unique hairdo. There are ponytails, afros, short cuts, longer waves, updos, pulled-back styles, headbands, and ribbons. A similar scene shows seven uncles outside with various types of hair, as well. This story shows a wide array of African American hair throughout.

In contrast to the variety and individual uniqueness demonstrated in *Grandma's Tiny House*, the illustrations depicting hairstyles in *Lola Gets a Cat* lack cultural variety. In *Lola Gets a Cat* (2017), the mom and the small daughter both seem to have straggly looking hair. Their hair definitely helps to show their African American ethnicity, but their hair does not seem to be celebrated and showcased in a positive manner. Although ponytails and hair bows are shown in the illustrations, the hair is lacking in appeal.

Another form of portraying African American hair in a non-appealing manner can be shown in how their hair texture is illustrated. Some of the picturebooks have African American characters whose hair is depicted in a stereotypical manner. In a time when African Americans are owning their hair and celebrating its natural beauty, hair texture is an important trait or feature and helps to build identity and self-worth. For example, in *Daddy Played the Blues* (2017), the characters' hair looks kinky and coily. Cassie's locks are untamed and stick straight up. Her mom's hair is depicted in the same style. However, I noticed that the stories that have interracial families portrayed the characters' hair texture as very fine and curly. Both *Twindergarten* (2017) and *I'm Big Now!* (2017) include children from biracial families.

Subsequently, their hair is black, fine, and very curly. These examples seem to be stereotypical in nature. CRT expresses the importance of counter-highlighting lived experiences. However, CRT also challenges the ideas of colorblindness and race neutrality. It is important for diverse books to feature diverse characters with illustrations that represent the African American community realistically. Another story in which hair texture is showcased but, in a culturally responsive manner, is *Grandma's Tiny House* (2017). The pictures in this story are full of various hair textures such as afros, ponytails, puffs, short straight, kinky curly, long, wavy, faded, and edged up. Such styles were showcased by men, women, boys, and girls. African American hair is an important component of African American life. All 13 books studied have significant visual representations of African American hair.

Counter Narratives

  Black girl magic. In 2013, CaShawn Thompson popularized the concept and movement of *Black Girl Magic*. This movement is a counter narrative to the way that African American women have been portrayed in a negative light. Instead, this movement became a way to celebrate accomplishments, beauty, and strength of Black women and girls. According to Merriweather Hunn, Guy, and Mangliitz, (2006), "counter-storytelling is a tool that CRT scholars employ to contradict racist characterizations of social life" (p. 244). Counter-storytelling has also been defined as "a method of telling the stories of those people whose experiences are not often told" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 26). In essence, it is an empowering tool that encourages, supports, and builds confidence in African American women and girls. Black girls tend to have self-esteem levels about equivalent to their male counterparts, unlike White girls (Greene & Way, 2005). This finding might be due, in part, to the role models African American boys and girls have in storybooks such as those analyzed here. In line with this movement,

several of the stories included in this analysis highlight African American girls. In *Early Sunday Morning* (2017), a little Black girl who finds the courage to sing her first solo at church. *In the Snow* (2017) is a story about a little Black girl playing in the snow. She tumbles, falls, and destroys her snowman that she worked hard to build. However, she gets back up and continues to play and have fun. Another example of Black Girl Magic is found in the story *I am Truly* (2017), a story about a little Black girl whose magical hair takes her on several adventures. Each of these stories emphasizes the unique nature of a strong Black female protagonist.

Building Confidence, Self-Esteem, and Self-Worth

Childhood is a critical developmental period, during which children must establish confidence, self-esteem, and self-worth to carry with them through adolescence and into adulthood (Harter, 2003). Several of the 13 books contained plotlines with an underlying message aimed at building the reader's confidence, self-esteem, or self-worth. These books seek to affirm African American lives by providing stories that included storylines that build confidence, self-esteem, and self-worth. For example, *In the Snow* (2017), *Early Sunday Morning* (2017), *Twindergarten* (2017), *I am Truly* (2017), *The Ring Bearer* (2017), and *Jabari Jumps* (2017) are all stories in which the African American child characters have the opportunity to build confidence.

African American Culture

When considering the impact that literature can have on children of diverse backgrounds, it is important for educators and instructors to understand the culture of the children they are serving. African American culture is full of customs, traditions, and specific factors that identify the culture and make it unique. In education, literature should depict a culture as accurately as possible for students. Paris and Alim (2017) believed that "sustaining language, literacies, and

cultural practices of students of color and their communities, while empowering youth and giving them space for their voices to be heard" is valuable (p. 36). For the African American culture, vernacular, names, and clothing are just a few of the ways the community express themselves.

African American vernacular. Language is an important part of any culture and language dialects can vary from region to region (Howard, 2001). The African American community share a vernacular and dialect that is unique to their community. For example in *Early Sunday Morning* (2017), a character stated, "Sunday is the Lord's day, when Mommy, Daddy, my brother, and I go to church." This particular excerpt is an example of African American vernacular that is unique in many African American families and communities.

Researcher Erik Thomas (2007) noted that one of the phonetic variables that are common to the African American vernacular is the consonant cluster simplification. An example of this would be in which the second consonant of a word is not pronounced and is dropped, such as "pas' for past, des' for desk, hol' for hold, or ac' for act" (Thomas, 2007, p. 455). An example of this is seen in *Daddy Played the Blues* (2017) a story about a girl named Cassie and her family leaving their Mississippi home for a better life in northward in Chicago. Cassie's dad sang blues songs as they drove. In the book, the dad sings, *"Goin'* down this road and I'm feelin' bad, baby, Goin' down this road feelin' so miserable and bad…" As language is a means of communication, it is important that children's literature is communicating a culturally responsive conversational language, including vernacular that is common to the African American community. Although there were a few examples of language that was reflective of the African American collective vernacular, the overall findings found the language was presented in a standard form.

African American names. Prior research has shown that African American parents, in particular, have a tendency to create novel names for their children (Lieberson & Mikelson, 1995). A small percentage of African American children are typically given one of the country's twenty-five most frequent names (Barry & Harper, 1995). Likewise, the stories analyzed here also introduced unique names to the reader. For example, names such as Jabari, Omari, Cassie, Troy, Harvey, Vernon, and Lola are not considered common names for other racial groups but may be very common amongst African Americans. Among the African American community, names are an important was to express ties to an African heritage. Diverse students can relate to the uniqueness of a name when they see creative names that are similar to their own within the text of a picturebook.

Clothing. Clothing, like other aspects of culture, is situated within a racial context. African American adolescents note that clothing is often used to differentiate Black and White teens (Harrison, 2017). African American girls are also more frequently punished than White girls for wearing similar clothing to school (Blake et al., 2017). The characters depicted in the 13 stories analyzed here are shown wearing a variety of types of clothing. Some characters wear typical clothing that would be worn by other racial groups. However, some of the picturebooks show characters wearing clothing that is recognized as culturally responsive clothing for the African American community. For example, *Early Sunday Morning* (2017) shows the mother wearing an African Dashikis in traditional African colors.

In response to the second research question on representation of culture, I examined the picturebooks for components that are important to the African American culture and community. I examined the diversity portrayed among families and looked for gaps and misrepresentations. I examined the illustrations for physical features that are representative of the African American

race. I examined components such as vernacular, names, and clothing that hold meaning and importance to the African American community. I examined all of these components with the intention of finding features and text among the selected materials that minority students could relate to.

Own Voices

While reading these books and conducting this study, I noticed that some of the depictions, storylines, pictures, and texts stood out to me as being representative of the African American experience or family. As an African American woman, I could relate to the stories, so it was apparent to me that those particular stories were written about African Americans by African Americans. I found that only three out of the 13 books studied were written by African Americans: *Early Sunday Morning* (Millner & Brantley-Newton, 2017), *In Your Hands* (Weatherford, 2017), and *The Ring Bearer* (Cooper, 2017). These three books included what I would describe as an insider's perspective into the lives of African American families.

Early Sunday Morning (Millner & Brantley-Newton, 2017) has a certain legitimacy and richness of African American culture. The words and pictures depict African Americans in a realistic and dignified manner. African Americans families, their hair, traditions, and culture are highlighted in a number of ways. The attention to details, word choices, and illustrations indicates that this book is written by someone who is a member of the African American community. Likewise, *The Ring Bearer* (2017) wonderfully showcases the African American family in a dynamic and realistic fashion. The storyline and illustrations portray the realistic experiences of many African American families. One scene shows the little girl, Sophie, sitting counting the flower petals that she will be gracefully dropping as the flower girl. The details in this picture are awesome. The look on Sophie's face, her hair (even down to her edges) simply

implies that this story was written by an African American. Additionally, *In His Hands* (2017) a story about a mother's prayer for a son. Although the pictures are not in full, rich color, this book does highlight some important messages that are often spoken over the lives of many African American children (especially boys) by their mothers. The very first page details how the mother is holding her firstborn son. She studies his hands and face and goes on to name him Omari. Another page boldly states Black Lives Matter. This message is important in a time when Black boys and men are killed because they are seen as a threat. This story was written by a Black mother who is praying to God to keep her son safe.

There are some experiences that can only be shared, spoken of, portrayed, and fully understood only by those who have experienced them. These three stories, written by and about African Americans represent many African American families in a positive way. Table 2 shows the 13 picturebooks studied including titles, authors, illustrators, and indicates whether or not books were written by African Americans (Own Voices).

Summary

Tyler, Boykin, Miller, and Hurley (2006) noted that educational research is becoming

increasingly more critical of the public school enterprise in the United States, namely

because of the perceived simultaneous promotion of mainstream cultural values in

procedures, structures, and activities which, oftentimes, trumped any recognition of the

cultural assets brought to the classroom by many ethnic minority students. (p. 365)

Gay (2000) noted that "culturally responsive teaching defies conventions of traditional educational practices with respect to ethnic students of color" (p. 34). Encouraging all educators to perform an analysis of literature with an aim to help diverse students make connections will develop "social consciousness, intellectual critique, and political and personal efficacy in

students so that they can combat prejudices, racism, and other forms of oppression and exploitation" (p. 34). Many of the central themes found throughout the analysis reflect the central features of culturally responsive teaching; cooperation, community, and connectedness.

This chapter presented the findings of a critical content analysis of children's picturebooks written by and/or about African Americans, which were submitted to the Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC) in 2017. This chapter presented findings that reflected the purpose of this study, which was to critically examine how the life experiences of African American families are currently depicted in recently published children's picturebooks. The information presented in this chapter was organized by the research questions and my findings on cultural representations, emerging themes, misrepresentations, caricatures, and stereotypes regarding African American children's literature were presented. The following chapter presents a conclusion, discussion, and recommendations for future studies.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this qualitative study was to use critical content analysis to closely examine picturebooks identified as being written by or about African Americans submitted to the CCBC in 2017. This study employed a qualitative research design to explore the topic of African American families in children's books. In children's literature, picturebooks are a means of assisting young children in understanding stereotypes and questioning stereotypes in culture (Koss, 2015). Thus, picturebooks can be a teaching tool that provides parents and educators with content that is essential raising awareness of cultures, race, and political climate. Lessons and conversations on diversity can stem from diverse literary content, which are powerful learning tools which enable the world to change. The questions that guided my study were: How are life experiences of African American families represented in children's picturebooks submitted to the CCBC in 2017? and How are African American characters and cultures portrayed in the illustrations and/or texts?

The theory that guided my research was the critical race theory. Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a theoretical framework that emerged from the work of critical legal scholars after the Civil Rights Movement and now is employed by scholars in various fields of education (Kumar, 2014). In this chapter, I present a discussion of the findings after conducting the critical content analysis. The conclusion of the study is presented. I provide implications of the results and findings. Limitations of the study are presented along with recommendations for future research.

Discussion

For this critical content analysis, I looked at how African American families are represented and/or portrayed in the illustrations and texts. Forty-six picturebooks were identified on the 2017 CCBC list as being picturebooks written by or about African Americans. These

books were examined to ensure that they met the established criteria. Thirteen books were examined as a part of this study.

Using critical content analysis, I closely examined the portrayal of African American families and characters in 13 children's picturebooks published in submitted to the Cooperative Children's Book Center in 2017. Although African American families and experiences are still considerably limited in children's picturebooks, especially when compared to the numerous picturebooks that feature White characters, this study showed that a few of the books written in the year 2017 addressed some of the life experiences of some African American families in a positive, authentic, and relevant way. Using CRT to highlight interactions can help educators create more inclusive learning opportunities for all students, especially minority students. Addressing race and diverse issues is one "means to present anti-racist pedagogy in the classroom" (Wiseman et al., 2019, p. 466).

The findings of this study also indicated that there are some voices and experiences that are not represented in the set of books that were a part of this study. The picturebooks analyzed in this study highlighted a vast range of representations of African American families, experiences, and lives. Consequently, some of the books consist of themes which imply a level of racism, colorism, and genericism. Even so, I believe that each of the 13 picturebooks is instrumental in adding to the much-needed conversations about African American families and life experiences. A summary of the results is presented by the corresponding research question. As an African American educator, this study has enhanced my desire to find relevant and meaningful literature that can resonate positive experiences with all children, especially children of color.

Representations of Life Experiences of African American Families

The first guiding research question for this study was: How are the life experiences of African American families represented in the children's picturebooks submitted to the CCBC in 2017? To examine this research question, I examined African American families that were featured in the picturebooks and closely looked at the life experiences in cultural representations, emerging themes, misrepresentations, caricatures, and stereotypes.

Three common life experiences were found amongst many of the books. The most prevalent life experiences found among the literature was the church, family, and music. African Americans also have a large presence in the art community. However, none of the selected texts highlighted the art culture that is unique to the African American community. These themes were found to be common among the depictions of the African American communities and families presented in the literature. Aspects of the importance of attending church and the worship of God were embedded in the texts and illustrations. These findings are consistent with other researchers that have noted the importance of these family activities within African American families.

Researcher Gray (2017) noted the importance of social gathering places, such as the barbershop and church, to the African American community. So, it would be accurate to portray such institutions within the context of children's literature for cultural accuracy (Gray, 2017). There were images of church buildings, bibles, or pastors in four of the 13 books.

Family gatherings such as Sunday dinners, church events, barbeques, weddings, and parties are considered customary within African American families (Jarrett, Jefferson, & Kelly, 2010). My analysis revealed that family gatherings occurred in several of the picturebooks. Another common life experience noted is music. Music provides a sense of agency and

individuality and is a key component of many African American communities (Love, 2017). I

found that many of the texts reflected the commitment to and valuing of music.

Representations African American Family Culture

The second guiding research question for this study was: How are African American

families and cultures portrayed in the illustrations and/or texts? To examine this research

question, I focused on analyzing the literature for family dynamics and representations of the

African American culture. Koss (2015) indicated that literature helps children identify with their

personal culture and the culture of others. Koss (2015) also noted that children that can see

themselves and their culture can develop a positive self-identity.

When examining the literature for family dynamics and cultural representations, for this

study several prevailing themes were noted. The diversity in family structure and the physical

appearances of African Americans depicted in the illustrations were commonly featured in the

analyzed literature. Because African American families are very diverse in color, size, shape,

social status, and structure (McNair, 2008; Revell & McGhee, 2012; Vereen, 2007), it was

important for me to note how the family unit was portrayed within the literature. Researchers

Murry et al. (2001) indicated that many African American families are composed of single-

parent structures in which the mother is the primary guardian and/or caregiver. If authors and

illustrators create stories with the intent to reflect everyday life, a single-parent or caregiver

would be expected as a common family unit depicted within African American picturebooks.

However, I noted the depiction of family and family dynamics portrayed in all 13 of the

picturebooks varied from book to book.

Researcher Welch (2016) noted that many readers learn about people of other races and

cultures through second-hand representations such as children's literature. Other researchers,

such as Brooks and McNair (2009), examined literature for issues of cultural authenticity. They reviewed literature for whether or not the "speech patterns, values, cultural practices, and perspectives of African Americans" were culturally responsive in the African American children's literature they examined (p. 130). For this study, throughout the examination of the literature for cultural representation, I noted several physical features of characters that were in place to represent the African American community. Some of the prominent physical features that were identified were facial features, skin tone, and hair texture. I noted that throughout many of the illustrations facial features were often portrayed as either exaggerated or building off of a stereotype, such as big eyes, big noses, wide hips, and big hair. This finding is consistent with other studies that have found that African Americans are often stereotyped in children's literature (Welch, 2016). In their review of studies that have focused on African American characters, Brooks and McNair (2009) noted that "across these studies of children's books featuring African Americans, particularly those written by Whites, the representations of African American protagonists were consistently found to reflect White supremacist thought" (p. 130). The findings from this study support the assertions that African Americans have historically been stereotyped in different contexts including characters often portrayed as having exaggerated characteristics (Brooks & McNair, 2009). The findings from this study are important because Harris (1990) stated that "if African American children do not see reflections of themselves in school texts or do not perceive any affirmation of their cultural heritage in those texts, then it is quite likely that they will not read or value schooling" (p. 552).

African Americans uniquely vary in skin tones, yet throughout the literature analyses, I found several of the books depict the African American characters with light skin tones and fair complexions. One of the main tenets of CRT is that racism is so ingrained in the U.S. society that

stereotypes become normal. If only lighter skin tones are used to represent African Americans then the message could translate into Whiteness as a symbol of power, according to CRT. One vital aspect of African American culture is hair. All of the books that were analyzed and studied had a significant portrayal of African American hair. Hair textures, hair care products, hair accessories, and a variety of hairstyles were evident throughout my coding process. In some stories, the portrayal of hair is stereotypical in nature. Hair texture is an important feature which helps to build identity and self-worth. In a study by King (2018), I noted that Black girls are not exempt from societal standards that straight hair is considered more presentable, while natural hair is considered unkempt and unprofessional. I was able to identify some picturebooks in which natural hair was showcased and celebrated.

Hayslip and White (2008) noted that many African American families have a grandparent in the home. Despite this common family dynamic, none of the picturebooks examined conveyed this. I noticed many key elements missing from the literature that are representations of African American families. Family structures in which the grandparent, particularly the grandmother, is a primary caregiver and younger parents were not strongly represented within the examined books. Other popular topics that were noted throughout the research process were the message of confidence and self-worth, unique naming of characters, and the use of clothing to represent culture.

Role of Children's Literature in Developing Character

Educational researchers and psychologists recognize the inherent importance of picturebooks in the psychological development of children. Children learn about their world and themselves within children's literature. A sense of familiarity and safety that is transferred to the social and cultural messages contained within the book can be experienced by children when

reading. Children want to identify with the characters in the picturebooks, and that association allows them to gain ideas and emotions that promote developmental growth (Spitz, 1999; Wolf, Coats, Enciso, & Jenkins, 2011).

Over fifty years ago, Larrick (1965) called for initial discussions around multicultural literature for young readers. He noted the importance of children of all cultures and races seeing themselves in the text and/or illustrations of a children's book (Larrick, 1965). In the *Handbook of Research in Children's and Young Adult Literature*, Wolf et al. (2011) noted that children's literature in primary education has essentially been viewed as a reading tool that is used to teach something else, such as a skill or concept. Wolf et al. (2011) perceived that children's literature is more than just a means of learning skills, it is essential in helping students understand themselves and the world they live in.

Implications for Theory and Research

For this study, the critical race theory (CRT) was used as the theoretical framework. After the Civil Rights Movement, CRT emerged from the work of critical legal scholars and is now employed by scholars in various fields of education (Kumar, 2014). Critical race theory provides conceptual tools for analyzing how race and racism have been systematized and supported. Many researchers suggested that CRT should be used to examine educational inequality that is deep-seated in our society (Ladson-Billings, 1998, Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2006; Luna, 2016). Utilizing the conceptual tools of CRT, researchers can examine and analyze visual and textual representations of the African American community. Research that aims to explore diversity, race, and minority experiences could benefit from the ideas and concepts of the CRT.

With the CRT as a study framework, I was able to analyze life experiences as portrayed as realistic narratives with significant African American characters and as depicted throughout

illustrations. CRT provides conceptual tools for examining how race and racism have been portrayed. The tenets of CRT can help educators examine for instances of racism, images that reflect Whiteness as a symbol of power, or stereotypes that do not represent the lived experiences of African Americans (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000). For this study, the portrayal of race was an important element for the analysis and examination of African American children's literature. Using CRT, I examined various children's literature for themes and implicit /explicit racism, while promoting and advocating for relevant multicultural texts that sought to accurately reflect the lives of all students, specifically, African American students. These findings are important because they provide verification of a gap in available culturally appropriate literature. Relevant and factual representations of the African American community are important for our culture and customs to be understood. Diversity in children's literature and educational materials must be presented in a manner that depicts different lifestyles, cultures, opportunities, and experiences (Boyd, Causey, & Galda, 2015). Researchers, educators, authors, illustrators, and publishers that use CRT can ensure culturally appropriate books are created and supported.

Implications for Practitioners

As a teacher-researcher, the goal of my study is to draw from Paulo Freire's work in critical pedagogy to change educational practice. Paulo Freire, the founder of critical pedagogy, was one of the most significant educational thinkers of the twentieth century (Leonard & McLaren, 2002). As an educator, Freire set forth the groundwork in using education to liberate oppressed groups of people. He believed that these oppressed people needed to understand the structures and systems in their society that continued to preserve and prolong inequality and injustice (Lac, 2017; Webb, 2010). Freire is well known for his work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970). Consequently, Freire stated that the problem of humanization has always been

humankind's central problem, it now takes on the character of an inescapable concern. Freire (1970), shed light on some of the problems that lie within the educational system. Freire argued that education becomes an act of depositing (Freire, 1970).

Teachers are the depositors, and the students are the depositories, like empty "containers or receptacles to be filled" (p.72). In this type of banking system, knowledge is bestowed by those who consider themselves the knowledge holders (teachers) upon those whom they consider knowing nothing (students). Freire considered this type of ideology to be oppressive (Freire, 1970). Wink (2005) defined critical pedagogy as "a prism that reflects the complexities between teaching and learning. It is a prism which sheds light on the hidden subtleties that might have escaped our view previously. The prism has a tendency to focus on shades of social, cultural, political, and even economic conditions, and it does all of this under the broad view of history" (p. 26). Lastly, it is important to note that critical pedagogy is a dynamic framework that focuses on empowering people of all classes, races, genders, through non-traditional educational practices. It gives those individuals and/or groups who are considered marginalized access to power to change their world and words.

A number of researchers in education (Beach & Cleovoulou, 2014; Dozier, Johnston, & Rogers, 2006; Janks, 2010; Kuby, 2013) referred to Freire's seminal work in critical pedagogy as a foundational building block and frame of reference. As an African American educator, I understand the nature of oppression that still exists. As a researcher, I acknowledge that there is still work to be done in eliminating the banking model from education. Recognizing and understanding racial injustices of minorities in the United States, as it pertains to education, is a significant component of this study which examined how African Americans are represented in current children's literature. To help alleviate the baking concept in education, this study

provides information for teachers and education experts to equip them to make quality decisions about diverse literature that can potentially benefit all students. For this study, I have employed critical pedagogy to act as an agent of positive change in the African American community, in the field of education, and in my world by analyzing children's literature that depicts families' everyday lives.

In public schools, educators strive to provide opportunities for all of their students, yet teachers are dependent on the resources that are available to them. In order to provide diversity in educational materials, students must be presented with books that depict different lifestyles, cultures, opportunities, experiences, in addition to books that only focus on the status quo (Boyd, Causey, & Galda, 2015, Koss, 2015). Literature is a resource for educators to convey lessons in multiple subjects, not just language arts. Moreover, children's literature serves as a gateway to knowledge by offering insights, reflections, and new perspectives (Bishop, 1990, Crowley, Fountain, & Torres, 2012; Warren, 2018).

Educators, authors, publishers, illustrators, and academic educators, through the examination of current children's literature, can begin making the necessary changes to move forward to ensure that culture and diversity are celebrated in literature. The changes include encouraging access to information that is accurate and reflects what children of all cultures and backgrounds recognize as reality. A balance and true representation of African American life that honors different cultures and lifestyles will inspire, empower children, and humanize education.

It is important for academic programs of educators and librarians to be knowledgeable of the need for more diverse literature. One method of collection development that will help preservice teachers and librarians is learning about book selection strategies and resources. Educators that know how to efficiently locate and find materials will have better success at

gaining access to a variety of literature that encompasses the culture and communities relative to all students. This will help educators and teachers select quality, culturally responsive and multicultural children's literature to share with future students. Questions that can help educators decide on diversity appropriateness may include: Does this book reflect the students that are in my classroom? Will this book offer an accurate illustration of a culture? Does this literature promote enriching conversations that my students can learn from? Is the diverse information in this book accurate and appropriate for my students?

When planning a unit of learning that is supported by various resources, the classroom teacher should make every effort to include diverse and multicultural literature in their courses. Critical thinking skills are recognized as important skills to be taught with the 21st Century Learner requirements. Diversity and discussions on differences in cultures would encourage learning new perspectives and critical thinking among young students. If an educator is lacking enough resources, many libraries have resource connections and they are able to borrow materials from other libraries and institutions. By connecting with other schools and libraries, a teacher would have access to a great amount of available literature that could meet the diverse needs of the student population.

In education, "multiculturalism is often viewed as an approach to curriculum development that involves the inclusion of diverse content and children's books about ethnic groups, women, and other cultural groups" (Fox & Short, 2003, p. 7). Good multicultural curricula can introduce everyone to a wide variety of people but cannot give in-depth or specialized information on all groups (Gilton, 2007). Educators that want to include multicultural literature should consider the following resources; multicultural organizations that are specific to the field of education, library collections, multicultural award-winning book lists, and even

international sources, such as embassies that want to promote their culture and country (see Appendix B). Educators can encourage older children to investigate and locate culturally diverse and accurate information by directing them to search within booklists, websites, and children's literature. This type of activity will encourage children to discover how they are similar and different and spark curiosity in learning a new culture. Gilton (2007) noted that "using pathfinders, libraries, and selected ethnic material will enable people from the group described to learn much more about themselves, and other interested people to learn more about the group" (p. 94).

Bishop (2003) noted that the combination of research and imagination are not adequate preparation for writers that want to represent a cultural experience outside their own. They also indicated "our society's strong traditional belief in the power of books to influence children's minds and transmit cultural values" (p. 46). Fox and Short (2003) noted that when authors, illustrators, and publishers strive for cultural authenticity, readers from the culture represented will recognize, identify, and be affirmed with the culture. Readers from different cultures will sense that the information provided is genuine and will gain an understanding that sometimes there are more similarities than differences. Boyd, Causey, and Galda (2015) stated the importance of all readers requiring a rich and diverse variety of books that reflect the diverse ethnic, cultural, socioeconomic, and linguistic groups that make up multiple voices, lives, and perspectives around the world. The results of this study indicate that there is still a need for children's literature that provides a true representation of the African American community and culture. Based on the findings from this study, the researcher recommends encouraging students and families to share their diverse stories as oral stories that may turn in to books or classroom literature.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

Limitations

I acknowledge that there were limitations to this critical content analysis study. In an effort to conduct a current and relevant study, I only examined picturebooks written in the year 2017. When researching diversity in literature, I found limited studies focused on children's picturebooks published in the United States in 2017 that are written by African Americans or have content about African Americans. This specific date range is a limitation that would potentially exclude other literature that may be a better representation of diverse cultures but is not considered current.

Another limitation is the specific focus on one minority group. My focus was on texts with depictions of African American families and cultures written by African -Americans or had content about African Americans. As an African American woman, I understand how my own lens may impact the analysis of this study. To take this into account, I used the tenets of CRT as a framework and remained aware of my personal life experiences and how they may impact the study.

Recommendations

This study expands our understanding of the representations of African American characters and families in current literature. The central purpose of this study was to examine African American children's literature submitted to the CCBC in 2017 and to perform an analysis to determine if the current literature selection was a true representation of the African American community and culture.

It was beyond the scope of this study to explore the reasons and purpose of the author and illustrator's intent in portraying a diverse culture. A future study could explore how authors and

illustrators select the material that represents a diverse culture. There is a demand for children's literature that is diverse and multicultural so research could indicate if there has been an increase in the publication of African American authors and illustrators. Future studies could also research the trends in the production of multicultural books as a whole and focus on the representation of different groups of people.

Conclusion

Culturally responsive diverse and multicultural literature provides a positive influence on children of all races. For children that are not represented in the literature, a new perspective on culture is offered. For children that identify with the represented culture, a sense of familiarity and belonging are offered. Picturebooks that are diverse and culturally responsive can affirm cultural and social identities (Crowley, Fountain, & Torres, 2012).

My findings of this study indicate that, with few deviations, the 2017 CCBC literature picturebook selection does not have enough culturally responsive books in their collection. A diverse collection that is a true representation of various cultures, especially the African American culture, is needed to meet the current shortage. Minority students should have the same equal access to quality, culturally responsive, children's literature as other racial groups. No student or teacher should ever feel embarrassed or misrepresented as my students and I felt during one read aloud of Dr. Seuss' book *My Many Colored Days* (1973, 1996).

REFERENCES

Amoateng, A., Richter, L., Makiwane, M., & Rama, S. (2012). Describing the structure and needs of families in South Africa: Towards the development of a national policy for families. *Department of Social Development, Pretoria: Child Youth and Family Development.*

Andersen, M. L., and Taylor, H.F. (2009). *Sociology: The Essentials.* Belmont, CA: Thompson Wadsworth.

Barry, H., & Harper, A. S. (1995). Increased choice of female phonetic attributes in first names. *Sex Roles, 32* (11-12), 809-819.

Beach, P., & Cleovoulou, Y. (2014). An inquiry-based approach to critical literacy: Pedagogical nuances of a second grade classroom. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, *60*(1), 161-181.

Beach, R., Enciso, P., Harste, J., Jenkins, C., Raina, S., Rogers, R., Short, K., Sung, Y., Wilson, M., Yenika-Agbaw, V. (2009). Defining the critical in critical content analysis. In Leander, K., et al. *58th Yearbook of the National Reading Council* (pp. 120-143). Oak Creek, WI: National Reading Conference.

Bennett, M. M. (2008). Understanding the students we teach: Poverty in the classroom. *The Clearing House, 81*(6), 251-256. Retrieved from https://login.proxy.kennesaw.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/1968882 41?accountid=11824

Bishop, R.S. (2007). *Free within ourselves: The development of African American children's literature*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Bishop, R. S. (2003). Reframing the debate about cultural authenticity. *Stories matter: The complexity of cultural authenticity in children's literature*, 25-37.

Bishop, R.S. (1990). "Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors." Perspectives: *Choosing and Using Books for the Classroom, 6,* p. ix–xi.

Blake, J. J., Keith, V. M., Luo, W., Le, H., & Salter, P. (2017). The role of colorism in explaining African American females' suspension risk. *School Psychology Quarterly*, *32*(1), 118-130.

Bland, C. M., & Gann, L. A. (2013). From standing out to being just one of the gang: Guidelines for selecting inclusive picturebooks. *Childhood Education*, *89*(4), 254-259.

Botelho, M. J. & Rudman, M. K. (2009). Critical multicultural analysis of children's literature. New York: Routledge.

Boyd, F. (2003). Experiencing things not seen: Educative events centered on a study of *Shabanu*. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 46 (6), 460-474.

Boyd, F. B., Causey, L. L., & Galda, L. (2015). Culturally diverse literature. *The Reading Teacher*, *68*(5), 378-387.

Braden, E. G., & Rodriguez, S. C. (2016). Beyond Mirrors and Windows: A Critical Content Analysis of Latinx Children's Books. *Journal of Language and Literacy Education,12*(2), 56-83.

Broderick, D.M. (1973). *Image of the Black in children's fiction*. New York, NY: Vintage.

Brooks, W. (2009). An author as a counter-storyteller: Applying critical race theory to a Coretta Scott King Award book. *Children's Literature in Education: An International Quarterly*, 40(1), 33-43.

Brooks, W. (2006). Reading Representations of Themselves: Urban Youth Use Culture and African American Textual Features to Develop Literary Understandings. *Reading Research Quarterly,41*(3), 372-392. doi:10.1598/rrq.41.3.4

Brooks, W., & McNair, J. C. (2009). "But This Story of Mine Is Not Unique": A Review of Research on African American Children's Literature. *Review of Educational Research*, *79*(1), 125-162.

Brooks, W.M., & McNair, J. W. (2008). *Embracing, evaluating, and examining African American children's and young adult literature.* Lanham, MD: Scarecrow.

Carbado, D. (2013). Colorblind intersectionality. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 38, 811-845.

Cooperative Children's Book Center. (2019). CCBC choices 2017. Retrieved from https://ccbc.education.wisc.edu/books/choiceintro18.asp

Crenshaw, K. (2011). Twenty years of critical race theory: Looking back to move forward. *Connecticut Law Review*, 43, 1253-1352.

Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. Stanford law review, 1241-1299.

Crowley, R., Fountain, M., & Torres, R. (2012). Seeing in color: Three reading teachers explore the importance of multicultural children's literature. *Michigan Reading Journal*, *44*(4), 27-35.

Dahlen, S. P. (2017). A Step from Heaven: On Being a Woman of Color in Children's Literature Studies. *The Lion and the Unicorn*, *41*(1), 82-92.

Darling-Hammond, L. (2006). Securing the right to learn: Policy and practice for powerful teaching and learning. *Educational Researcher*, *35*(7), 13-24.

Delgado, R. & Stefancic, J. (2013). Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge. 3rd ed. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Delgado, R. & Stefancic, J. (2012). Critical Race Theory: An Introduction. 2nd ed. New York: New York University Press.

Delgado, R. & Stefancic, J. (1992). Images of the Outsider in American Law and Culture: Can Free Expression Remedy Systemic Social Ills? *Cornell Law Review, 77*, 1258-1297.

Diller, J., & Moule, J. (2005). Cultural competence: A primer for educators, Thomson Wadsorth: Belmont, California.

Dozier, C., Johnston, P., & Rogers, R. (2006). *Critical Literacy Critical Teaching: Tools for preparing responsive teaching.* Columbia, NY: Teachers College Press.

Du Bois, W. E. B. (1970). *WEB Du Bois speaks: Speeches and addresses, 1920-1963* (Vol. 2). Pathfinder Pr.

Dyson, A. H. & Genishi, C. (2005). An NCRLL Volume-On the case: Approaches to language and literacy research. New York: Teachers College Press.

Edge, T. (2017). "Who Do You Think You Are?": Examining the African American experience in slavery and freedom through family history television. *The Journal of American Culture, 404,* 341-354.

Fiester, L. (2010). Early Warning! Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters. KIDS COUNT Special Report. *Annie E. Casey Foundation*.

Fisher, D., & Frey, N. (2007). Implementing a schoolwide literacy framework: Improving achievement in an urban elementary school. *The Reading Teacher*, *61*(1), 32-43.

Fisher, H. (1950). Family life in children's literature. *The Elementary School Journal*. 50(9), 516-520.

Freeman, M. H. (2010). Cognitive Linguistic Approaches to Literary Studies: State of the Art in Cognitive Poetics. *Oxford Handbooks Online*. doi:10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199738632.013.0045

Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed.* New York, NY: Continuum Publishing Company.

Freire, P., Ramos, M. B., Macedo, D. P., & Shor, I. (2018). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (50th ed.). New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic.

Fox, D. L., & Short, K. G. (2003). Stories Matter: The Complexity of Cultural Authenticity in Children's Literature. National Council of Teachers of English, 1111 W. Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL.

Galda, L., Ash, G.E., Cullinana, B. (2000). Children's literature, In M. Kamill, P. Mosenthal, P.D. Pearson, R. Barr, *Handbook of reading research, Volume III.* Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Garbarino, J., & Ganzel, B. (2000). The human ecology of early risk. *Handbook of early childhood intervention*, *2*, 76-93.

Gardner, R. P. (2017). Unforgivable blackness: Visual rhetoric, reader response, and critical racial literacy. *Children's Literature in Education*, *48*(2), 119-133.

Gay, G. (2000). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Georgas, J. (2003). Family: Variations and changes across cultures. *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture*, (Unit 13, Chapter 3). Center for Cross-Cultural Research, Western Washington University, Bellingham, Washington USA.

Gilton, D. L. (2007). *Multicultural and ethnic children's literature in the United States. US*: Scarecrow Press.

Glesne, C. (2011). *Becoming a qualitative researcher: An introduction*. Pearson.

Gorski, P. C. (2012). Perceiving the problem of poverty and schooling: Deconstructing the class stereotypes that mis-shape education practice and policy. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, *45*(2), 302-319.

Gray, P. (2017). "Join the club: African American children's literature, social change, and the Chicago defender junior." *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, vol. 42, no. 2, pp. 149-168.

Greene, M.L., Way, N. (2005). Self-Esteem Trajectories among Ethnic Minority Adolescents: A Growth Curve Analysis of the Patterns and Predictors of Change. *Journal of Research on Adolescence, 15*(2), 151-178.

Halpern, R., Lago, E. D., & Dal Lago, E. (2002, 2008). *Slavery and emancipation*. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated.

Harris, M. S., & Skyles, A. (2008). Kinship care for African American children: Disproportionate and disadvantageous. *Journal of Family Issues, 29, 1013–1030. doi:10.1177/01925 13X08316543*

Harris, V. J. (1990). African American children's literature: The first one hundred years. *The Journal of Negro Education*, *59*(4), 540-555.

Harris, A. P. (2012). Critical race theory. *Critical Race Theory (Third Edition),* Xiii-Xviii. doi:10.2307/j.ctt1ggjjn3.3

Harrison, L. (2017). Redefining intersectionality theory through the lens of African American young adolescent girls' racialized experiences. *Youth & Society*, *49*(8), 1023-1039.

Hareven, (1978). The dynamics of kin in an industrial community. *The American Journal of Sociology, 84,* 151-182.

Harsh, S., & Mallory, M. (2013). The future of education: Building capacity for success. *Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin*, *80*(1), 16-25.

Harter, S. (2003). The development of self-representations during childhood and adolescence. In M. R. Leary & J. P. Tangney (Eds.), *Handbook of self and identity* (pp. 610-642). New York, NY, US: The Guilford Press.

Hawkesworth, M. (2010). From constitutive outside to the politics of extinction: Critical race theory, feminist theory, and political theory. Political Research Quarterly, 63(3), 686-696.

Hayslip, B., & White, D. (2008). Grandparents as grievers. *Handbook of Bereavement Research*, 441-460.

Hill, S. 2nd (2017). Precarity in the era of #BlackLivesMatter. *Women's Studies Quarterly*. 45(3-4), 94-109.

Horning, K. T., Lindgren, M. V., & Schliesman, M. (2017). Children's Cooperative Book Center. https://ccbc.education.wise.edu

Horning, K. T., Lindgren, M. V., & Schliesman, M. (2016). Children's Cooperative Book Center. https://ccbc.education.wise.edu

Horning, K. T., Lindgren, M. V., & Schliesman, M. (Eds.). (2014). A few observations on publishing in 2013. Retrieved from ccbc.education.wise.edu/books/choiceintro14.asp

Howard, T. C. (2001). Powerful pedagogy for African American students: A case of four teachers. *Urban Education*, 36(2), 179-202.

Howard, T., Dresser, S. G., & Dunklee, D. R. (Eds.). (2009). *Poverty is not a learning disability: Equalizing opportunities for low SES students*. Corwin Press.

Howard, T. & Navarro, O. (2016). Critical race theory 20 years later: Where do we go from here? *Urban Education.*51 (3), 253-273.

Hou, Y. Y. (2013). A critical content analysis of international travel experiences in children's

    literature. Dissertation. The University of Arizona. Retrieved from

    https://repository.arizona.edu/bitstream/handle/10150/293617/azu_etd_12734_sip1_m.pd

    f?sequence=1

Hsieh, H., & Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three Approaches to Qualitative Content

    Analysis. *Qualitative Health Research, 15*(9), 1277-1288. doi:

    10.1177/1049732305276687

Huyck, D., Dahlen, S. P., & Griffin, M. B. (2016). *Diversity in Children's Books 2015,*

    infographic. Sarahpark.com blog.

Hutchison, A., & Reinking, D. (2011). Teachers' perceptions of integrating information and

    communication technologies into literacy instruction: A national survey in the United

    States. *Reading Research Quarterly*, *46*(4), 312-333.

Iwai, Y. (2017). Multicultural children's literature and teacher candidates' awareness and

    attitudes toward cultural diversity. *International Electronic Journal of Elementary*

    Education, 5(2), 185-198.

Janks, H. (2010a). Language, power and pedagogies. *Sociolinguistics and Language Education*,

    40-61.

Janks, H. (2010b). *Literacy and power*. New York: Routledge.

Jarrett, R. (2010). Finding Community in Family: Neighborhood effects and African American

    kin networks. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies, 41*(3), 299-328.

Jarrett, R. L., Jefferson, S. R., & Kelly, J. N. (2010). Finding community in family:

    Neighborhood effects and African American kin networks. *Journal of Comparative*

    Family Studies, 299-328.

Johnson, H., Mathis, J., & Short, K. G. (2017). *Critical content analysis of childrens and young adult literature: Reframing perspective*. New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group.

Kincheloe, J. L., & McLaren, P. (2002). Rethinking critical theory and qualitative research. *Ethnography and schools: Qualitative approaches to the study of education*, 87-138.

Kincheloe, J. L., McLaren, P., Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2005). The Sage handbook of qualitative research.

King, V. (2018). Race, Stigma, and the Politics of Black Girls Hair.

Kohn, A. (2008). *Progressive education: Why it's hard to beat*. Retrieved from www.alphiekohn.org

Kohn, A. (1999). *The schools our children deserve: moving beyond traditional classrooms and" tougher standards"*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Koss, M. D. (2015). Diversity in contemporary picturebooks: A content analysis. *Journal of Children's Literature*, *41*(1), 32. doi: 10.3138/9781442688063-003

Kracauer, S. (1952). The Challenge of Qualitative Content Analysis. *Public Opinion Quarterly, 16*(4, Special Issue on International Communications Research), 631. doi: 10.1086/266427

Krippendorff, K. (2004). *Content analysis: An introduction to methodology.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Kuby, C. R. (2013). Critical inquiry in early childhood education: A teacher's exploration. *Voices of Practitioners*, *8*(1), 1.

Kumar, T. (2014). Where are their voices? Examining power and privilege in a family literacy text. *School Community Journal*, *24*(2), 127-126.

Lac, V. T. (2017). In real time: From theory to practice in a critical race pedagogy classroom. *ie: Inquiry in Education*, *9*(1), 3.

Ladson-Billings, G. (2014). Culturally relevant pedagogy 2.0: aka the remix. *Harvard Educational Review*, *84*(1), 74-84.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1998). Just what is Critical Race Theory and what's doing in a nice field like education? *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*. 11(1), 7-24.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). But that's just good teaching: The case for culturally relevant pedagogy. *Theory into Practice,* 34(3), 159-165.

Ladson-Billings, G., & Tate, W. F. (Eds.). (2006). *Education research in the public interest: Social justice, action, and policy*. Teachers College Press.

Ladson-Billings, G. & Tate, W. (1995). Towards a critical race theory of education. *Teachers College Record*, 97, 47-69.

Landrine, H., & Klonoff, E. A. (1996). *African American acculturation: Deconstructing race and reviving culture*. Sage Publications, Inc.

Larrick, N. (1965). The all-White world of children's books.

Laslett, P., & Wall, R. (1972). Household and family in past time.

Leonard, P., & McLaren, P. (Eds.). (2002). *Paulo Freire: A critical encounter*. Routledge.

Lewison, M., Flint, A. S., & Sluys, K. V. (2002). Taking on critical literacy: The journey of newcomers. *Language Arts,* 79(5), 382-392.

Lewison, M., Leland, C., & Harste, J. C. (2014). *Creating critical classrooms: Reading and writing with an edge*. Routledge.

Lieberson, S., & Mikelson, K. S. (1995). Distinctive African American names: An experimental, historical, and linguistic analysis of innovation. *American Sociological Review*, 928-946.

Lopez, G. (2003). The (racially neutral) policies of education: A critical race theory perspective. *Education Administration Quarterly*, 39, 68-94.

Love, B. L. (2017). A ratchet lens: Black queer youth, agency, hip hop, and the Black ratchet imagination. *Educational Researcher*, *46*(9), 539-547.

Love, E. (2017). Building bridges: Cultivating partnerships between libraries and minority student services. *Education Libraries*, *30*(1), 13-19.

Luna, S. M. (2016). (Re) defining "good teaching": Teacher performance assessments and critical race theory in early childhood teacher education. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, *17*(4), 442-446.

Mabbott, C. (2017). The "we need diverse books" campaign and critical race theory: Charlemae Rollins and the call for diverse children's books. *Library Trends*, 65(4), 508-522.

Mayring, P. (2000). Qualitative Content Analysis. Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/ *Forum: Qualitative Social Research.* 1(2)20.

McCaffrey, P. (2013). *Families: Traditional and new structures*. Ipswich, MA: H.W. Wilson.

McNair, J. (2016). We need mirrors and windows: Diverse classroom libraries for K-6 students. *The Reading Teacher*, 70 (3), 375-381.

McNair, J. (2014). "I didn't know there were Black cowboys". Introducing African American families to African American children's literature. *Young Children,* 64-68.

McNair, J. C. (2008). A comparative analysis of *The Brownies' Book* and contemporary African American children's literature written by Patricia C. McKissack, In W.M. Brooks & J.C. McNair. *Embracing, evaluating, and examining African American children's and young adult literature.* Lanham, MD: Scarecrow.

Meier, T. (2015). "The Brown face of hope": Reading engagement and African American boys. *The Reading Teacher*. 68(5), 335-343.

Mercado, D. (2016). Closing this wealth gap could take 228 years. CNBC. Retrieved 4/30/18. https://www.cnbc.com/2016/08/09/closing-this-wealth-gap-could-take-228-years.html

Merriam, S. B. (2009). Qualitative case study research. *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*, 39-54.

Milner, H. R. (2016). A Black male teacher's culturally responsive practices. *The Journal of Negro Education*, *85*(4), 417-432.

Milner, H. R. (2008). Critical race theory and interest convergence as analytic tools in teacher education policies and practices. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 59, 332-346.

Mitterauer, M., & Sieder, R. (1982). *The European Family: Patriarchy to Partnership from the Middle Ages to Present.* Chicago: IL. University of Chicago Press.

Mo, W., & Shen, W. (1997). Reexamining the issue of authenticity in picturebooks. *Children's Literature in Education,* 28(2), 85-93.

Moller, K. (2016). Creating diverse classroom literature collections using Rudine Sims Bishop's conceptual metaphors and analytical frameworks as guides. *Journal of Children's Literature*. 42 (2), 64-74

Moyo, L. (2017). Searching for ourselves: African cultural representation in children's books in the United States, and implications for educational achievement. Retrieved June 10, 2018, from http://commons.clarku.edu/idce_masters_papers/114

Murnane, R. J. (2007). Improving the education of children living in poverty. *The Future of Children, 17*(2) Retrieved from

https://login.proxy.kennesaw.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/1519298
638?accountid=11824

Murry, V. M., Bynum, M. S., Brody, G. H., Willert, A., & Stephens, D. (2001). African
American single mothers and children in context: A review of studies on risk and
resilience. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review*, *4*(2), 133-155.

National Center for Education Statistics (2017). *The Condition of Education.*
www.nces.ed.gov/programs/coe

National Conference for Community and Justice. (2019). *Colorism*. Retrieved from
https://nccj.org/colorism-0

National Survey of Family Growth Data (2010). Retrieved 20 April 2019 from
https://www.bgsu.edu/content/dam/BGSU/college-of-arts-and-
sciences/NCFMR/documents/FP/FP-11-04.pdf

Nel, P. (2017). Was the cat in the hat Black? The hidden racism of children's literature, and the
need for diverse books. Oxford University Press: NY.

Newman, D. M. (2009). Families: A Sociological Perspective. New York: NY. McGraw-Hill.

O'Hara, M. (2006). In search of the next enlightenment? The challenge for education in
uncertain times. *Journal of Transformative Education*, *4*(2), 105-117.

Oslick, M. E. (2013). Children's Voices: Reactions to a Criminal Justice Issue Picturebook. *The
Reading Teacher*, *66*(7), 543-552.

Paris, D., & Alim, H. S. (Eds.). (2017). Culturally sustaining pedagogies: Teaching and learning
for justice in a changing world. *Teachers College Press.*

Parker, L. (2015). Critical race theory in education and qualitative inquiry: What each has to
offer each other now? *Qualitative Inquiry*, 21(3), 199-205.

Perea, J. F. (2011). The Echoes of Slavery: Recognizing the Racist Origins of the Agricultural and Domestic Worker Exclusion from the National Labor Relations Act. Ohio St. LJ, 72, 95.

Pescosolido, B. A., Grauerholz, E., & Milkie, M. A. (1997). Culture and conflict: The portrayal of Blacks in U.S. childrens picturebooks through the mid- and late-twentieth century. *American Sociological Review, 62*(3), 443. doi: 10.2307/2657315.

Revell, M. A., & McGhee, M. N. (2012). Evolution of the African American Family. *International Journal of Childbirth Education*, *27*(4).

Richardson, E. (2003). *African American literacies.* New York: Routledge.

Riley, K. (2015). Enacting Critical Literacy in English Classrooms. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, *58*(5), 417-425.

Ringen, S. (1988). Direct and indirect measures of poverty. *Journal of Social Policy*, *17*(3), 351-365.

Robinson, S. R. (2018). *Access, authenticity, accuracy, and relevance: A content analysis of award-winning children's books about African Americans, 2001-2017*. Cardinal Stritch University.

Rosenblatt, L. M. (1994). The reader, the text, the poem: The transactional theory of the literary work. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

Saldana, J. (2013). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers.* Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.

Schwalbe, M. L., & Staples, C. L. (1991). Gender differences in sources of self-esteem. Social Psychology Quarterly, 158-168.

Sims-Bishop, R. (2012). Reflections on the development of African American children's literature. *Journal of Children's Literature*, 38(2), 5-13.

Sims, R. (1980). *Shadow and substance: Afro-American experience in contemporary children's fiction*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Sipe, L. R. (2000). The Construction of Literary Understanding by First and Second Graders in Oral Response to Picture Storybook Read-Alouds. *Reading Research Quarterly,35*(2), 252-275. doi:10.1598/rrq.35.2.4

Sleeter, C. (2011). An agenda to strengthen culturally responsive pedagogy. *English Teaching*, 10(2), 7.

Smith-D'Arezzo, W.M. & Musgrove, M. (2011). Two professors critique the representations of Africans and African Americans in picturebooks. *Equity & Excellence in Education*. 44(2), 188-202.

Soeiro, L. P. (2017). Dear Mrs. Trump. The Horn Book: Publications about books for children and young adults. Retrieved 4/5/18. https://www.hbook.com/2017/09/blogs/family-reading/dear-mrs-trump/#_

Spitz, E. H. (2000). *Inside picturebooks*. Yale University Press.

Standing. G. (2011). The Precariat: *The new dangerous class*. New York: NY. Bloomsbury Academic.

Sussman, M.B., Steinmetz, S.K., & Peterson, G.W. (1999). *Handbook of Marriage and the Family (2ⁿᵈ Edition).* New York: NY. Plenum Press.

Taylor-Grover, L. (2016). Panel Discussion: Zero Tolerance Policy: A Look at Disparity as a Means of Disenfranchisement and Impact on the School-to-Prison Pipeline.

Teachman, J. D., Polonko, K. A., & Scanzoni, J. (1987). Demography of the family. In Handbook of marriage and the family (pp. 3-36). Springer, Boston, MA. US Census Bureau. (2008). *Statistical abstract of the United States*. US Government Printing Office.

The Black and White in America: Views on Race and Inequality, Worlds Apart. (2017). *Journal of Pan African Studies*, (3), 397.

Thomas, E. R. (2007). Phonological and phonetic characteristics of African American vernacular English. *Language and Linguistics Compass*, 1(5), 450-475.

Tyler, K. M., Boykin, A. W., Miller, O., & Hurley, E. (2006). Cultural values in the home and school experiences of low-income African American students. *Social Psychology of Education*, 9(4), 363-380.

Tylor, E. & Seymour-Smith, C. (1986) Macmillan Dictionary of Anthropology. The Macmillan Press LTD.

United States Census Bureau. (2014). *Statistical abstract of the United States*. U. S. Government Printing Office.

Vereen, L. G. (2007). African American family structure: A review of the literature. *The Family Journal*, *15*(3), 282-285.

Vygotsky, L. (1978). Mind in society. The development of higher psychological processes. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Warren, C. A. (2018). Empathy, teacher dispositions, and preparation for culturally responsive pedagogy. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 69(2), 169.

Webb, D. (2010). Paulo Freire and 'the need for a kind of education in hope'. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, *40*(4), 327-339.
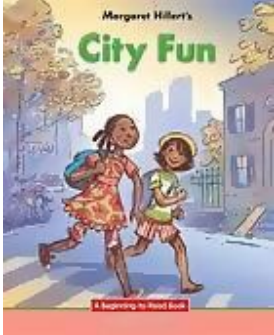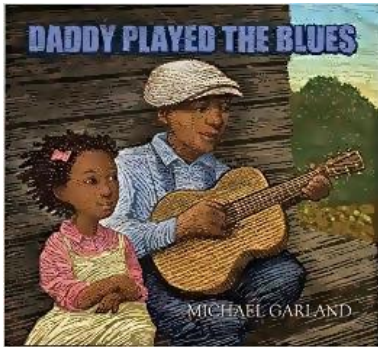
Welch, B. F. (2016). The pervasive Whiteness of children's literature: Collective harms and consumer obligations. *Social Theory and Practice*, 42(2), 367-388

White, M. & Marsh, E. (2006). Content analysis: A flexible methodology. Library Trends, 55(1), 22-45.

Wilcox, W. (1962). The Press of the Radical Right: An Exploratory Analysis. *Journalism Quarterly, 39*(2), 152-160. doi: 10.1177/107769906203900202

Williams, S. A., & Crockett, D. P. (2013). Institutional barriers: Poverty and education. *School psychology and social justice: Conceptual foundations and tools for practice*, 137-154.

Wilson, H. (2014). Turning off the school-to-prison pipeline. *Reclaiming Children and Youth*, *23*(1), 49.

Wink, J. (2005). *Critical pedagogy: Notes from the real world*. New York, NY: Pearson/Allyn & Bacon.

Wiseman, A. M., Vehabovic, N., & Jones, J. S. (2019). Intersections of Race and Bullying in Children's Literature: Transitions, Racism, and Counternarratives. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 1-10.

Whitaker, M. C., & Valtierra, K. M. (2018). The dispositions for culturally responsive pedagogy scale. Journal for Multicultural Education, 12(1), 10-24. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/JME-11-2016-0060

Wolf, S., Coats, K., Enciso, P. A., & Jenkins, C. (Eds.). (2011). *Handbook of research on children's and young adult literature*. Routledge.

Young, I. (2000). Five faces of oppression. In, Adams et al. (Ed.), Reading for diversity and social justice: An Anthology on racism, anti-semeticism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism, and classicism (pp. 35-46). New York, NY: Rutledge.

Zembylas, M. (2005). Discursive practices, genealogies, and emotional rules: A poststructuralist view on emotion and identity in teaching. *Teaching and Teacher Education,* 21, 935-948.

Zhang, Y., & Wildemuth, B. M. (2009). Qualitative analysis of content. In B. Wildemuth (Ed.), Applications of Social Research Methods to Questions in Information and Library Science (pp.308-319). Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited.

Appendix

Appendix A

Book Information and Summary Chart with Cover Art Images

Book	Title	Author/ Illustrator	Summary
	City Fun	Margaret Hillert	Two girls explore the city watching buildings being torn down and built. They ride the subway, visit the park, watch a parade, play games, and visit the library.
	Come Play with Me	Margaret Hillert	This book is a collection of short poems for beginning readers on play-time topics such as pets, friends, family and fantasy
	Daddy Played the Blues	Michael Garland	Cassie's family went through hard times. They were poor, but they were together. Her dad worked hard, but what he really loved was playing the blues. This evocative tale of the African American odyssey in search of a better life is also a homage to the uniquely American music that developed from African music and American

spirituals, work songs, and folk ballads.
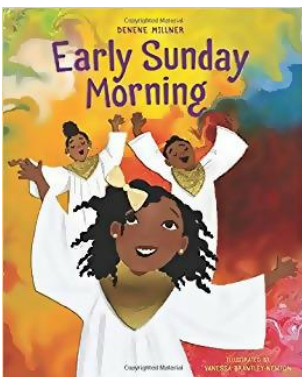
	Early Sunday Morning	Denene Millner	Sarah has a big day on Sunday morning. She engages readers as she collects helpful pieces of advice on how to be less nervous about her big solo in the church's choir performance on Sunday.
	Grandma's Tiny House	JaNay Brown-Wood Priscilla Burris	In this counting book, neighbors, aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, and grandkids crowd into Grandma's house and pile it high with treats for a family feast.
	I am Truly	Kelly Greenawalt Amariah Rauscher	Princess Truly can do anything she sets her mind to with the help of her "magical hair." She is brave and strong and likes to have fun!
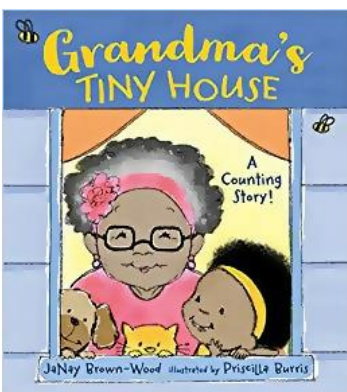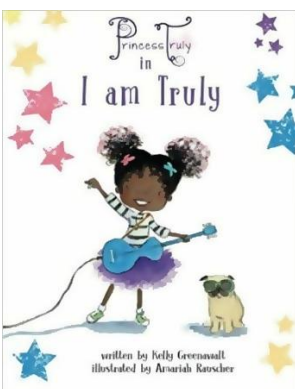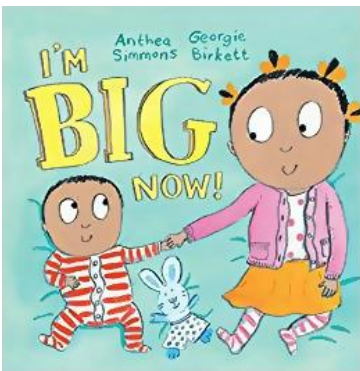
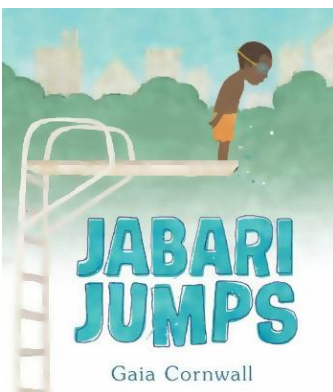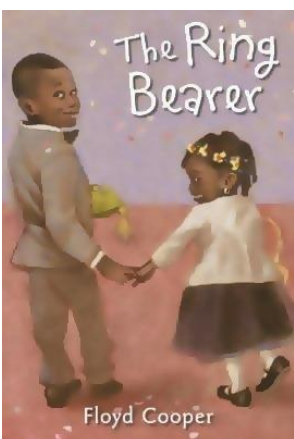|	Title	Author	Description
	I'm BIG Now!	Anthea Simmons Georgie Birkett	In this funny story, one little girl decides to try out being a baby again, but she soon discovers it is more fun being the big sister of the family.
	In the Snow	Elizabeth Spurr Manelle Oliphant	In this rhyming book, a young girl and her mom take advantage of a snowy day. She makes a snowman, sleds, and has other winter fun!
	In your hands	Carole Boston Weatherford Brian Pinkney	A mother expresses the many hopes and dreams she has for her son in this powerful picturebook masterpiece that gives insight into a Black mother's prayer for her young son.
	Jabari Jumps	Gaia Cornwall	Jabari is ready to overcome his fears. Jabari is definitely ready to jump off the diving board. He's finished his swimming lessons and passed his swim test, and he's a great jumper, so he shouldn't be scared to jump. With his dad's support, he can take the dive.
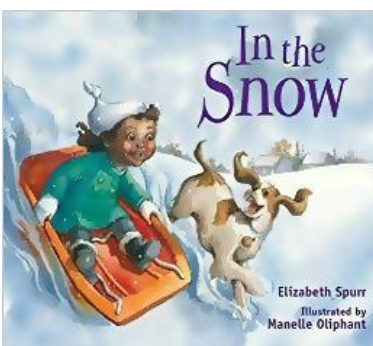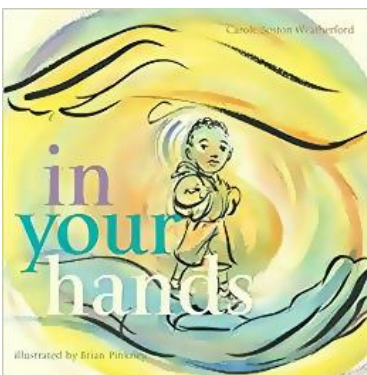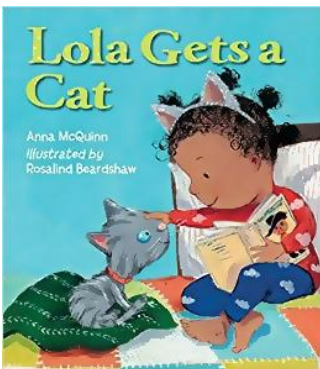
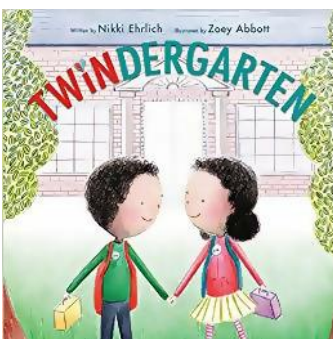|			
	Lola Gets a Cat	Anna McQuinn Rosalind Beardshaw	Lola wants a cat, but her mom says taking care of a pet is a lot of work. At the library, Lola finds books about cats and pet care and she and her mom learn about taking care of cats. Lola pretends her stuffed kitty is real and practices taking care of it. Finally, Lola is allowed to adopt her new cat.
	The Ring Bearer	Floyd Cooper	Jackson's mama is getting married, and he gets to be the ring bearer. But Jackson is worried. What if he trips? Or walks too slowly? Or drops the rings? Jackson's not sure about his new stepsister Sophie. He saves the day when he helps her.
	Twindergarten	Nikki Ehrlich Zoe Abbott	It's the night before the twins start kindergarten, and they have jitters. After all, they will be in different classrooms! What will kindergarten be like when they're not together all day? Dax and Zoe will learn that kindergarten is full of new surprises and adventures, and being apart for a short while isn't so bad.

Appendix B

Multicultural Resources for Educators

Multicultural Organizations/Resources

Center for the Study of Multicultural Children's Literature- Their mission is to preserve the

richness of the many cultures in the field of children's and young adult literature. Site:

https://www.csmcl.org/

Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC) School of Education. University of Wisconsin-

Maddison. Site: https://ccbc.education.wisc.edu

Council on Interracial Books for Children- Social Justice Books draws inspiration from the work

of the Council on Interracial Books for Children (CIBC) formed in 1965 with the

objective "to promote a literature for children that better reflects the realities of a

multicultural society." Site: https://socialjusticebooks.org/council-on-interracial-books-

for-children-cibc/

Ethnic & Multicultural Information Exchange Round Table (EMIERT) - To serve as a source of

information on recommended ethnic collections, services, and programs. Site:

http://www.ala.org/rt/emiert

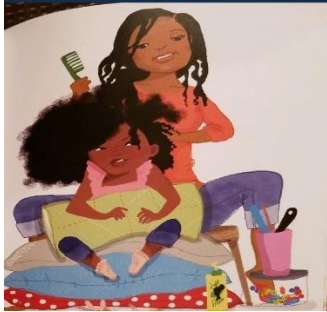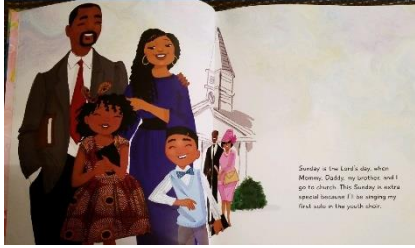**Multicultural Award-Winning Book Lists**

Children's Africana Book Award (CABA)

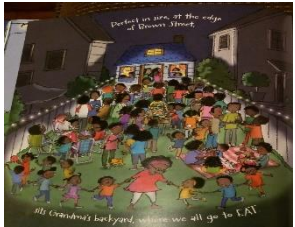Coretta Scott King Book Awards

Lee & Low New Voices Award

NAACP Image Awards for Outstanding Children's Literature

New Voices Award

Appendix C

Critical Content Analysis Codebook Template with Examples

Code	Description	Examples of Culturally Relevant Text or Picture
African American Hair *43 code excerpts*	Text or pictures relating to hair styles, hair products, or accessories.	 *Early Sunday Morning* I coded this picture of this little girl getting her hair combed. Hair care products are also shown.
God/Church as Central *38 code excerpts*	Text or pictures relating to Religious representations such as God, church, bible, pastor, etc.	 *Early Sunday Morning* I coded this picture of this African American family standing outside of their church. I also coded the bibles and text for religious representations.
Physical Features *44 code excerpts*	Text or pictures relating to African American physical appearance such as skin tone, eyes, nose, etc.	 Open window. Shout "Hooray!"

		In the Snow I coded this picture for the girls, big bushy hair, fair skin, rosy cheeks, and large eyes.
Playing Instruments, Singing, and Dancing *36 code excerpts*	Text or pictures relating to music, instruments, singing, and dancing.	 *Daddy Played the Blues* I coded this picture for instruments being played.
Diversity in Families *90 code excerpts*	Text or pictures relating to African American Family unit: traditional family, non-traditional, extended family, etc.	 *Jabari Jumps* I coded this picture for non-traditional African American family. It shows a single dad and his children. No mom is present or mentioned in the text or pictures.
Family Dinner/Gatherings *14 code excerpts*	Text or pictures relating to Family dinner or family gathering.	 *Grandma's Tiny House* I coded this picture that shows a large family gathering at Grandma's house.

Appendix D

Critical Content Analysis Codes

Title	Description
"Black Girl Magic"	bold confident can do spirit
African American as working poor	
African American hair	depiction of African American hair in authentic ways
African American Hair traditions/products	girl is getting her hair combed by her mother girl is sitting on pillows hair comb. brushes, bows, products
cornrolls, braids, locs, pony tails	
African American name	
African American Sunday Dinner	i.e. mac & cheese, collards, and cornbread
African Americans looking for a better life	
Country/City Life	south north
African print cloth or clothing	
African-American Characters look like slaves	
image reminds me of slavery	
All the characters basically look the same	
American-American living in city slums/poor	
People of color taking the bus	
Black Lives Matter	
Black men in hats	
Building Confidence	
Children playing	
Church/Religion as being central to AA family	
Pastor Preaches on an on....	
Clothing	girl in dress
Dancing	
Emotions/Feelings	
Happy	
Nervous/worried/scared	
Relief	
Sadness	
Endless possibilities	
Exaggerated features	

Big eyes	
Big hips/butt	
Big nose and/or lips	
Straggly and/or kinky hair	
Failure/flop	
Family Gatherings	
Father Involved with Family	
Father/Daughter relationship	
food	
Friends	
Hats	
Home	
kid's toys/ clothes	
white baby doll for a black girl	
Language used in African American homes	
Law enforcement	
Love	
Music/Instruments	
Non-traditional family/No dad is present	no siblings present no other family members present
No Mom	
Step-parent present	
parental support	reassurance help/aid
person of color looking like "the help"	
Pet(s)	
image of animal(s)	
image of animals seem "wicked"	
Positive Message	encourages the reader
Religious Representations	
links African-Americans to devil, evil, witch craft	
Siblings	
Singing	
Snowy	
snowman	
skin tone	
dark skin	
light/fair skin	
various shades of brown	
Strong/Present/Mother	

taking a journey/making a move	
Too diverse/token black, white, Asian, Latino, etc.	
Traditional Family	
extended family i.e. aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents	
Interracial family	
Traditional Sunday clothing	Dressy attire typically worn to church on Sundays
Traditions in African American churches	
use of Imagination	
white person portrayed as professional	
Wild and crazy hair	