

INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

U·M·I

University Microfilms International
A Bell & Howell Information Company
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA
313/761-4700 800/521-0600

Order Number 9314578

**An inquiry into the attitudes of a selected group of African
Americans towards the portrayal of African Americans in
contemporary children's literature**

Costello, Jane Hunt, Ed.D.

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1992

U·M·I

300 N. Zeeb Rd.
Ann Arbor, MI 48106

AN INQUIRY INTO THE ATTITUDES OF A SELECTED GROUP
OF AFRICAN AMERICANS TOWARDS THE PORTRAYAL OF
AFRICAN AMERICANS IN CONTEMPORARY
CHILDREN'S LITERATURE


by

Jane Hunt Costello

A Dissertation Submitted to
the faculty of the Graduate School at
the University of North Carolina at Greensboro
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

Greensboro
1992

Approved by


Dissertation Advisor

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of the Graduate School of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Dissertation
Adviser

Barbara W Stoodt

Committee Members

Rale L. Brubaker
Dickson [unclear]
Ernest W Lee

November 5 1992
Date of Acceptance by Committee

November 5 1992
Date of Final Oral Examination

COSTELLO, JANE HUNT, Ed. D. An Inquiry Into the Attitudes of a Selected Group of African Americans Towards the Portrayal of African Americans In Contemporary Children's Literature. (1992) Directed by Dr. Barbara Stoodt. 222 pp.

This study investigated the attitudes of a selected group of African Americans towards the portrayal of African Americans in contemporary children's literature. A qualitative research design, using in-depth interviewing, autobiographical statements, and a Likert-type evaluation scale, enabled the researcher to gain insights and understandings into the world of children's literature from a minority perspective.

Five participants were selected for this study. One of the five individuals served as a practice participant; she helped design and develop the questions for the interviews. The other four participants represented one of the following categories: parent, grandparent, teacher, and minister. Each participant was an important member of the educational community in a small, predominantly African American, elementary school. The participants represented various age, gender, and socio-economic backgrounds.

The participants were asked to evaluate five children's books that represented contemporary literature with African American characters and settings. The authors of these books were African Americans. Four of the selections represented realistic fiction and the other was a collection of poetry. The participants rated each book using a five point Likert-type scale.

Four themes emerged from the interviews which included: life experiences as African Americans; the concept of beauty; racism, discrimination, and stereotypes; and morals, values, and life lessons. The participants in this study felt that contemporary children's literature must address these themes if they are to accurately and authentically portray African Americans and their culture.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express my sincere appreciation and gratitude to Dr. Barbara Stoodt, who patiently advised this dissertation. I would like to thank the members of my dissertation committee: Dr. Dale Brubaker, Dr. Ernest Lee, and Dr. D. Michelle Irwin for their professional council and personal support.

In addition I would like to thank my husband, Kevin, for his technical advice and my daughter Emily, who kept me company in the library late at night.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
APPROVAL PAGE	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	iv
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Research Questions	7
Autobiographical Statement	10
Statement of the Problem.....	17
Operational Definition of Terms.....	17
Assumptions and Limitations.....	29
II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....	21
Multiculturalism	22
Education and Culture	23
Literature as a Means of Developing Multiculturalism	29
The African American Experience in Children's Literature	41
The Sociology of Reading.....	58
Research in Reading: Quantitative vs. Qualitative	63
III. OUTLINE OF PROCEDURES.....	72
Design of the Study	72
Sampling	73
Setting	79
Criteria for Book Selection.....	82
Description of the Books	84
Interviews	86
Guidelines for the Initial Interview.....	87
Guidelines for the Second Interview.....	89
Procedures	90
Transcriptions	91
Coding the Data	92
Identification of Themes	93

IV. RESULTS.....	96
Participant One	103
Participant Two	117
Participant Three	130
Participant Four	140
V. CONCLUSIONS.....	154
Life Experiences as African Americans.....	156
Beauty	166
Racism, Discrimination and Stereotypes.....	174
Morals, Values, and Life Lessons.....	186
Conclusions and Recommendations.....	191
Summary.....	191
Conclusions.....	193
Recommendations.....	197
BIBLIOGRAPHY	202
APPENDIX. EVALUATION OF TRADE BOOKS.....	222

List of Illustrations

I.	Comparison of the Findings of Larrick's Study of (1965) and Chall's Study (1975).....	46
II.	Events Influencing the Portrayal of African Americans in Children's Literature.....	57
III.	Participant Profile.....	78
IV.	Procedures.....	95
V.	Summary of Participant's Responses.....	153

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Introduction

In the landmark case of Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka (1954), the United States Supreme Court ruled that segregated schools did not provide equal "educational opportunities" for all students. Prior to this decision, the 1896 case of Plessy v. Ferguson was used to legally support separate schools for black and white students. Three decades later, "despite legal and educational efforts to diminish racial discrimination, the cycle of prejudicial thinking is still strong and easily takes root in the minds and feelings of young children" (Ramsey, 1987, p.1).

The schools are a microcosm of the larger society; the attitudes and belief systems of the adult world are reflected in the curriculum and materials presented in the school setting. In her text, Backlash: the undeclared war against american women, Susan Faludi (1991) describes the media's perpetration of a "backlash" against a minority group. The attitudes expressed have cost "American women dearly in their endless struggle for equality" (book jacket). This situation is analogous to the African American in today's society. The publishing industry has created a backlash against minorities

by omitting them entirely or by casting them in secondary roles in literature and text books. This backlash promotes the attitude that some are more equal than others. It is the responsibility of parents and teachers to present a more realistic view of the world in which we live. Children must learn to accept and appreciate people who are different from themselves. This understanding only comes after children recognize their commonalties with others.

The Civil Rights movement has impinged upon the status of minorities in this country. Conceptualizing the United States as a melting pot is no longer acceptable. We live in a pluralistic society that must promote acceptance and understanding of one another. Cultural pluralism celebrates diversity and individuality.

Teaching from a multi-cultural perspective is an approach designed to acknowledge and promote an understanding of differences and diversity. Patricia Ramsey (1987) describes the objectives of a multicultural perspective which include:

1. Children should view themselves as members of many different groups, rather than seeking an identity based on race, gender or socioeconomic status.
2. Children should view themselves as members of the larger society and relate to individuals different from themselves.

3. Children should have opportunities to increase their understanding and appreciation of different cultures.
4. Multicultural education should encourage open communication between schools and families and demonstrate a genuine concern for the individual.

These goals must be integrated throughout the curriculum in order that children internalize and therefore act upon these ideas. By presenting a world view different from the traditional white middle class perspective, educators can influence the social interactions among culturally, economically, and racially different individuals.

Literature is appropriate for building respect across cultures, sharpening sensitivity toward the common features of all individuals, and improving the self-esteem of people who are members of racial and ethnic minority groups. (Norton, 1991, p.531)

Children may experience vicariously the lives of others through literature. Though young children are generally ethnocentric and unable to "conceptualize another's point, they can respond to another's emotional experience" (Ramsey, 1987, p.13). Thus they are able to relate to individuals who have experiences similar to their own.

The goal of multicultural education is to promote understanding and acceptance of self and others (Tway, 1989). Literature, when carefully selected, enables children to "walk

in another's moccasins". Through literature children realize that others have the same expectations, fears, and aspirations as themselves. "Books are an effective and powerful way to validate children's unique lifestyles and to expand their awareness beyond their immediate experiences" (Ramsey, 1987, p.14). Quality literature, that is both authentic and accurate, helps children recognize the commonalties they share with others who may be of a different gender, race, or socio-economic class. It also promotes a positive self-identity and pride in one's cultural heritage.

Historically, minorities have been underrepresented or stereotyped in children's literature. Arna Bontemps describes in the article, "Uncle Remus, Farewell," his childhood search for a book that would provide a role model or a sense of what it meant to be black in the United States. States Bontemps:

What I found was of cold comfort, to say the least. Nothing more inspiring than Our Little Ethiopian Cousin was on the shelves, and I read almost every book in the room to make sure. Moreover, Our Little Ethiopian Cousin was not me and his world was not mine. (Sterling, 1968, p.227)

In her article, "The All White World of Children's Books", Nancy Larrick (1968) explains that only four-fifths of one percent of the five thousand juvenile trade books published between 1962-1964 mentioned African Americans in either text or illustrations. The few available books

depicted African Americans in stereotyped roles. The books published during this time frame offered no sense of pride or self-awareness for the African American child and according to Larrick, "the impact of all white books on 39,000,000 white children is probably worse" (p.65).

The Larrick article which was published in the Saturday Review (1965) had an impact upon the publishing industry. In addition, the Council on Interracial Books for Children was formed to solicit manuscripts from unpublished minority authors and illustrators. From 1967 to 1979 there was a strong multicultural movement in the publishing industry. Authors such as Sharon Bell Mathis, Mildred Taylor, Lucille Clifton, and Eloise Greenfield wrote about the African American child in everyday situations. For the first time, the characters reflected a culture different from the majority population. The authors' impact upon the world of children's literature was monumental at the time but short lived. In 1979 the Council's annual writing contest, which guaranteed publication of the winning title, was discontinued due to a lack of funding.

This is one reason, perhaps even the main reason, why the children's book world saw a dramatic drop in the number of authors and artists of color who had first books published in the 1980's. (Kruse, 1991, p.xii)

During the 1980's the number of books written by African Americans declined. By 1990, only fifty-one out of a

possible five thousand titles were either written or illustrated by African Americans (Kruse, 1991, p.x).

When fewer books are written by and about African Americans educators have fewer opportunities to present authentic portraits of African Americans. Bettye Latimer maintains that white children have a

distorted image of American society because they are surrounded with literature and other instructional materials that either present minorities stereotypically or make minorities invisible by omitting them entirely (Norton, 1990, p.532).

Books written to promote racial understanding may indirectly create a feeling of superiority for the child from the majority culture. Judith Thompson and Gloria Woodard (1969) explain in their article, "Black Perspective in Books For Children", that the white character is generally the protagonist and the black child plays an ancillary role. Referring to the book, Fun for Chris, by Blossom Randall, the authors state: "The story gives a white child no insight into the real life of a black child and it gives a black child no real reflection of himself (p.41)."

Teachers and parents must be aware of the sometimes subtle forms of discrimination when selecting literature for children.

Donna Norton (1990) suggests a framework for using a multicultural literature study in the classroom. She recommends beginning with traditional literature, then moving

to traditional tales from one area, to historical nonfiction, to historical fiction and concluding with contemporary literature which would include poetry, fiction, and biography.

The bulk of literature which provides identification for black children has so far been confined to the histories, biographies, and autobiographies. To date, informational, biographical, historical, and scientific books are far superior to the fictional works (Thompson and Woodard, 1969, p.49).

According to Thompson and Woodard (1969) the eternal questions of "Who am I?" "Where did I come from?" and "Where am I going?" are not answered for African American children in contemporary fiction. The fiction is "too often irrelevant and inadequate as a guide to answering these questions for black children" (p.40). Both agree that the accurate histories and biographies instill a sense of pride and understanding of the African American heritage, however the fiction does not. The purpose of this study is to examine the attitudes of a select group of African Americans towards the portrayal of African Americans in contemporary children's literature.

Research Questions

1. How do African American adults feel about the portrayal of African Americans in contemporary literature for young children?

2. What criteria should be used for selecting and evaluating literature that portrays African Americans in contemporary children's literature?
3. What types of books are appropriate for developing a positive self-concept and identity for African American children?
4. What types of books promote understanding and acceptance of cultural differences?
5. How does one's childhood reading experiences influence what one identifies as important in literature for the next generation?

Initially, I thought I might answer these questions by sending out a survey and collecting the responses. I realized that I needed more than circled responses; I needed thoughts and opinions in order to create a framework for examining the attitudes of African Americans towards their portrayal in contemporary children's literature. A qualitative study, using in depth interviewing, was designed. The participants, except for the individual who agreed to be a practice participant, were connected to one small elementary school in a southern city with a population of 200,000. One participant was a custodian in the school, one was a teacher in the school, one was a minister who served as an after school tutor at the school, and one was a parent of a child who attended the school. All four of the

participants worked either directly or indirectly, as a volunteer or support personnel, with the children in the school and demonstrated a commitment and interest in the education of young children. As a teacher in this setting I had accessibility to and acceptance by the individuals who agreed to participate in this study. Because I worked in a setting in which the population was predominantly African Americans from lower socioeconomic status, the participants understood my intentions and recognized the fact that my inquiry was sincere. Additionally, each individual seemed to realize that the information they provided could serve as a catalyst for changes in our school.

Naturalistic inquiry involves the discussion of other people's visions and perceptions of their world. The interpretations are based on perspectives, which are shaped by the ideals which individuals hold true not only for themselves, but others as well. Because each person's values are shaped by rather unique and personal events, their windows for viewing a setting are different. My window is framed by a strong family background, educational, social, and professional experiences. I have included an autobiographical statement in order that the reader may gain insights into the experiences that influence my interpretation of reality. When one participates in qualitative research, the interpretations are subjective and reflective. This statement gives the reader an opportunity

to come "backstage" in order to better understand the map I use when interpreting someone else's reality.

Autobiographical Statement

From a very early age I knew that I wanted to teach. As the oldest of five, I was cast into a nurturing role. Since the age of two, when my first sibling arrived, I engaged in teaching activities; whether it was showing a brother how to roll a ball; teaching long division to sixth graders, or more recently showing my eight month old daughter how to drink from her cup. These experiences have and continue to be personally rewarding; empowering me with a sense of efficacy as well as a moral responsibility to try and make a difference in the lives of children.

Although our family is very close, individual members are different in terms of personality, temperament, strengths, and weaknesses. Our parents cherished these differences and avoided comparisons. I remember when I was young asking my mother the question, "Who do you love the best?", hoping of course that she would say me. Her response, reflecting a sensitive understanding of children and their development, responded by telling me the characteristics and traits that she loved best about each one of us. She gave us the feeling that we were loved equally and completely; yet we were each a unique individual. Her emphasis on our strengths prevented a competitive spirit in

our home; as individuals we were good, but as a family we were better.

Although I was born in New Haven, Connecticut, while my father was a medical student, I was raised in the south by parents whose attitudes were shaped by their lives in a northern urban city. Our neighborhood, which was about a square mile in area, was a community within a larger setting. Most of the people were natives, others relocated because of the economic, cultural, and educational opportunities available in a small, yet relatively progressive, small town.

The families in our neighborhood were established, both professionally and socially. People tended to make this their home and established life-long friendships across generations. Everyone knew one another and for the most part still do. Though we do not interact on a daily basis, people keep in touch through Christmas cards, the grocery store , and formal events such as weddings and funerals.

The neighborhood was a safe place for raising a family. Doors were not locked nor was there a need for sophisticated alarm systems. Neighbors collected the mail, watered the plants, and fed the dog while families were on vacation. Strong, though informal, networks existed in which medical, legal, financial, and educational advice was and still is exchanged during backyard barbecues. It is not my intent to mislead the reader and pretend that this setting is the same

today. My youngest brother and sister , who are part of a generation that has always had integrated schools, single parent households, two career families, and friends whose parents relocate on a regular basis, would not recognize the neighborhood that I have described. Like the society in which we lived, it has changed and it depends on one's perspective whether it is for better or worse.

We attended an elementary parochial school that had the nuns as teachers. In seventh grade I had hopes of going to the "public" school with many of my friends. I can remember my parents discussing the issues of attending private versus public schools. We were registered at the public school initially but then they changed their minds when they saw the violence towards the busing in other communities. We were enrolled in a new private day school that was founded at this time. In our junior high school class there were no African Americans. When we began high school there were two male African American students out of forty students. In the eleventh grade, I changed to the public high school because I really wanted to go the the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. My parents felt that I should be exposed to a larger setting, with a more diverse student population if I wanted to go to a state university.

My experiences in the public school were really no different from those in the private school. The caliber of education was basically the same though there were more

social opportunities in the larger public high school setting. Race relations were excellent at this time in this school and have only recently been questioned by both African American and white students . Though I was warned by my friends at the private school about all the horrible things that could happen in public school, none happened and it was a positive experience. It is interesting to note however, that I can not name one African American person, from my high school, with a graduating class of five hundred student. I graduated from the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill in 1980 and I can not name one African American that I went to school with. Though by law, the schools I attended in my teens were integrated, the social structure was not.

After graduating, I accepted a kindergarten teaching position in Shreveport, Louisiana. I went with two friends and we taught in schools that were integrated by staff rather than students.

This was perhaps the most rewarding professional experience of my career. The teachers and principal were extremely supportive of a beginning teacher. It was at this point in my life that I became actually aware of regional, cultural, and racial difference. I recall a young child named Santana in my class who came to school one day and said, "I hate white people." Taking great offense, I asked him why. He responded by saying, "Cause they are bad." At this point I was confused and asked him "Why are they

bad?". The teacher across the hall, who was an African American woman, had come in the room at this point and was listening to the conversation taking place. Santana responded by saying "All white folks is bad." The other teacher, obviously embarrassed for me, said to him. as she grabbed my arm and held it up to hers, "Santana, what's the difference between Miss Hunt and me?". and he responded, "She wears dresses and you wears pants." It was clear from his response that he did not recognize me as a white person because to him I was not "bad". This was also the first time I realized what an important role families play in developing positive and in this case negative attitudes in young children.

After leaving Shreveport, I returned to Greensboro and accepted a teaching position in the same elementary school that both my husband and myself attended. I taught for two years in this setting and completed a masters degree in elementary education. I enjoyed the close knit relationships between families and the school in the private setting. I left this school primarily for financial reasons and accepted a position with the public schools.

Upon returning to public education I was acutely aware of the discrepancies among many of the students. For the purposes of integration, students were assigned particular schools based on their neighborhood attendance zone. In my particular situation we had white students from upper and

upper middle class families, and African American students from federally funded housing projects. The students seemed to segregate themselves more because of socioeconomic status than because of racial concerns. Presently, I am teaching in a situation in which the majority of students are African Americans and only a few white middle class students attend because their older brothers and sisters are in an accelerated program at the school. On the playground one sees kindergarten students playing together with no concern at all about race or money. They select their friends because of common interests. It is only later that they begin to discriminate against others based on attitudes they learn from older children and adults.

I became interested in this study after discussing with my advisor, Dr. Barbara Stoodt, the book Tar Beach. She showed the book to me one afternoon and though I really enjoyed the story, I made the comment that I would not use the book with my kindergarten class which consisted of fourteen African Americans and two white males. My reasons for not using the book seemed on the surface very sound. I believed that I might hurt someone's feelings or a parent might be offended if I used this book because the word "colored" was used and it discussed the issue of racial discrimination. This book brought back the feelings of discomfort I experience during Black History Month. I tend, like many of my white colleagues, to only use "safe"

materials for instruction. I generally discuss Dr. Martin Luther King, and then focus on the African American inventors and scientists. I really dread this time of year because I do not feel comfortable discussing racial prejudice and discrimination with students. Consequently, I use "safe" materials so that I will not offend anyone nor get any parental complaints. I justify my actions by thinking that everyone seems to be getting along very well, why bring up negative things that may hurt someone's feelings. Though this is very simplistic and unrealistic thinking, I believe it is very common among elementary school teachers. We, as a group, tend to be nonconfrontational and do not want to upset the status quo. Most white teachers rely on the fiction of Ezra Jack Keats during Black History Month. Though the majority of my class was African American, most of my literature, except in February, contained white characters.

I asked other white teachers, including a professor of children's literature, their reactions to the book, Tar Beach. Each said that they would not use this particular book in a classroom because it might offend a student or parents. Each person believed that they were protecting the feelings of children by not presenting this book to a class.

Statement of the Problem

This study was designed to examine the attitudes of African Americans towards contemporary children's literature such as Tar Beach. Do they feel that this type of literature is appropriate for young children? Does it accurately portray the lives of African Americans? Do individual African Americans feel that issues such as discrimination and prejudice are appropriate topics in children's literature? What types of books are appropriate for African American children? What types of books are appropriate for children from the majority culture and other minority cultures? What criteria are used in selecting appropriate literature for young children?

Operational Definition of Terms

African American - This term has been used consistently throughout the study by the researcher when referring to those individuals who live in the United States but are of African heritage. Writers also use the terminology Blacks and Afro-American to describe the same group. These references are used in quotations or when discussing the ideas of another expert in the field of children's literature.

Multiculturalism encourages the development of positive attitudes and acceptance of cultural diversity in this

country. It dismisses the melting pot concept and promotes pride in belonging to different racial, ethnic, cultural, and economic groups.

Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter One is an introduction to the study, statement of the problem, and the research questions. An autobiographical statement provides the reader with the researcher's "map" for interpreting the interviews provided by the participant and provides a statement of the problem. The purpose of this study is stated in Chapter One and the operational definition of terms.

Chapter Two provides the reader with a synthesis of the research in the area of children's literature and multicultural education. It presents a discussion of the different studies as they relate particularly to the study of the attitudes of African Americans towards their portrayal in contemporary children's literature. The research is organized into areas of discussion which include: multiculturalism; literature as a means of developing multiculturalism, the African American experience in children's literature; the sociology of reading, and qualitative research in reading.

Chapter Four utilizes a case study format to present the ideas collected during the interviews. Biographical sketches and the reactions to specific literary selections are discussed in this chapter. Each participant's reaction to children's books are documented by excerpts from the transcribed tapes used during the interviewing process.

Chapter Five will discuss the themes that arose from the interviews and present conclusions and recommendations for those responsible for selecting and sharing quality literature with young children.

Assumptions and Limitations

The researcher assumes that each individual participated in this study because they were interested in discussing children's literature. It is also assumed that their responses reflected their personal feelings and experiences. There was no type of payment or gift offered in return for participation. Once the study is complete however I would like to give each participant one of the books (the one they selected as their favorite) as a token of my appreciation for sharing their time and expertise. This study is limited in that it only presents the ideas of a select group of African Americans. Each participant is in some way related to one particular elementary school in our community. Though the socioeconomic status, age factor and educational backgrounds

were different for each participant, they do not represent all African Americans. The participants were selected because they fit into one of the following categories : teacher, parent, grandparent, and minister. The interpretation of their stories may not be generalize to anyone other than themselves.

CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter reviews the research in multiculturalism and multicultural education as it relates to children's literature. The research is organized into five broad headings. Part one discusses the foundations of multiculturalism in the United States. The goals and objectives of multicultural education are discussed and a subheading, Education and Culture, cites the literature relating to schools and cultures. Part two focuses on the role literature plays in developing multicultural attitudes in young children. Specific research supporting the fact that children's literature has the ability to help children discover their commonalties with others is discussed. Part three discusses the African American experience historically in children's literature and presents the current state African American literature. The sociology of reading is discussed in part four. Those factors which influence a child's ability to read are presented. Part five of this chapter focuses on the nature of qualitative research and why it is an appropriate methodology for studying topics in children's literature.

Multiculturalism

The United States is comprised of many different racial and ethnic groups. The traditions of each group contribute to the richness and diversity of this country (Dyer, 1978; Stoodt, 1992). Each should be encouraged to celebrate their heritage, thus contributing to the American "mosaic" (Dyer, 1978).

The idea of the United States as a melting pot was popularized in Israel Zangwill's play, The Melting Pot, (1908). The Industrial Revolution and the surge of nationalism "created a climate that nurtured the melting pot concept, a symbol of an assimilation of philosophy and a goal that has been internalized by educators and the educational institution" (Dyer, 1978, p.2). Theodore Roosevelt, inspired by Zangwill's play, supported the idea of one nation, one people.

Citizens who showed allegiance to another national group were not true Americans (Schlesinger, 1992). Immigrants to this country were expected to leave their cultural traditions at the gates of Ellis Island and assume the culture and traditions of the American society. Other minority groups such as African Americans, Mexican Americans, and Asian Americans were sometimes physically forced to assimilate themselves with the dominant culture, that of white, Anglo-

Saxon, Protestant traditions (Weinberg, 1974). Meyer Weinberg proposed the idea of two melting pots, "one for the dominant Anglo whites and the other for all the minorities in American society" (p.28).

The melting pot concept was challenged by Horace Kallen in his essay, "Democracy Versus the Melting Pot." Kallen stated that the melting pot concept did not exist as a fact or as an ideal; rather, he believed the variations among cultures enriched American society (Schlesinger, 1992). Multiculturalism "refers to the fact that human existence is inherently and universally multicultural, even though throughout history, mankind has resisted recognizing it" (Wurzel, 1988, p.1).

Education and Culture

Culture may be defined as the shared knowledge a group uses to construct meaning for its members (Goodenough, 1971; Wurzel, 1988). The family micro or sub culture socializes the young child according to the familiar culture. The school, church, neighborhood, work place also function in socializing the child/adult. It is the combination of "our macro and micro cultural experiences [that] shape our world view and influence our interaction with others" (Wurzel, 1988, p.2).

Children come to school with a breadth of knowledge about their world and the people closest to them. This knowledge is a reflection of their culture and guides their understandings and interactions within social contexts (Dyer, 1978; Goodenough, 1971; Stoodt, 1992; Wurzel, 1988). A child's conceptualization of family, morality, values, rules, sex roles, time, dress, and safety are part of their subculture (Ramsey, 1987). These factors influence a child's ability to adjust and succeed in school (DiMartino, 1989).

The individual child learns those behaviors, values, and norms espoused by the home and school; when such are congruent there is no conflict. But when the cultural traditions and priorities of the home differ from those of the dominant culture, the school's goals—those of the majority—become imposed in a resocializing process. (Cross, 1977, p.7)

Traditionally the school has been viewed as an agent of acculturation. Outside of the home, the school is the major socializing institution (Banks, 1988; Berlowitz, 1984; Bullivant, Cross, 1977; 1981; Ramsey, 1987).

The school, which has a culture of its own, must address the needs of all its students. In order for this to occur, the school personnel within the school must examine their own peer relationships. In order to effectively teach children how to value themselves and others, teachers must first understand their own value system and prejudices. Some teachers practice unicultural vision; though they do not consider themselves racially or culturally biased, they do

little or nothing to introduce multicultural concepts and materials in their lessons (Cross,1977). "All teaching occurs in a sociocultural context and all materials and practices reflect social values" (Ramsey, 1987, p.6). Teachers must examine their attitudes towards others and reflect upon the content they present to their students.

Teachers can make a difference by understanding that while all individuals seek validation, historic and current negative reactions to a cultural/ethnic presence create a situation in which some minorities need support that acknowledges their existence on intellectual and spiritual levels. (Cross, 1977,p.13)

The goal of multicultural education is to recognize and accept cultural diversity as a part of the society and understand that these differences can enhance the quality of one's life (Cross, 1977). Multicultural education can be dull because it is taught as factual content in isolation (Ramsey,1987). These lessons are generally repeated year after year with only slight variations as part of a two or four week unit on Black Americans or Native Americans. The lesson may use antiquated materials that present stereotypes and inaccurate information. Moreover, the activities may be developmentally inappropriate for young children (Ramsey, 1987).

Children's perceptions of themselves and others are influenced by the stories they see and hear (Cohen, 1969; Miel and Kiesten, 1967). Teachers can foster a child's

social, emotional and cognitive development. They can help children develop positive attitudes about people different from themselves. They can also promote positive self images among their students.

Early childhood educators have the opportunity to expand, challenge, and influence children's social perceptions. To design meaningful and effective ways of accomplishing this goal, teachers need to understand how children think about human differences. (Ramsey, 1987, p.10)

Children, aged three through eight, are at Piaget's pre-operational stage of development. They see things concretely and make generalizations on single attributes. Children at this stage of development tend to over generalize and therefore make judgments about people that may not fairly represent their experiences (Ramsey, 1987). Because young children have difficulty with the cognitive process of conservation, perceptual clues, including race and culture, can confuse them (Ramsey, 1987).

Young children are egocentric and are unable to understand things from a perspective different than their own. They are however able to empathize with other people, generally relying on facial cues for information about a particular situation (Borke, 1971). Oftentimes children will kiss someone who has fallen down or hand them their favorite toy when they see someone looking sad or lonely. Even infants are able to are able to respond to another persons'

emotional state (Sagi & Hoffman, 1976). Children are able to predict how a person will react to a given situation and are able to express an understanding of how a person might feel when a particular event happens to them. Some studies suggest that children may understand the social world before they understand concepts about the physical world (Gelman & Spelke, 1981; Hoffman, 1981). A child's "awareness, identification, preferences, and assumptions do reflect the adult world" (Ramsey, 1987, p.27).

Although concepts about socioeconomic status are not fully understood, they develop at an early age. Children often describe their friends in terms of material possession (Livesley and Bromley, 1973). Children are able to identify and rank people according to their socioeconomic status (Leahy, 1981, 1983; Naimark, 1983; Naimark & Shaver, 1982). They assume that wealthy people are happier than poor people (Ramsey, 1986).

Children are able to use racial cues to identify, label, and match people by age three or four (Clark & Clark, 1947; Goodman, 1952; Katz, 1976; Porter, 1971; Thurman & Lewis, 1979). Children bring these attitudes and prejudices to school. Verbalizing their feelings about race enables teachers to correct misconceptions.

Carter and Patterson (1982) found that cultural relativity did not develop until age eight or nine. Younger children (ages 3-7) were more accepting of different social

conventions that older children (8-9). This suggests that teachers need to introduce culturally diverse materials earlier in the elementary school curriculum in order to increase a child's background knowledge and understanding of others. "Teachers need to be aware of different cultural styles, yet not make sweeping generalizations about families based on their ethnic identification" (Ramsey, 1987, p.32).

The images of different racial and ethnic groups portrayed in the media influence children's perceptions and attitudes towards people different from themselves. Stereotypes are easy for young children to adopt because they do not have critical thinking skills yet and they accept information from television, newspapers, and books as factual and true. Gast (1970) and Dieterich (1972) found that books transmit messages to the reader/listener about minority groups. These messages encourage children to develop a negative attitude towards individuals different in physical appearance from themselves. "Children between the ages of three and eight are developing their group-referenced identities, early perceptions of human differences, and interpersonal skills " (Ramsey, 1987, p.39). Teachers must help children appreciate the diversity within their classrooms.

Literature as a Means of Developing Multiculturalism

"Through literature we become a thousand people and yet remain ourselves" - C.S. Lewis

Because our society is not a melting pot, the traditions and experiences of minority groups must be validated in order that all children experience the uniqueness of the American culture. Multicultural literature fosters children's social and emotional development. Rudine Sims Bishop (1987) in, "Extending Multicultural Understanding through Children's Books" states that literature is an effective means of developing three components essential to the understanding of multiculturalism. These three concepts include:

1. Literature shows the emotions we share with one another; making us aware of our emotional bonds to humanity.
2. Literature enables us to appreciate our differences and recognize the uniqueness of each cultural group that "enrich(es) the larger society by adding distinctive flavors to the "salad bowl of our common nationality" (p.61).
3. Literature can be a catalyst for social reform.

One way we transmit values to our children is through literature (Bishop, 1987). It conveys to children the attitudes that are acceptable to the adult world.

Children who find their own life experiences mirrored in books receive an affirmation of themselves and their culture. Children who find that people like themselves are excluded or denigrated receive another message altogether. They learn that they are not valued members of society and that reading can be a negative or hurtful experience (Bishop, p.61).

Fiction is one genre of literature that allows children to experience the lives of others. It can reconfirm one's own existence and humanity in our world (Rasinski and Padak, 1990). Children can relate to the characters in stories if they are portrayed honestly and authentically. However, the characters must be portrayed realistically so the young reader recognizes part of himself/herself in the story and/or illustrations.

A book may prove to be meaningless if a child does not encounter something familiar that triggers his/her own schemata. Children must be able to relate to the printed page. If their experiences do not in any way relate to those in the text, then someone must provide connections, or ropes that tie the child into the story.

Stories also help provide a framework for our interpretation of reality (Hardy, 1978; Langer, 1953). Through narrative we are able to organize and interpret our perceptions of the world.

Literature is the imaginative shaping of life and thought into the forms and structures of language. The province of literature is the human condition: life with all its feelings, thoughts, and insights. The experience of literature is always two dimensional, for it involves both the book and the reader. (Huck, 1987, p.4)

Literature provides a framework for understanding the human condition (Huck, 1991). Children broaden their experiences and understanding of people and events through quality literature. Vicarious experiences provide the reader with a new lens in which to view the world. Reading moves us out of our own time and space, out of ourselves; and in the end returns us, a little different, a little changed by the experience (Huck, 1987).

These changes occur because the reader is able to identify with the characters and the plot. For just a short period of time they may live that life. "Because it tells the stories of human events and the human condition, and not simply the facts, literature does more than change minds; it changes people's hearts (Rasinski and Padak, 1990, p.577).

A child's imagination is stimulated by literature and consequently he/she is able to look at themselves and others in new ways (Huck, 1991). Through books, children begin to see themselves connected to others who share similar feelings and experiences. These stories emphasize our similarities

with mankind while simultaneously showing our individual and cultural uniqueness (Huck, 1991).

Multicultural literature fosters understanding of self and others (Dyer, 1978; Tway, 1989). This type of literature helps children develop a more universal perspective towards their own existence. They are able to recognize their similarities with others who may look or act differently from themselves (Huck, 1987). Violet Harris states that children are empowered by literature that positively reflects their culture. They are able to take pride their ethnic membership and they enjoy stories that have characters that look and feel as they often do (Harris, 1990). Reading about familiar experiences conveys the message that you are valuable and important. (Rasinski and Padak, 1990).

Multicultural literature helps develop of "social sensitivity" that enables children to recognize their similarities as well as differences with other people (Norton, 1990). Through literature, authors have the opportunity to increase cultural sensitivity and awareness.

Reading about people from different cultural backgrounds provides students with contrasting perspectives that ultimately increases their understanding and acceptance of others (Rasinski and Padak, 1990; Tway, 1989; Stoodt, 1991). Multicultural literature fosters a child's social and emotional development. Because children often read books without adult supervision and interaction, we must be assured

that the books they read are free of stereotypes and minority misrepresentation (Deane, 1989).

Books convey attitudes and beliefs about minority groups (Dieterich, 1972; Gast, 1970). Davis (1972) suggested that children with a strong racial identity may develop negative attitudes towards reading and books if he/she were exposed to literature in which the characters were degraded or stereotyped. Meyer-Reimer (1992) argued that reading and language development, as well as self-esteem, may be affected by the limited number of quality books with minority characters.

Schools have been charged with developing multicultural curricula that promote tolerance, friendship, patience, and acceptance among children from different racial and ethnic groups (Rasinski and Padak, 1990). Judging from the emotions fueled by the not quality verdicts of four white policeman in the beating of a black motorist in May 1992, we can assume that racial and ethnic unrest is prevalent in many parts of our country. The riots in Los Angeles and the demonstrations in many cities throughout the United States indicate that we still do not have appreciation and acceptance of those from minority populations. Oftentimes "textbooks touch the mind with sanitary descriptions of events" (Rasinski and Padak, 1990, p.578). The perspective is generally that of the majority population. Literature is one way to integrate the goals of a multicultural program into the curriculum. Books

can help children look at more than one point of view and it can introduce students to conflicts that mirror real-life situations. Through problem-solving children internalize the author's message. Literature enables people to see the world in a different way. Reading or listening to a "good" story is an experience that allows the reader another way in which to view the world. "Literature is an art that is concerned not so much with reproducing the world in which we live in as with creating a world we can imagine" (Sloan, 1984,p.14). Imagination permits us to see different possibilities for living in harmony with one another.

Banks (1989) proposed a four curricular model for the integration of multicultural literature in the classroom. Arranged hierarchically, the lowest level, referred to as the "contributions approach", was commonly found in classrooms. Literature in this category focused on holiday traditions and heroes of a particular culture. Many of these books were biographies and were used irregularly during certain focus units such as Black History Month or Native American Week. Bank's second level was referred to as the "additive approach" in which the actual structure of the curriculum remained unchanged; however certain themes were added. Rasinski and Padak (1990) pointed out that the lower levels of Bank's hierarchy were relatively simple to incorporate into the curriculum and may be viewed as patronizing. The third level of this model, "transformation approach",

encouraged students to view a problem from more than one perspective. This approach "allow[ed] students to see the interconnectedness of various ethnic groups with the dominant culture (Rasinski and Padak, 1990, p. 578). The "decision making and social action" approach required that students not only consider another point of view but they must "identify social problems and concerns, make decisions and take actions to resolve the problems they have identified." Literature must be selected that enables children to experience a viewpoint different from the majority.

The goal of every storyteller consists of fostering in the child, at whatever cost, compassion and humanness, this miraculous ability of man to be disturbed by another beings misfortune, to feel joy about another beings happiness, to experience another fate as your own (Chukovsky, 1963, p.138).

Multicultural literature helps children learn the beliefs and values of their own cultures as well as others (Goodman, 1990; Short, 1990). David Piper (1986) viewed traditional literature as a means of increasing students' awareness of themselves and other cultures. In order to respond intellectually and emotionally to a book, the reader must relate to the characters, setting, and plot.

Contemporary fiction reflects the joys and hardships of our changing world. Children respond well to stories that reflect situations they can identify with their own communities (Goodman, 1990; Short, 1990). Rudman (1976)

found that children selected familiar stories that reflected their own heritage. Through literary exposure, children can come to understand and respect people from other cultures (Rudman, 1976). Johns found in his study, "Reading Preferences of Urban Students in Grades Four Through Six (1975) that middle grade students from urban settings selected books in which characters possessed high self concepts interacted positively within middle class settings. Davis (1972) found that children's literature containing stereotypical information about minorities, specifically African Americans, influenced children's attitudes towards reading and books.

Media specialists and teachers are responsible for presenting quality literature that represents many different populations. In attempts to provide diverse literary selections, teachers and media specialists may select books that lack literary integrity simply because they have a minority character and they are readily available (Dyer, 1978). These books may be much more harmful to both minority and majority students than no books at all. Harris (1990) stated that media specialists have complained about the lack of representation of minority groups in children's literature. Shepard (1962) examined sixteen popular children's books. He found that 4% of the favorable characters were "non-white". 38% of the "unfavorable characters" were nonwhite. When selecting books for young

children we must be aware of the subtle and sometimes not so subtle forms of discrimination and racial prejudice in the stories.

Multicultural materials enable students to connect with others (Dyer, 1978). Teachers must be careful not to use a book just because it has ethnic representation (Dyer, 1978; Huck, 1990; Norton, 1991). Classrooms and libraries should be filled with books that contain an authentic representation of many different people, cultures, lifestyles, and viewpoints (Rudman, 1976). "Children need to discover what is unique to each group of persons and universal to the experience of being human" (Huck, p.502).

Multicultural literature must meet the literary criteria for a good book as well as the criteria that identifies works that represent minority groups. Donna Norton (1991) developed a series of questions, based on the recommendations of the Children's Literature Review Board, Ann Lee Stensland, and the Council of Interracial Books for Children for people to think about when selecting and evaluating books for children. The following criteria represents a synthesis of the questions Norton proposed for evaluators examining multicultural literature.

1. The characters should be portrayed as unique individuals. The reader must understand that this individual does not represent the entire cultural

or ethnic minority. The reader must understand that within each minority groups there are some shared traditions as well as individual differences.

2. The books must be free of stereotypes regarding the ways in which people look and act.
3. The illustrations in the text must be realistic and not portray the characters as a "universal color". The reader must be able to identify with the portrayal of the character both in text and illustration. The illustrations must be genuine and avoid stereotyping any particular features.
4. The culture of each minority group needs to be portrayed accurately. The contributions of a particular group must not be glorified nor romanticized. Information must be discussed honestly.
5. The minority character must be viewed as a competent individual who is able to solve problems by relying on themselves, family, and friends. Members of the majority culture should not be depicted as the ones who step in and "save" the character. The minority character must not be dependent on the white character for help and understanding.
6. The setting is realistic and reflects the community in which the character lives, plays, and works.

7. Historical events are described objectively and honestly.
8. The language used in the story is authentic. The use of dialect is appropriate and has a purpose. Vocabulary is spelled correctly and the particular dialect is indigenous to the setting of the story.
9. The plot of the story is realistic and reflects the culture of the characters. The reader should be able to identify with the depiction of the culture or learn something about a culture that is different from his/her own.
10. The story should provide a positive role model in which the reader may identify with and consequently feel good about him/herself. The book should promote a positive self-concept for readers of the minority culture and respect and understanding towards the minority culture by the majority culture.

Cohen (1969) and Miel and Kiesten (1967) supported the idea that a child's self concept is influenced by the images his/she sees portrayed in media. These images influence the way a child sees him/herself and the way in which he/she sees people from different ethnic or cultural groups.

Minority groups have been under-represented in children's literature both in the past and presently.

Oftentimes there are stereotypical portrayals of minority groups in either text or illustrations that are inaccurate and harmful. Throughout most of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century minority groups have been stereotyped or omitted from children's literature.

Nancy Larrick's article, "The All White World of Children's Books" served as a catalyst for the demand of quality literature depicting the lives of those persons who were not part of the white, middle class Protestant majority. The Council on Interracial Books for Children was formed during the late sixties to encourage minority authors and illustrators to write and publish children's books. The Council "was formed on the principle that authors and artists of color could be encouraged to create good books for children and that publishers could be encouraged to publish and market them" (p.x). An annual contest guaranteed publication of a previously unpublished writer's work for the winner. Writers such as Walter Dean Myers, Sharon Bell Mathis, Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve, Minfong Ho, as well as artists of the caliber of Charles Bible, Cheryl Hanna, and Idalia Rosario (Kruse, 1991). The amount of multicultural literature increased during to seventies. There was a heightened awareness of cultural diversity within the American society thanks to the Civil Rights Movement, the Elementary and Secondary School Acts, and the creation of the CIBC. However the progress of the seventies was short-lived,

according to some literary critics. When the CIBC's contest and showcase for illustrators was discontinued due to a lack of funding, the number of books written by minority authors decreased. In 1990, 51 books out of a possible 5,000 were written or illustrated by African Americans. These numbers were even smaller for the Asian Americans and American Indians. Rudine Sims Bishop(1987) remains hopeful for the future, stating that the ground lost in the eighties is beginning to pick up again in the nineties. Other experts in the area of children's literature disagree and believe that not only will the number of multicultural books continue to decrease but the ones that are published will go out of print quickly (Meyer-Reimer, 1991).

When discussing multicultural literature one must consider the African American experience, the Asian American experience, and the American Indian experience. This study focuses on one particular minority group-African Americans. For this reason, the remainder of this section will discuss the African American experience in children's literature.

The African American Experience in Children's Literature

In 1965, Nancy Larrick's article "The All-White World of Children's Books" appeared in the Saturday Review . Her article discussed the results of a survey she conducted using children's books published from 1962-1964 and described how dramatically blacks were excluded from children's literature.

6.7% of the children's books published between 1962 and 1964 included African Americans in the text or illustrations, which is 349 books. Of these books, only 47 or .9% depicted African Americans in a contemporary setting. The majority of books containing black characters took place outside of the United States and/or before World War II. Black characters were often depicted in menial positions.

Dorothy May Broderick (1971) examined children's books published from 1827 to 1967. She found that the portrayal of blacks in the available books tended to fall into the following categories:

1. Characters were unattractive and their features often exaggerated.
2. Characters played a musical instrument ,sang, and danced.
3. Characters had strong religious beliefs and were often superstitious.
4. Characters goals and aspirations related to the welfare of the black community.
5. Characters depended on white people for their fortunes.

According to Broderick, the books that were published between 1827 and 1967 would not give an African American child a sense of pride in his/her heritage and would give a white child an inflated image of his/her culture. Carlson

compared books published in the 1930's with those in the 1960's. She found that 15% of the earlier works contained black characters and the majority of these characters were stereotyped. In the 1960's only 10% of the books contained black characters; however, the characters were portrayed more realistically. By the end of the sixties, Sterling (1968) found that 1% of the children's books told about the black experience in this country. The seventies were marked by a surge in momentum for a Black nationalist literature that would target blacks specifically as the audience. Leroi Jones and Ron Kerengo urged black writers to focus on "settings, themes, styles. and even forms.....for example, the meaning of 'soul', the strengths that enabled Black families to survive, various forms of Black English, and . . . the idea that "Black love is Black wealth" (Sims,1982, p.7). Gast, 1970; Cornelius, 1971; Muse 1975, and Wunderlich (1974) were hopeful that more books depicting the lives of Blacks and other minority groups would be published.

In 1975, Chall, Radwin, French, and Hall replicated the Larrick study, "The All-White World of Children's Books", "to determine whether the situation had changed over the eleven year period, and if so, in what ways (Chall, et. al. 1975, p.211)." The results of their study did show some improvements. 689 books out of a possible 4,775 (14.4%) had at least one Black character in text or illustrations. Only 6.7% of the books published between 1962-1965 contained a

black character. Larrick's study found that 60% of the books with one or more Black characters were set outside the U.S. or took place before World War II. Chall et. al. (1975) found that 20% of the books with Black characters took place outside the U.S. and less than 16% of the stories took place prior to World War II. Only 14% of the books surveyed in Larrick's study had a contemporary setting compared to the 28% found in the books Chall et.al. examined for the study. 11% of the children's books published between 1973-1975 portrayed a black character in a contemporary setting compared with eight-tenths of 1% in the 1965 study by Larrick. Chall et. al. found that the seventies experienced an increase in the number of contemporary fiction books depicting black characters. The study also found an increase in the number of blacks in non-fiction materials. Chall found that there was an increase in the number of biographies portraying the lives of Blacks in the U.S. Out of the 700 books published between 1973-1975 that had black characters, 70 of the books were classified as biographies. 50 out of the 70 were biographies about athletes. Rollock (1984) also found African American biographies usually featured athletes. States Rollock, "Their stories remain in print long after their playing . . . careers [have] ended, and they far outnumber the biographies of Black scientists, artists, civic leaders, and others who have contributed to society as a whole" (Rollock, 1984, p.4).

Authors create personas and shape perceptions. They influence opinions through the language they use to describe people, places, and things. African Americans often see no images because they have been omitted from literature or portrayed in such negative images due to blatant racism and prejudice.

Prior to the Civil War three stereotypes were propagated throughout traditional literature. Sterling Brown identifies these major stereotypes as:

1. The Contented Slave
2. The Wretched Freeman
3. The Comic Negro

An example of this comes from John P. Kennedy's Swallow Barn (1832) which states:

Figure 1: Comparison of the Findings of Larrick's Study (1965) and Chall's Study (1975)

	Larrick	Chall
Years investigated	1962-1965	1973-1975
Number of reported books published	63 publishers responded and reported a total of 5,260	51 publishers responded and reported a total of 4,775
Books with at least one African American in text and/or illustrations	6.7% (349)	14.4% (689)
Books with settings outside the U.S.	> 60%	< 20%
Books in which the story takes place before WW II	> 60%	< 16%
Books with contemporary settings	14%	28%
Books published with at least one African American in a contemporary setting	.8%	11%
Percent of publishing companies printing books with at least one African American	87.3%	94%

(The Negro) is in his moral condition dependent upon the white race . . . Apart from this he has the helplessness of a child This helplessness may be the due and natural impression which two centuries of servitude have stamped upon the tribe. (Excerpt from Eloise Greenfield, in MacCann and Woodard, 1985, p.25)

The period during Post-Reconstruction was characterized by Jim Crow laws. Blacks were portrayed as ignorant, dependent, and dishonest. In the fiction series, The Bobbsey Twins (1904), Dinah "is the ultimate stereotype of the Contented Slave, the Buxom Mammy and the superstitious, watermelon-eating, eye-rolling thieving black" (Greenfield,p.29). The original first three books in this series were republished in 1979 by Wanderer Books, complete with dialect and stereotypical descriptions of Dinah, the cook, and Sam, the house man for those persons longing for the "bygone era in American literature which reflects the social mores and world view of the early 1900's" (taken from the Introduction by the publisher). The original series was edited for racial stereotypes and biased language in 1950 and again in 1961.

Paul Deane (1985) identified five common stereotypes in the portrayal of African Americans in the early fiction series. These included:

1. All blacks spoke in dialect, regardless of their geographic location.

2. Blacks were the brunt of jokes; they were someone to laugh at.
3. Blacks always worked in menial positions
4. Blacks were depicted as "lazy, ignorant, and cowardly" (p.154).
5. Derogatory terms such as "nigger" and "coon" were acceptable.

Many of the early fiction series exhibited these weaknesses. Books were rewritten, changing both the dialogues and plots, because of racial slurs.

The Civil Rights Movement, the Black Movement and the Larrick article contributed to the changes that were being made in children's literature during the late sixties and early seventies. Sims (1982) described the books published during this time, the "Social Conscience Stories." The stories described as "Social Conscience" generally fit into one of the four categories:

1. Integration.
2. White children befriended a black child and protected them from the insults of others.
3. Afro Americans succeed in the white world because they conform and compromise.
4. Afro American protagonist is discriminated against.

Additional characteristics of the social conscience books according to Sims are:

1. A white male from a low socioeconomic status is the villain in the story.
2. Negative physical descriptions are present in the stories. For example, "black, shiny face" or "Joe shifts from one foot to the other, clears his throat, and scratches his head before speaking" (Sims, p.23).
3. A father is not present in the home; a single female supports herself and family.
4. "Beauty and perhaps goodness are determined by how closely one's physical characteristics resemble those of Euro-Americans" (p.26).
5. "Race mixing generally leads to trouble" (p.26).

The "socially conscience" books of the sixties are often patronizing even though they increased the Afro American's visibility in children's literature. For example, "black, shiny, face" or " Joe shifts from one foot to the other, clears his throat, and scratches his head before speaking." (Sims, 1982, p.23)

Sims (1982) described the books published from the mid-sixties through the end of the seventies as the "melting pot" books. These books supported the concept that of one person, one country. They denied cultural differences. In melting

pot books the only clue to racial identity was in the illustrations. The melting pot books ignored racial and cultural differences in the written text (Sims, 1982).

Controversial subjects, such as racism and prejudice, were not discussed in the melting pot books. Themes such as friendship and family are characteristic of the melting pot books (Sims, 1982). Most of these stories are published in picture book form. They did not celebrate nor describe Afro American traditions or culture. " [The] melting pot books deliberately ignore racial and subcultural differences in their texts" (p.41-42). Characteristics of the melting pot books according to Sims included:

1. The characters represented middle class nuclear families.
2. Characters used standard English.
3. The stories contained some non visual clues about the racial identity of the character. "Some melting pot books have even been criticized for visually presenting perceived stereotypes" (p.43). The author cited the portrayal of the mother in the story by Ezra Jack Keats', The Snowy Day, "because the woman is fat and wears a bright house dress, reminiscent of the fat Black "mammies" of plantation stereotypes" (Sims, p.43).

4. The illustrations presented Afro Americans as individuals, presenting differences in physical features. The illustrators have "created attractive, unambiguously Black images of Afro-American children" (p.43).

Though the "melting pot" books are considered to be a step above the "socially conscience" books, they did not enunciate the culture and heritage of the African American; rather they mirrored the experiences of the middle class majority in this country.

The mid to late seventies were characterized by the "culturally conscious books". These books spoke to the African American child and tried to "reflect , with varying degrees of success, the social and cultural traditions associated with growing up simultaneously Black and American" (Sims, p.49). Both the text and pictures tried to portray a realistic story in which the protagonist was an Afro American. The characters are Afro American, the setting was an Afro American home or community, and the physical descriptions or cultural traditions reflected the lives of Afro Americans (Sims, 1982). When discussing conflicts between blacks and whites, the "culturally conscious" books presented the African American perspective. The major characteristics of the "culturally conscious" books included:

1. Black English appeared when appropriate. "While Black communicative styles do not appear in all the culturally conscience books, where they do appear they add richness and authenticity to the book" (Sims, p. 68-69).
2. A relationship between a younger person and an older person was found in the story.
3. Extended families were depicted in the stories.
4. Skin color was described in terms of shading (for example, reddish brown) and "positive imagery [is used] to paint the person accurately" (Sims,p.70).
5. Nicknames were used,particularly among males.
6. African American traditions and historical events were mentioned in the story.
7. Religion or the church was referred to in the "culturally conscious" fiction.

This fiction was written primarily for the Afro American child, by Afro American authors, so that children could see a little bit of themselves in literature.

The "culturally conscious" books described by Sims depicted Afro Americans in a more realistic way. "Current fiction should offer a characterization of the African American that is neither white middle class nor black disadvantage" (Anelli, 1978, p.26). African Americans have positive self concepts even though they are oftentimes

victims of prejudice and racism because of their strong ties to their families and communities (Taylor, 1976). The struggle African Americans encounter when dealing with prejudice and racism is characterized by four stages. (Anelli, 1978)

The Pre-encounter Stage was described as "Blacks in this stage admire white values and desire assimilation into white society" (Anelli, p.27). This was considered the first step in the self-actualization process. Literature that represented or spoke to this stage portrayed African Americans characters as one-dimensional and unrealistic. A child would not readily identify with these characters because they were almost "too good" to be believable. They appeared to be grateful for any fortune that came their way and they appeared satisfied with a subservient position in life. If they work hard and were obedient, they may be tolerated by the white community.

Anelli cited several examples of books representing the pre-encounter stage. For example, in the story, The Other Side of the Fence, an African American family moved into a white neighborhood and must be the perfect citizens so that they are accepted. Another book, Roosevelt Grady, by Loisa Shotwell, has been criticized because it too represented the pre-encounter stage of thought in that the characters have no aspirations for a better life. The Empty Schoolhouse

depicted the characters so perfectly that they are unbelievable to the reader.

The Encounter Stage was characterized by the fact that "blacks perceive that they have many strengths and prefer to interpret the world from a black perspective. Their search for identity may be anxious and obsessive" (Annelli, p.27). Literature that typifies this stage was published during the late sixties. It was largely influenced by the Civil Rights Movement and the fact that many people were taking pride in being Black. Stories "include fictional accounts of difficulties encountered when confronting white intolerance" (Annelli, p.27). The black character did not initiate the conflict, rather he/she dealt with the consequences.

The Immersion Stage represented the African American as "liberated from whiteness, the African American becomes completely involved in a world of blackness and feels an overwhelming attachment to everything black" (Annelli, p.27). Literature that represented this stage celebrated the distinctiveness of the African American culture and did not try to conform to the values and expectations projected by the white, middle class community.

The final stage of the process was the Internalization Stage. Persons who have reached this point were "free, aware, securely self-confident, and compassionate towards all oppressed people" (Annelli, p.27).

According to Anelli, literature should help children get to the Immersion and Internalization stages of identity development. Literature should avoid all stereotypes and depict African Americans in all kinds of settings and socioeconomic statuses. "While blacks should assume leadership roles, they should not have to be 'super people' in order to succeed" (Anelli,1978,p.34). The components proposed by Anelli for developing the last two identity stages included:

1. Time - current and past problems in the lives of ordinary and great Black Americans
2. Religion - the role of the black church and human relationships to nature.
3. Language and Oral Traditions - playful use of words, humor, and black idiom.
4. Social and Community Relationships - the survival of the tribe against great adversity and prejudice because of the strength derived from family and community.

The strides made by African American authors and illustrators during the sixties and seventies were halted during the 1980's (Lachmann, 1992). There was a dramatic decline in the number of new authors/illustrators that were published and even those who were published during the previous years had difficulty getting their words in print.

(Lachmann, 1992). Lack of money, a resurgence of conservative attitudes and a loss of interest in politics are reasons attributed by Walter Dean Myers for the decline of published African American authors. Improvements began however in 1987. New publishers such as Black Butterfly Press and Just Us Books published multicultural books by minority authors. By the end of the 1980's there was some improvement with respect to representation of minority authors and illustrators in children's literature.

The portrayal of African Americans in children's literature has evolved somewhat during the 19th and 20th centuries. The stereotyped portrayals of contented slaves no longer exist however there is still not enough "culturally conscious" fiction for young children. Children come to understand the world in which they live through reading books about people and problems that are relevant and realistic.

The books selected for this study would be characterized by Sims as culturally conscious. They were written by African American authors for African American children. The characters were African Americans and the setting was African American homes and communities. They are relevant for white students as well.

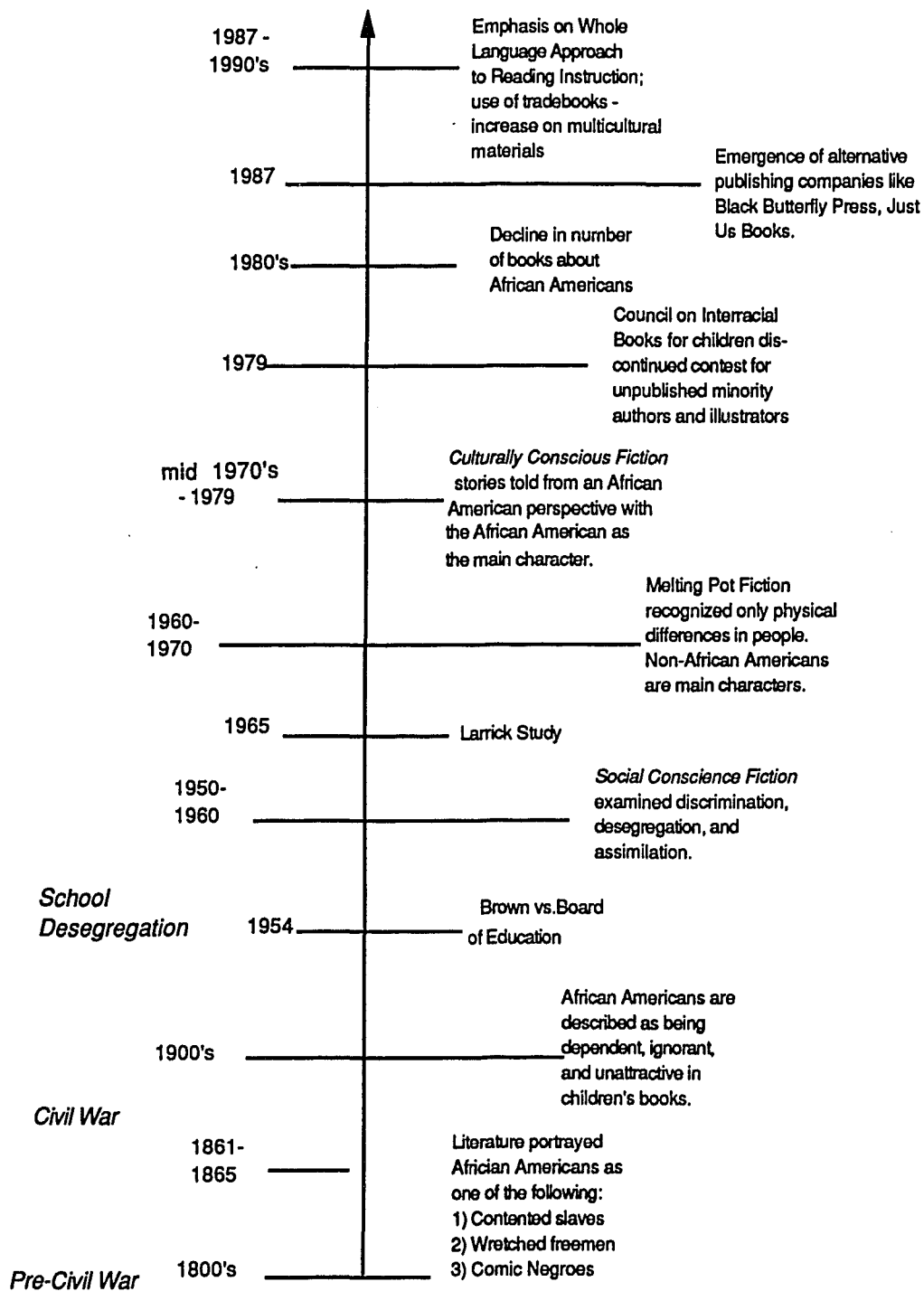


Figure 2: Events Influencing the Portrayal of African Americans In Children's Literature

The Sociology of Reading

The home is the primary socializing agent for children. The culture, values, and attitudes that prevail within the context of the family are directly and indirectly taught to the young child through words and actions. Members of a child's, immediate community influence to a great extent the types of reading materials available and presented to the young child. Premier amount the influential materials and activities in the home are the books children listen to and read. There is a positive correlation between the number of books in the home and a child's reading and language development (Chomsky, 1972; Lamme and Olmsted, 1977; Sheldon and Carrillo, 1952). Parents' attitudes towards reading influence children's attitudes towards reading (Ransbury, 1973). Parents who read to their children and provide an abundance of literary materials for their children foster a child's reading ability (Bing, 1963; Brezinski, 1964; Dix, 1976). Though the research conducted by Briggs and Elkind did not support this conclusion, they did find that parents of early readers took their children to the library more often and provided more reading materials than the parents of children who did not acquire literacy at an early age. The home plays an important role in providing young children with the necessary prereading experiences to enable them to become successful readers during their school years. A literate

home environment helps children make connections between print and language. Additionally, the home is the first place where children develop their oral language skills. Parents who read regularly to their preschoolers and discuss the stories stimulate the cognitive development and interests of their child. For this reason it is important that children are able to relate to the stories that are read to them. Young children must be able to see themselves and their families in the stories that they read.

Middle class children are read to more and have more exposure to books than lower SES children (Miller, 1977). Early readers tend to be middle class children (Briggs and Elkind, 1977; Sutton, 1964). It is interesting to note that the majority of books for this age group tend to reflect with respect to characters and setting, the values of the white, middle class. Perhaps these children are able to view themselves in the books they are read and therefore develop a positive attitude towards books and reading because it reconfirms their place in the world. Many of the studies support the idea that environment rather than socioeconomic status is a better predictor of academic performance (Bradley, Caldwell & Elardo, 1977; Marjoribanks, 1976; Walberg & Marjoribanks, 1973; Wolff, 1966).

Once children begin school parents continue to play an important but somewhat less obvious role in their child's reading achievement. Parents who provide opportunities for

recreational reading once their children enter school, positively influence their child's attitudes toward reading and learning.

Socioeconomic class and race influence teacher perceptions and expectations of students (Brophy & Good, 1974). Middle class students were favored over lower SES students (Yee, 1968) and white students were described more favorably than black students (Datta, Scheaffer, and Davis, 1968). A student's social class was described by teachers as the most important predictor of school achievement for first graders (Goodwin & Sanders, 1969). Paladry (1969) suggests that a teacher's expectation of a student's potential learning ability influences that student's achievement. Children who are expected to do well in school receive more positive reinforcement and more opportunities to respond to teacher questions, are allowed more "wait time" to respond to questions and have more responsibilities in the classroom (Brophy & Good, 1970; Good & Brophy, 1977; Good, Cooper & Blakely, 1980; Parsons, Kaczala, & Meece, 1982; Weinstein, 1976). Students are aware of their classmates academic levels and are able to rank their classmates as high or low in achievement (Weinstein & Middlestadt, 1979).

Ray Rist (1970) found that kindergartners were grouped by their socio-economic status and those in higher SES groups received more favorable treatment from the teacher. Two years later, these children were still basically in the same

groups receiving the same treatments. Butkowsky and Willows (1980) found that children in low ability reading groups when given a series of solvable and unsolvable problems, poor readers attended to the task less time than good and average readers, they had lower expectations for success, they attributed success to external factors and failure to internal factors such as a lack of ability. Butkowsky and Willows suggested that students considered as poor readers exhibited learned helplessness when faced with failure.

The home environment plays a significant role in shaping students' attitudes towards reading and academic motivation in school. Coleman (1966) found that home factors are significantly more influential in determining student achievement than school factors. Wigfield and Asher (1984) suggested that students from middle and upper SES backgrounds were more likely to view reading as an important skill due to parental influences. Students who read well oftentimes come from home environments that foster a positive attitude toward reading and learning. Asher (1979) found that both black and white students had higher comprehension rates when reading high interest materials. Asher and Markell (1974) found that boys had similar comprehension scores with girls when reading high interest materials and lower scores than the girls when reading low interest materials. Providing high interest reading materials has been positively related to African American children's reading performance (Daniels ,1971).

African American children who have a strong racial identity develop negative attitudes toward books and reading when they have materials that portray African Americans negatively (Davis, 1972).

Issues of race and socioeconomic class with respect to reading achievement have been a prime concern in research for the past thirty years. The findings suggest that differences do exist between students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. As a group, students from low SES backgrounds have had less success in reading and have had lower expectations for themselves (Armor, 1972; Coleman, 1966; Entwistle, 1978). It is interesting to note that in the study, "Student Expectations", Entwistle (1979) found that young children beginning school had the same expectations for their success in school regardless of their home environment. By the end of the second grade these perceptions had been altered. Children from low SES backgrounds had less confidence in their ability to do well than their age mates from higher SES backgrounds.

In 1984, the report "Becoming A Nation of Readers" summarized the state of reading instruction in the United States. The report emphasized the role that parents play in developing prereading skills in young children. The home environment has a significant influence on the reading habits of the children. Parents can stimulate their child's

interest in reading by encouraging them to read and write informally on a daily basis.

Adults play an important role in developing the reading skills and attitudes of young children. Roser (1983) found that preschool children, whether in a home or school situation, model their responses to literature after adults rather than the other children. Hoffman concluded, based on case studies, that oral reading is the best preparation for the development of beginning reading skills.

"Books can be bridges, between children and parents, and children and the world" (Butler, 1989, p.157). In her article, "Saying It Louder," Dorothy Butler stresses the importance of having parents read to their preschoolers. Additionally she charges public libraries with a responsibility for getting books into the hands of children. "It is parents who are powerful. They must be reached, convinced, and helped to exercise this power" (p.157).

Research in Reading: Quantitative vs. Qualitative:

Until recently, quantitative rather than qualitative research has been the predominant research methodology. Today, descriptive research, which is grounded in anthropology, is growing in acceptability. Ethnography, one type of qualitative research, involves the study of and description of cultures (Pearson, 1984). In the area of reading and children's literature, the setting may be the

classroom, the school, or the individual's perspective regarding a certain aspect of literature or reading. The ethnographer goes into the setting, as free from personal prejudices and biases as possible, in hopes of viewing the setting from the participants' perspectives, their world view. Hypotheses and research questions are generated in the field and reformulated as data is collected. Methods for collecting data vary depending on the nature of the study. Examples of data collection include: participant observation, case studies, structured and informal interviews, and diary or autobiographical studies.

Qualitative research is an an appropriate methodology in the area of reading and literature because it generates questions for further area of study and it also enables the researcher to investigate a problem from another's point of view. McDermott's work with inner city black children suggests that something within the classroom environment inhibits learning for one particular group of students. By investigating the interactions among teachers and students, students and students, and families and schools, we are better able to understand different phenomena that influences what actually occurs in classrooms. For example, McDermott's study, "Kids Make Sense", is a micro-ethnography that suggests the verbal and nonverbal behaviors of teachers are qualitatively different for students in high ability reading groups versus those in low ability groups. The type of

instructional input, methods for eliciting student responses and providing feedback; as well as academic engaged time are different for these two groups which ultimately affects students' achievement in reading. The majority of qualitative studies in the area of reading are concerned with minority populations and their acquisition of literacy (Cook-Gumperz et al., 1981; McDermott, 1976; Piestrup, 1973; Rist, 1973). Pearson (1984) explains that quantitative methods help us rank students in relationship to one another, however it does not explain how each student got his/her ranking. " A common thread running through this research is the belief that only by looking at the interactional process of education, only by looking at what is really happening between teacher and student when children learn, or are taught, will we really gain any significant insight into the problems facing poor readers" (Pearson, 1984, p.100). Both qualitative and quantitative research studies are necessary in the area of reading and children's literature. Descriptive studies yield research questions and possible variables; experimental and quasi-experimental studies test the validity of these questions and attempt to determine if they significantly relate to the hypothesis. It must be noted that the findings of qualitative research are difficult to generalize to samples other than the one studied.

Prior to the 1960's most of the qualitative research conducted was from the anthropology and sociology

disciplines. The Civil Rights Movement impacted upon research in the field of education. Educators were now interested in the issues of schooling from a minority perspective. Autobiographical stories of teaching minority students were published (Kohl, 1967; Kozol, 1967). Project True was a federally funded qualitative research project that studied integrated schooling in urban classroom. They interviewed parents, teachers, principals, and Board of Education members to get a multi-perspective. Participant observation, a method in which the researcher spends as much time as possible in the setting with the participants (Spradley, 1980), was used to gain access to what life in the classroom was like within these settings. Project True was conducted by researchers at Hunter College.

During the 1970's there was considerable controversy between quantitative and qualitative researchers regarding the "true" methodology. Some argued that qualitative research was "soft", "intuitive rather than scientific" and "journalism rather than research" (Brogdan, 1982, p.21).

The School Home Ethnography Project (Cook-Gumperz et al., 1981) examined the acquisition of literacy. Information about the classroom and students' cultural backgrounds was obtained by participant observations, audio and video taping, interviews and questionnaires (Pearson, 1984). The home of each child was also studied. Mothers were asked to keep diaries that provided the researcher with personal documents

to analyze. The researchers examined the children's linguistic style during the show and tell time of day. The conclusions of the study were that individuals who have a topic centered rather than topic chaining linguistic style will be probably be placed in higher reading groups.

The Kamehameha Early Education Program (Au, 1980) was an ethnographic study that led to the development of a reading program that was culturally relevant for Hawaiian children. Understanding that young Hawaiian children are familiar with "talk-story" helped researchers develop a curriculum that would help children learn to read.

Participant observation and in depth interviewing are two widely used methodologies in qualitative research (Brogdan, 1982). The researcher goes into the field and becomes a "native". He/She builds relationships with the members of the group studied in order to gain their trust and respect. Once the researcher has immersed him/herself in the culture they can begin examining the group from an insiders perspective.

Robert Brogdan and Sari Biklen outline five features of qualitative research in their book, Qualitative Research For Education. These include:

1. Qualitative research has the natural setting as the direct source of data and the researcher is the key informant.

2. Qualitative research is descriptive.
3. Qualitative researchers are concerned with process rather than simply with outcomes or products.
4. Qualitative researchers tend to analyze their data inductively.
5. "Meaning" is of essential concern to the qualitative approach (pp. 27-30).

Phenomenology is the interpretation of human behavior from the subjects' perspective (Brogdan, 1982).

Phenomenological sociology was influenced by the philosophers Edmund Husserl and Alfred Schutz. The researcher does not assume that he/she understands the participant's perspective towards the culture of the setting. He/She attempts to enter the field free from preconceived ideas about the participants and their world. "Phenomenological inquiry begins with silence" (Psathas, 1973). The researcher tries to understand the participants world view. It is the researcher's responsibility to gain access in the person's world and then describe their behavior subjectively (Geertz, 1973).

The description of culture is ethnography. Culture may be defined as "the acquired knowledge people use to interpret experience and generate behavior" (Spradley, 1980,p.6).

"Researchers in this tradition say that an ethnography succeeds if it teaches readers how to behave appropriately in the cultural setting, whether it is families in a black

community (Stack, 1974), in the school principal's office (Wolcott, 1973), or in the kindergarten class (Florio, 1978)" (Brogdan, p.35).

Qualitative research is an appropriate research model for examining the attitudes of adult African Americans towards their portrayal in contemporary children's literature. This is a significant issue for study because multicultural literature has the potential to shape the attitudes of young children. Through quality literature they may experience the lives of others vicariously, thus increasing their understanding and appreciation of cultures and people different from themselves. Poor quality literature that portrays minorities in stereotypical roles does more harm to both minority and non-minority students. Children need to books with which can identify with themselves. Multicultural literature has the power to foster self-esteem and pride in one's ethnic heritage. Historically African Americans, Asian Americans and Native Americans have been depicted inaccurately in our text and trade books. Oftentimes they were omitted entirely. Minority groups are part of the American society. They must be represented fairly and consistently in the literature so that children may understand that people are different and one group is not better than any other group. The United States is not a melting pot; rather, it is made up of diverse racial and cultural groups. Within each group there are individuals and

they must be represented as such. For example, not all African Americans have the same skin color or the same hair style. If we are to accurately and authentically portray minorities in literature then individuals rather than group stereotypes must be represented.

Lachmann (1992) discussed two trends in the publishing industry regarding the depiction of minorities in literature. Some of the books during the late 1980's fall into the melting pot category (Sims, 1984) in that it is only through the illustrations that the reader recognized that the character is a member of a minority group.

Though the books have been criticized for presenting a homogenized middle-class suburban American culture, many teachers and librarians have praised them for showing the commonality of human experience and the possibilities for attaining a truly egalitarian, color blind society (Lachmann, 1992, p.9).

The opposite of this has also occurred. There have been some books published recently that celebrate the African American culture and discuss topics that are controversial within the minority community. (Lachmann, 1992). When evaluating books for young children teachers, parents, and media specialists should examine the text for:

1. Stereotypes.
2. Inaccurate information.
3. Incorrect usage of dialect
4. Illustrations for authenticity.

5. Perspective of the author-has the author accurately and honestly portrayed the setting and culture within the setting? Are the interactions authentic and realistic?
6. Audience - who is the story written for and why?
(Adapted from Lachmann, 1992)

By presenting literature that honestly and accurately represents minority cultures within the American society we help develop positive self concepts as well as promoted positive attitudes among the majority cultures towards others. The purpose of this study is to examine the attitudes of a selected group of African Americans towards the portrayal of African Americans in contemporary children's literature.

CHAPTER III
OUTLINE OF PROCEDURES

Overview

The black character in children's literature has evolved from a single-dimensional stereotype to a richer, multilateral individual, with a well-rounded character development. Written and/or illustrated primarily by African Americans, these books address the "social and cultural conditions associated with growing up Black in the United States" (Sims, 1982,p.49). These books differ from earlier works in that they describe the uniqueness of life from an African American perspective. They do not attempt to homogenize the Black experience in this country. Rather, they "recognize, sometimes even celebrate, the distinctiveness of the experience of growing up simultaneously Black and American" (Sims, p.49). The purpose of this studied is to examine the attitudes of four adult African Americans towards their portrayal in contemporary children's literature.

Design of the Study

A qualitative research design was used to gain insights into the world of children's literature as perceived by four adult African Americans; a parent, a grandparent, a minister,

and a teacher. Through the use of interviews, a rating scale, and autobiographical information that was obtained prior to the interview, I attempted to synthesize and interpret the stories told. Entry into the field was made possible because I had worked in this particular educational community for several years. I had worked with one participant, the grandparent at two different schools spanning six years. I had worked with the teacher for three years. I did not know the minister prior to the study, nor did I know the parent very well. I had also been a kindergarten teacher in the school's program for three years. I think entry into the field was made easier because of my commitment to the program and because of my reputation as a concerned teacher in the immediate community.

Sampling

Judgmental sampling, in which the researcher relies on judgement and instinct to select participants was used in this study. I wanted to identify people I thought would be interested in children's literature and who respond candidly to the research questions. Five participants were asked to participate in this study. One person served as a "practice participant"- someone who would help me ask questions clearly and unoffensively as well as reassure me that I was on the right track in even asking the questions. The information gathered from the practice participant was invaluable. She

helped identify some of the more poignant aspects of each book from an African American perspective. The data collected from that interview is reflected in the design of Guidelines for the First Interview and Guidelines for the Second Interviews.

Parents, teachers, grandparents, and ministers can serve as role models for young children and may influence what types of books a child chooses to read or what selections are made available for the child. For that reason, a person representing each of the categories of parent, teacher, grandparent, and minister was interviewed. All participants were either directly or indirectly involved with the education of young children in a predominantly black elementary school. Two males and two females participated in the study and all were African Americans. One person was in their mid-fifties, one in their mid-forties, one in their late thirties, and the other in their mid-thirties. Initially a different parent had been contacted to participate in the study who lived in the housing project adjacent to the school. The mother agreed to participate and then did not come to the initial interview. When I tried phoning the home, no one answered the phone at first and then I received a busy signal for approximately three hours. When I called the next day to try and reschedule the interview I was told that the mother was not available and she would call me back. She did not return my call. I did not do any more follow up

because I felt that there must have been a reason for her decision not to participate in the study. Because she is an active member of the community and very vocal, I felt that it might be better not to ask someone else from the housing project to participate in the study. Therefore I decided to ask a parent who lived in the neighborhood on the other side of the school.

Three of the four participants were born and for the most part raised in this state, North Carolina. The other participant was raised in New York City and was fairly new to the area. He has lived in this city three years. All four received high school educations, and three out of the four attended college. All four people readily agreed to be interviewed though they doubted that they knew anything that would be particularly helpful. It was interesting to note how the participants underestimated their knowledge about children's literature. As the interviews progressed I believe that the participants also were convinced of their knowledge and their individual power to make a difference.

It was very difficult to write each person's story without using their name because using a general term in some way detracted from the personal drama that unfolded during the interviews. The word "Subject" was not an appropriate term because it seemed quantitative and objective. These were interactive interviews in which questions were asked during a conversation between the participant and the

researcher rather than in a question-response format. Each person shared their ideas, their backgrounds, and their opinions with me and willingly revealed part of themselves in the process. As we all know, it is never easy discussing one's opinion when it is perceived that there might be a "right " or "wrong" answer. To alleviate this feeling for the participant I used an initial interview to gather insight into the individual's personal feelings about stories, their concept of story and factors that influence the types of stories that should be read to young children. These interviews varied in length but were approximately thirty minutes long. A series of questions guided the first interview. I consciously tried to ask each person the same questions at least in some form whenever possible. The questions served only as a map for the conversation. If we seemed to be straying too far from the topic on hand I used a question to redirect the conversation or to gather additional information. The first interview helped put both of us more at ease. I think each person agreed to participate and then probably wondered what they had gotten themselves into. The first meeting helped clarify the purpose of the study and helped both of us focus our attention on stories for young children. We scheduled a second time to meet at the end of the first interview. I think after the first interview was over each participant had a clearer idea of what I really wanted- their opinions. Each participant was given the

collection of five books and an evaluation sheet (See Appendix). All four participants looked at the sheet as I explained the rating scale and indicated that they understood how to mark their responses. The primary purpose of the evaluation sheet was to guide the discussion during the second interview.

The second interviews focused more specifically on the books. The characters and stories dominated the discussions and I found myself too caught up in the participants' responses to follow the Questioning Guidelines. All of the participants had definite opinions about the books that they articulated and supported with evidence from the stories. They made generalizations about the criteria necessary for selecting books for young children. The responses indicated thought and reflection. At times there were contradictions; but in most instances the person speaking recognized the conflict and then through discussion crystallized their thoughts on that particular subject. These interviews also varied in length with the average time approximately one hour. Each person used the books to emphasize their particular points of view. Though initially each person expressed some doubt about the information that they might provide, I believe at the end of the second interview each person realized that they did have very strong feelings about books for children based on their own life experiences. As one respondent put it:

Figure 3
Participant Profile

Participant	Age	Sex	Level of Education	# of Dependent children	# of Grand-children
1	mid 50's	M	12 Years	0	1
2	mid 40's	M	16	4	0
3	early 40's	F	16+	2	0
4	mid 30's	F	16	1	0

We should of done this over a drink. Then I never would have shut up. Last night I really got on a roll after reading these books. I wanted to call up _____ [his grown daughter] and talk about some of the things she's been saying all these years. I enjoyed this. I really did. It got me thinking. Thinking about things I haven't thought of in awhile.

Setting

The participants from this study work either directly or indirectly (as a parent) with children attending a predominantly black elementary school in a city with a population of approximately 200,000. The city schools serve 9,613 elementary children with twenty-five elementary schools. 44% of the students belong to the majority population and 56% are minority students. At the elementary school studied, there were a total of 313 students in grades K-5. 35% of the students are white and 65% are black. Most of the African American students come from the neighborhood surrounding the school. The neighborhood has a federally funded housing project, single family homes, and apartment buildings. The white students are bused from many different neighborhoods and select this school because of its academic program. These students are here by choice. This is not their attendance zone school. Their parents have selected the program for the child because of the curriculum. The black students that live in the neighborhood may attend the school, which is within walking distance (less than 1.5 miles from their homes), or they may "opt" out of this program and

attend another elementary school that is farther away but still within walking distance (meaning no bus transportation would be provided by the school system) or attend another elementary school approximately 10 miles away in which the school system would provide bus transportation. The majority of the African American students in the school live in the attendance zone. There are African American students who choose to attend this school because of the program. It is more difficult for them to be accepted into the program because there are quotas as to how many minority students may attend the school in an attempt to make the ratio of African Americans to whites represent the city's ratio of 44% white and 56% African American.

The magnet school program in this city offers parents, teachers, and students a choice in learning styles and in programs. The eight elementary magnet schools were opened with federal money. There are two open education magnets, two science and technology magnets, a communications magnet, a cultural arts magnet, an acceleration and enrichment magnet, and a global magnet in which the students attend school two hundred and twenty days instead of one hundred and eighty. A new elementary magnet in which the students attend one hundred and eighty days using a year round calendar (vacations would be smaller throughout the year as opposed to one long break in the summer) has been proposed and accepted for the 1992-1993 school year. Parents may select one of

these schools by filling out an application during the spring registration period. Placements are filled on a first come first serve basis and for some of the schools there are long waiting lists.

The participants in this study worked directly or indirectly with elementary students attending a magnet school. I interviewed three of the participants at the school. The interviews took place in the conference room, classroom, media center, and principal's office. I interviewed the parent in my home so that she could bring her child with her. I also interviewed the practice participant in my home because it was convenient for both of us. Each person gave me permission to tape record the interview sessions. I assured them that I would not use their names in the paper. I did not have the individuals read the transcripts because I did not want them to feel as though their answers needed revisions or corrections. Clarification was sought during the interviews. Also, the individuals revised their own responses as they thought about the questions and discussed them. Field notes were taken during the interviews and then elaborated upon after the session. All notes were then transcribed to color coded index cards. The cards were sorted and shuffled many times in order to establish categories for sorting and synthesizing the data.

Criteria for Book Selection

The books selected for this study were written by female African Americans. Three of the five books were illustrated by black females (one being Tar Beach, in which the author and illustrator are the same person) and the other two were illustrated by whites; one male and one female. Each book represented contemporary realistic fiction, including poetry. Four of the books were copyrighted in 1991, the other in 1992. The protagonist in each story was an African American and the plots revolved around an African American character's relationships with themselves, family, and friends. Each story clearly took place within the homes or communities of African Americans. The illustrations, language, and experiences reflected an understanding of the African American culture. A variety of lifestyles and socioeconomic classes were represented in the stories. For example, one respondent surmised that the story Three Wishes represented a lower SES background because the story was written in a black dialect and the characters lived in an apartment. The respondents also felt that Tar Beach represented a lower income family. Aunt Flossie's Hats (and Crab Cakes Later) represented a middle or upper middle class background. Finding the Greenstone also presented a more middle class perspective. Night on Neighborhood Street represented a

variety of lifestyles, some of which were lower SES and others were more characteristic of a middle SES.

These books are characterized as "culturally conscious fiction" (Sims, 1982,p.49). The text and illustrations show the protagonist as African American and the setting an African American home or community. The illustrations, language, or cultural traditions identify the literature as authentic (Sims, 1982). All five books tell a good story which is an essential criteria for selecting any book (Huck, 1979; Stoodt, 1991). In addition, each of the stories addresses at least one of the elements described by Catherine Anelli as important for African American literature:

1. Time - current and past problems in the lives of ordinary and great black Americans.
2. Religion - the role of the black church and human relationships to nature.
- . Language and Oral Traditions - playful use of words, humor, and black idiom.
4. Social and Community Relationships - the survival of the tribe against great adversity and prejudice because of the strength derived from the family and community (1978,p.34).

Description of the Books

Howard, Elizabeth Fitzgerald. Aunt Flossie's Hats (and Crab Cakes Later). illustrated by James Ransome. New York: Clarion Books. 1991

Aunt Flossie's Hats (and Crab Cakes Later) is about the excitement and love two girls share with their aunt when they go and visit her in Baltimore. The girls enjoy trying on their aunt's hats. Each hat represents a story that Flossie shares with her nieces. The setting of the story is Baltimore. At the end of their stay the girls have crab cakes for their snack. The illustrations are rich and colorful paintings.

Walker, Alice. Finding the Greenstone. illustrated by Catherine Deeter. San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. 1991.

Everyone in the community has a green stone which shines brightly except for Johnny. Because of his meanness, Johnny loses his stone. Through the help of his sister, his parents, and the larger community, he realizes that the green stone represents the feeling of love and kindness and he finds his green stone from within.

Greenfield, Eloise. Night on Neighborhood Street.

illustrated by Jan Spivey Gilchrist. New York: Dial Books for Young Readers. 1991.

This is a collection of poetry that depicts life in many different homes during the evening hours. There are poems about parents arguing with one another, and Daddy's playing games with their children. There are warnings of drug dealers and the fun of a slumber party. The poems include fears, dreams, and hopes. The illustrator, a Corretta Scott King Award winner for illustrations, portrays a variety of African American families in her paintings. This book received second-place from the Corretta Scott King Awards.

Ringgold, Faith. Tar Beach. New York: Crown Publishers. 1991.

Tar Beach is the story of a young girl who dreams of a better life for herself and her family. This is a quilt story and is part of Ringgold's "Woman on a Bridge" series on display in the Guggenheim Museum. The setting, Tar Beach, is actually the rooftop of the family's apartment building. As Cassie, the main character flies overhead, searching for answers, she reveals fears and aspirations that may be familiar to the reader. This book received the Corretta Scott King Award for its illustrations.

Clifton, Lucille. Three Wishes . illustrated by Michael Hags. New York: Doubleday Books For Young Readers. 1992 .

When Nobie finds a penny on New Year's day with her birthdate she knew that it was good luck because she was able, according to the superstition, make three wishes, which all came true. Through her mother and a close friend, Nobie comes to realize that a good friend is more valuable than material things. This books was originally published in 1976. Michael Hags updated the illustrations with oil paintings. It is noted on the last page of the book that the illustrator used photographs as references for his portrayal of the characters. After the books were identified and purchased, the actual study was initiated.

Interviews

An informal format was used in conducting the interviews with each participant. Survey questions were designed to elicit responses that reflected the individual's personal experiences with literature and what they considered important or valuable in contemporary children's literature. The question, "Can you think of a story from your childhood that was important to you in anyway or that you remember for a particular reason?" was designed to give the researcher insight into the individual's perceptions and experiences with literature. The first interview consisted

primarily of unstructured open-ended questions that provided the researcher with biographical sketches of each participant. The second set of interviews followed a more structured format in that the questions were designed to gather specific information about the books in the study. When asking these types of questions the researcher must oftentimes explain the question or provide an example (Spradley, 1979). Questions that specifically related to prejudice, stereotypes, and racism needed to be made clear for the participant. I found myself discussing some of the research that I had read with the participant in order to make the questions clearer. This dialogue was very helpful in eliciting responses because the person was able to relate personal incidents in which they also had read books that contained negative stereotypes of African-Americans.

Guidelines For The Initial Interview

1. The purpose of this study is to identify how African-Americans feel about their portrayal in the literature for young children.
2. Obtain permission to tape conversation.
3. Please tell me about yourself; where you grew up, where you went to school, about your family...

4. What are your interests or hobbies? How did you become interested in these things? How do you pursue these interests?
5. What types of stories did you enjoy as a child?
6. Do you share these same stories with your own children/grandchildren/students/parishioners?
7. What types of books do you remember as a child in school?
8. Do you feel that the literature for young children has changed since you were a child? How do you feel about these changes?
9. Do you have time to read for pleasure? If so, what types of books do you enjoy?
10. Do you read to or share stories with your children/grandchildren/class/church members?
11. What types of stories do you like?
12. What types of stories do you think young children like?
13. Do you think issues such as racial discrimination and prejudice should be discussed with young children?
14. Do you think young children understand these concepts?
15. What kinds of books are appropriate for young African-American children?

16. Do you think these same books are appropriate for young children of different racial backgrounds?
17. What types of books would you like to see your children check out from the school's media center?

Guidelines For Second Interview

These questions are designed to generate discussion about the five contemporary realistic fiction books selected for the study. The initial five questions are book-specific, while the latter encourage the respondent to synthesize his or her thoughts and impressions about the books collectively.

1. What were your general impressions of the books?
2. Which characters did you like the most? Why?
Which characters in the stories did you find the most believable? Were there any characters that you did not find believable or realistic?
3. Are the events in these stories credible?
4. Are these books positive or negative portrayals of African-Americans? Do you see them as accurate representations of African-American life?
5. What, if anything, would you like to see changed in any of these stories?
6. Do you feel that any of these books would be appropriate for your child/grandchild/students/congregation? Which ones?

7. Who do you think these stories were written for? Are they appropriate for that audience? Are they appropriate for any audience.
8. Which of these books should be in the school's media center?
9. Do these books speak to your experiences as an African-American?
10. What other topics/issues need to be addressed in contemporary children's literature?

Procedures

1. The categories of parent, teacher, grandparent, and minister were decided upon.
2. Potential participants were identified through personal contacts and referrals from the school's secretary and principal were developed. Each participant was categorized into one of the four groups.
3. Participants were either contacted in person or by telephone. Initial interviews were scheduled.
4. Initial Interviews were conducted to explain the study, obtain biographical sketches, distribute materials, explain evaluation sheet, and schedule second interviews.

5. Second interview - discussions of the books and issues in books.
6. Field notes were transcribed to index cards and color coded.
7. Tapes were transcribed.
8. Analysis of data: recurring ideas
9. The identification of themes
10. Summarize findings, address research questions, and propose recommendations.

Transcriptions

Initially a professional transcriptionist was used to transcribe the first set of interviews. She had difficulty understanding the accent, not being from this area, and as a result there were many "inaudible" found within the text. After listening to the tapes I was able to fill in the sections with the words spoken by that person. I decided that perhaps it would be better for me to transcribe the tapes personally because I knew the context in which the conversation took place and I did not have a difficult time understanding the local accent. In several instances, the taped voice became much clearer after referring to my field notes. There are still instances of "inaudible" sections usually due to noise (children in the halls, the vacuum cleaner in the classroom, or the intercom) in the building.

Though extremely time consuming, I found that transcribing the tapes myself gave me a much better understanding of the message relayed by each participant. Typing, listening, reading, and then listening again, internalizes the information much more so than if one just reads the transcription and listens to the tape. After the tapes were transcribed they were read and checked with the tape again. Corrections were made before the hard copy was printed. It took approximately three and one half hours to transcribe and revise a thirty minute tape.

Coding the Data

After each tape was transcribed and revised, it was read many times looking for categories for organizing and analyzing each participant's perceptions. Initially fourteen categories were derived from the transcribed tapes. These categories included:

1. Life Experiences as an African American.
2. Experiences (past and present) with books.
3. Concepts of Racism and Prejudice.
4. Issues of Stereotypes.
5. Authenticity of story and illustrations.
6. The use of dialect.
7. Morals and Life Lessons.
8. Individuality versus Group Identity.

9. Concept of Beauty.
10. Patronizing attitudes.
11. Criteria for book selection.
12. Multiculturalism.
13. Self-esteem.
14. Availability.

These groups were helpful in the initial analysis of the texts for organizational purposes however they became quite unyielding as one tried to interpret reality and identify common themes. A second domain was developed using only four broad categories. Secondary concepts were discussed within the larger framework. These four themes included:

- I. Life Experiences as African Americans.
- II. Prejudice/Racism/Stereotypes.
- III. Concepts of Beauty.
- IV. Moral, Values, and Life Lessons.

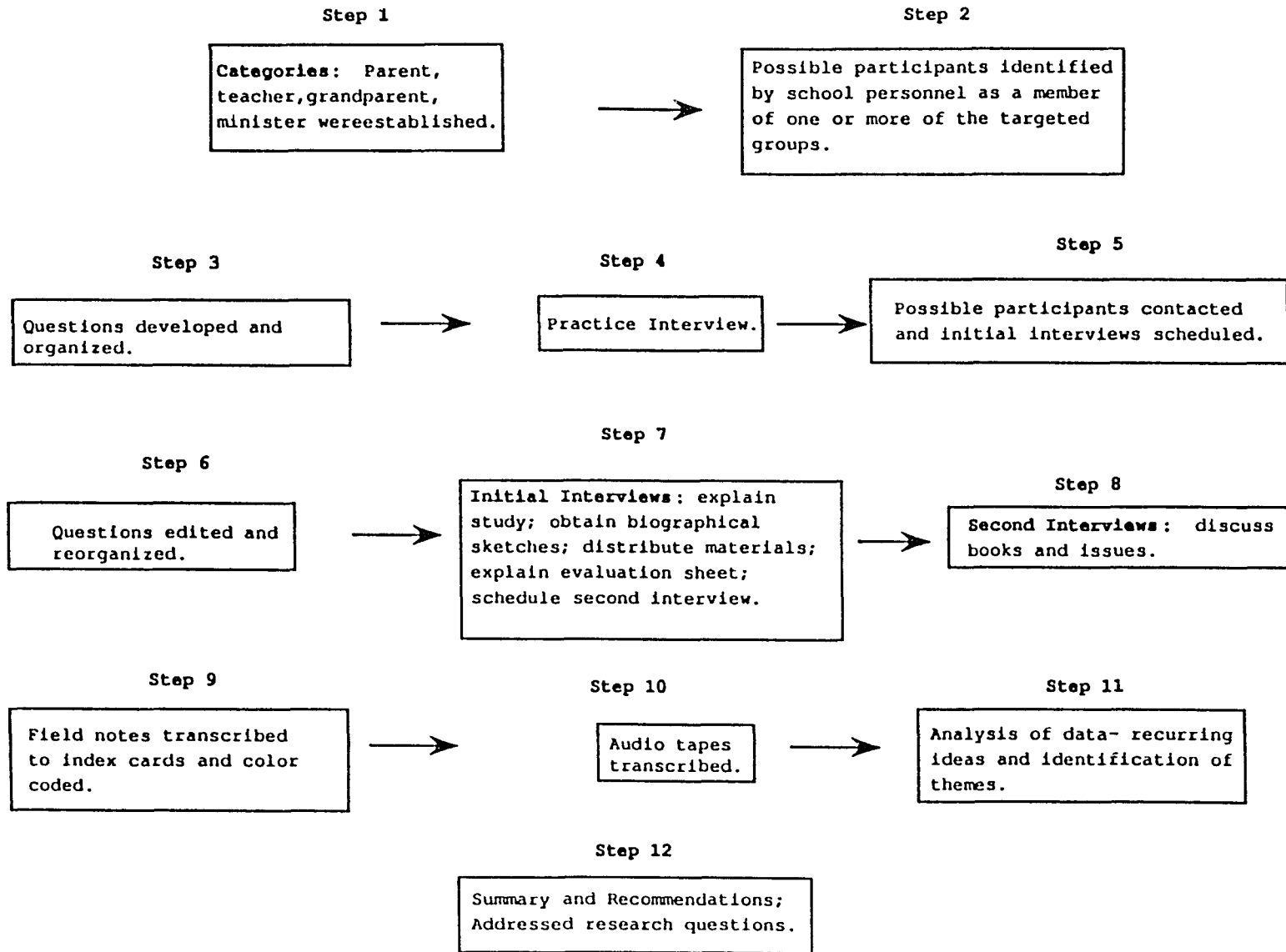
The original categories were then recoded throughout the transcripts.

Identification of Themes

ORIGINAL CATEGORY	THEME
Life Experiences as an African American	Life Experiences as an African American
Experiences (past and present) with books	Life Experiences as an African American

Authenticity of story and illustrations	Life Experiences as an African American
Concepts of Prejudice/Racism	Prejudice/Racism/Stereotypes
Stereotypes	Prejudice/Racism/Stereotypes
The use of dialect	Prejudice/Racism/Stereotypes
Individuality versus Group Identity	Prejudice/Racism/Stereotypes
Patronizing ideas	Prejudice/Racism/Stereotypes
Morals and Life Lessons	Morals/Values/ Life Lessons
Self-esteem	Morals/Values/ Life Lessons
Multiculturalism	Morals/Values/ Life Lessons
Concept of Beauty	Concept of Beauty

Figure 4: Procedures



CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Overview

The narrative descriptions presented in this chapter describe the attitudes of a select group of African Americans towards the portrayal of African Americans in contemporary children's literature. Five individuals were asked to participate in the study. One individual was willing to serve as a "practice" participant. She helped format questions that were relevant to the African American perspective and clarified insights and possible controversial issues presented in the five reading selections. She spent a considerable amount of time looking over questions, making sure that they were not offensive and addressed the specific concerns of the researcher. She shared her reactions to the stories and how they related to her personally and culturally. This individual shared part of herself with me and verified that the questions developed needed to be asked. Though her specific responses were not discussed in depth in this chapter, they served as a framework for presenting the perspectives of the four participants.

Parents, grandparents, ministers, and teachers have an opportunity to impact upon the lives of children. They are

able to influence the types of literature children read and make these materials available in the home, church, or classroom. Once the practice interviews were completed, four individuals, representing the categories of parent, teacher, grandparent, and minister were asked to participate in the study which involved two interviews and the reading and evaluation of five children's books. Each of the individuals understood the purpose of the study and the reason that they were asked to participate. These four individuals either worked or lived in the same community and interacted on an almost daily basis with the children attending a predominantly black elementary school. Though each person came from a different background, they had many common concerns and criteria for evaluating books representing African Americans. Though each person used slightly different terminology, four themes reoccur throughout the conversations. These themes included:

1. Life experiences as African Americans.
2. Prejudice/Racism/Stereotypes.
3. Concept of Beauty.
4. Moral, Values, and Life Lessons.

This chapter discussed the data collected during the research process. The individual theme are discussed in Chapter Five as well as the criteria for selecting and

evaluating contemporary African American children's literature.

Perhaps the most significant aspect of this study was the tremendous amount of thought and reflection exhibited by each participant. They shared openly their feelings and supported their ideas with real life stories or instances from the books. As each person spoke, one felt that they had thought about their responses and consistently restated ideas that they considered important. Interestingly enough, the most popular book among all the participants was Aunt Flossie's Hats (and Crab Cakes Later) by Elizabeth Howard. This book did not contain any material that would be categorized as controversial and it received the highest rating (5=strongly like) by each participant. Finding the Greenstone, by Alice Walker, also received the highest rating (5 = strongly like) by each participant although it did touch on some controversial ideas. Tar Beach, by Faith Ringgold, received the highest rating by three of the participants (5 = strongly likes) but one person rated it as a two (1 = strongly dislike). Three Wishes, by Lucille Clifton, received two highest ratings (5=strongly like) and two ratings of four. The least favorite book among the participants in this study was Night on Neighborhood Street. It received one highest rating (5 = strongly like) one rating of four, and two ratings of three. Several of the participants commented on the fact that they were not

particularly "poetry people" and therefore did not like the book as much as they liked the other books. The minister did not care for the poetry itself in the book, commenting that it was "shallow and lacked meaning for children." The grandparent did not care for the book because it was not realistic nor specific enough for young children.

The participants were not familiar with any of the books prior to their participation in this study. All commented that they would like to see these materials become part of the classroom collections.

It is significant to note when reading the narratives that follow that many of the ideas and concerns voiced by the participants echoed the criteria the experts in the field of children's literature consider important when selecting literature to share with children. Though none of the participants considered themselves an expert in the area of literature, each reads daily for work and for pleasure. The participants. Each remembered the traditional folk and fairy tales as part of their early reading materials, mainly because they were readily available. Oral story telling was part of each participant's childhood though it did not seem to have the same impact as books. The mother and the teacher were the people who taught each participant to read and encouraged them to read on a regular basis. Each person interviewed was in some way influenced by the stories they read as a child. Three out of the four felt that the stories

they read as children impacted upon their lives and reading was their link to the world outside their everyday lives. The teacher recalled her early reading experiences as more lessons in learning "how to" read. The early materials that she remembers were the text book series with Dick and Jane. Though all the characters in these stories represented a white middle class perspective she does not recall questioning this as a child because all the materials available to her had white characters.

Each participant expressed the fact that they enjoy reading and consider it a pleasurable activity. Their early experiences with books shaped their perspectives towards children's literature. This chapter was written using a case study format. Each person's interviews were discussed and the data was presented to the reader. Interpretation is limited in this chapter and will be elaborated upon in Chapter Five. The first part of each interview helped the researcher identify each individual's perspective and the events that influenced their criteria for evaluating children's literature. The second interview was designed to better understand each participant's reaction to the literature and see if they use the criteria they believe is important for evaluation when they are examining specific literary selections.

The researcher was consistently reminded of Erving Goffman's monograph "The Presentation of Self in Everyday

Life" (1959) while during this inquiry. Goffman utilized a dramaturgical metaphor to express his hypothesis that all individuals in their everyday social interactions attempt to direct the impression others form of them by carefully selecting various techniques to sustain their personae. He suggested that social interactions consisted of a "team" of performers who, in cooperation with one another, attempted to define a situation which included delineation of an "own" team and an audience as well as the assumptions and rules which were to be observed by the participants. These teams were created by the researcher and the participant. Knowing three of the participants casually made it much easier to explain the purpose of the study. Establishing a relationship with a complete stranger was much more difficult. It took us longer to build a team because each of us was uncertain of the other's sincerity. We were unsure of self interests and therefore guarded our initial questions and responses. The first part of the initial interview seemed stilted and laborious. Somewhere along the line, once we were no longer strangers, the conversation became more relaxed and the questioning less sterile. At some point in the first fifteen minutes I put the question sheet away and we began discussing some critical issues of the African, American experience in this country.

Seymour Sarason discussed in his text, The Creation of Settings and the Future Societies, the need to examine the

culture and the traditions that existed "before the beginning". For this reason I asked each participant questions about their childhood reading experiences, books they particularly remember or persons who were influential in developing their reading habits. When one is examining the "before the beginning" context, one must consider whether or not individuals are content with the status quo. The initial interview was designed to address some of these concerns.

Sarasson also recommended that one examine the traditions of the setting. For this reason, I asked specific questions about books each participant remembered as a child and whether or not they felt that children's literature had changed. By examining the responses, the researcher was able to identify several reasons why the participants felt there was a need for a change in the type of literature presented to children.

In his text, Human Services and Resource Networks , Sarasson identified three concepts which help the researcher better understand the culture of the African American experience. Symbols may have referred to the socioeconomic status of the characters in the books which may or may not be representative of African Americans. The rituals of the culture and myths that are portrayed as fact were explored during the interviews. The experiences of these participants with children's literature helped the researcher identify

issues that were important and relevant when selecting and discussing literature for young children.

Participant One

The first participant was an African American male approximately fifty-two years old. He was born and raised in the local community and left upon high school graduation to join the military. He went to boot camp in South Carolina and then was stationed in Ohio. He moved to New York City after his military discharge because he really loved the City after visiting relatives there. He worked in a grocery store and eventually became the manager and worked there until his retirement. He married and raised four daughters, three of whom completed their college degrees. After his retirement he moved returned to North Carolina and accepted a position as a custodian with the public school system. Presently he is the head custodian of an elementary school. He and his wife help care for their three year old grandson in the afternoons and evenings while the child's mother goes to work. He is very involved in his grandson's life.

Participant One has been described as a naturalist. He is an avid reader and enjoys gardening, astronomy, photography, botany, and biology.. Though he does not consider himself an expert in politics, he certainly enjoys debating the upcoming presidential elections. One seldom

sees this man without some type of reading material in his arms as he comes and goes to work. He always has an article from a newspaper or magazine that he is willing to share. He enjoys reading two newspapers each day and the New York Times on Sundays. He presently has reduced his magazine subscriptions to three. However, he spends a considerable amount of time in book stores and the public library. He does not drive and uses a combination of walking and public transportation to get back and forth to work each day. Some times during the six years that we have known one another I have offered him a ride home. When he accepted we always had an interesting conversation about current events or a special documentary that he had recently watched on television.

This man is role model for many of the children in the school. He knows most of the three hundred students by name and has a genuine interest in each child. Frequently he is seen offering a word of encouragement to the child having difficulties with peers or commenting on an art project he saw on display in the media center. He has a cheerful smile for the children and asks them about their day. He is also very supportive of the teachers. Generally he anticipates problems before they happen and is available with a helping hand. Though he does not get paid extra, he always works additional hours at the beginning of the school year to help move furniture, polish floors, and make preparations for open

houses. He is well respected by the parents, students, and staff members.

The stories that influenced his life were the myths and fairy tales. He explained that though he attended school during the days of segregation, it was his experience that the black schools in many of the counties in this state tried to copy or improve upon the curriculums used in the white schools. He disagreed with the claim that black people of his generation received an inferior education because they attended an all black school. "From that point of view, I think we've covered just about everything that the white or middle-class kids covered." He stated that the stories with a moral were the ones that had the greatest impact upon his life. The story, The Little Engine That Could, helped him through boot camp. Just when he thought he couldn't push himself any more that story popped into mind. The story about Rudolph The Red Nosed Reindeer was something he could relate to as a high school student trying out for the basketball team. The fables were also very important and taught life lessons, particularly the one about two geese taking a turtle across a lake.

Sometimes you learn you have to just keep your mouth closed and learn to listen. I didn't do it a couple of times when the Coach was telling me something, and I wasn't paying attention and I got hit in the head."

Participant One shares the traditional literature with his three year old grandson. Either he or his wife read at least one story to him each night. They have found that if they get busy and forget the little boy will bring the books to them. Conversation about the stories is very important to their reading sessions. He believed that you have to talk with children about the stories and explain certain points so that it was relevant to their daily experiences. He commented: "Kids are very smart and bright today. As a matter of fact, they make you do your homework". He encourages his grandson to ask "why" and think about the stories they share.

He had not up to this point used any African American literature with his grandson but plans to in the future. "I think he should learn black characters and black tales, but this is America and this is a black and white world. One should not be short-changed for the other at this point in time."

When asked about books written in a dialect he stated that he did not think it was necessary.

We should learn the English language, the roots of the English language, and as much about the words as possible. Before we start speaking in dialect, we should learn to speak [standard English] correctly, fluently, and understand all of the meanings and nuances. If we start with these dialects and the slangs, you lose part of the value of words, in my opinion.

He did not rule out the possibility of using a particular book because it was written in a certain dialect if the story was good and the language was appropriate to the characters and setting.

Children's literature has changed considerably since Participant One's childhood. There are more stories about people from different cultures, "there's more - I think the words you use now are 'multicultural' - stories." He also believed that the stories have "true value" as opposed to "busy stories." An example was a story he just finished reading about a young girl's life in the city. The illustrations were realistic and it discussed experiences children could relate to in their own lives.

Realism is important in literature. At times people don't like to look at life realistically but children are able to identify things that are not portrayed honestly. Participant One. believed that controversial subjects such as racial discrimination, prejudice, and poverty should be addressed in the literature for children.

I think it should be handled clearly. I mean if we're dealing with poverty, we should show the poverty. We should enunciate why that poverty is there, but not make holier than thou excuses for that poverty. Whenever possible, we should show not only the cause or the results, but part of the responsibility for the cause.

Participant One believed that good writers and illustrators have the ability to effectively write stories

about discrimination but these books must be taught by teachers "who know what in the heck they are doing." Discrimination exists and children must be taught how to recognize and respond to its existence. Children must also be taught that you may not want to play with someone, not because of their race but rather because of their values.

During the interview we discussed the fact that some people might select a book simply because it has an African American character in the story or it reflects an aspect of African culture. "But just because it is black doesn't make it right." He believed the book must have redeeming value regardless of the color or socioeconomic status of the characters.

I don't think we should pick things based on color. Sometimes we worry so much about what the white man did or is doing or what he - or the type books he has, that we find something wrong with them and then we take home a book that's worse than something that the devil might have projected on us. Just because it has somebody black on it or an African flag or somebody with a dashiki on.

Though his experience with African American literature is limited he remarked that oftentimes the adult literature seemed to be just "a white story with a black face so it didn't move me." He felt that we spend too much time talking about Africa and not enough time discussing the life experiences of blacks in the American culture. Though more books about African Americans are being published, there are not as many as there should be. This observation supports the

writings of Kruse (1991) and Meyer-Reimer (1992). He considered a much larger problem – getting children to read. If you can get children reading and develop their interests, then “water will find its own level”. Participant One felt children will select books that interest them. If African Americans are in books then these books must be interesting and positive so that children will relate to the stories. Davis (1972) found that child developed negative attitudes towards reading and books if they confronted stereotypes. Participant One elaborated upon this idea when he stated:

You can start them off on black books, but once they become interested in something, the person who likes to read is going to zero in on it and color is not going to mean that much. You know, I was a science fiction nut and I never questioned what color Sir Isaac Newton was. Never. Never thought of it. I was just really trying to find out whether or not the moon was made out of green cheese. I didn't care whether a black man or a white man made the cheese.

Participant One would like to see teachers introducing a variety of books representing different cultures and colors in his grandson's classrooms. He does not want books censored because they deal with some controversial topics nor does he want quotas established so that the children read an equal number of books from each culture. Teachers should encourage children to read and introduce them to many different types of stories so that they are exposed to different things and can make choices for themselves. When referring to his grandson, “I want him to be exposed to

books." Children can make intelligent decisions for themselves once we educate them. Books are one means of teaching children what to say "no" to. Trying to shelter them or the materials they read does more damage than good. Children need books that deal with things they will confront in their lifetimes. They need ethics and morals. Children learn from what they read, hear, and see around them.

Participant One. believed that we needed more literature that deals with reality. We must keep the traditional literature and add to it with quality books about the present. Children need a rich literary background that is comprised of many different books representing the different cultures and traditions of the world in which they live.

The second interview was conducted the following day after school hours in a classroom. Participant One brought his evaluation sheet and notes that he had made while reading the books to the interview. His overall impressions of the books were positive. He saw them as a "step in the right direction." The books emphasized values and would relate to all children regardless of their cultural backgrounds.

The stories could have been about any kid and they still would have been outstanding books. The kid could have been black, white, red, or green. I think that's a valuable book right there. When you can judge it that way. Rather than it being limited to a specific group.

Participant One ranked four out of the five books with a score of 5 which indicated "strongly liked". The book Night

on Neighborhood Street ,by Eloise Greenfield, was rated a 3 on a scale of 1 to 5. Though he liked the illustrations, he felt that the poetry itself was "soft". "It does not give a kid room to imagine and in good book for children, you have to be able to imagine or to visualize things more perceptively." He felt that the book was shallow in that the poems were not vivid enough for a child.

The book is very shallow. I mean, to make a note on the dreams, the dreams weren't real dreams. The fright of the evilness wasn't bad, it wasn't vivid enough. The visions were not real. Kids dream, and these dreams are visions of good, bad, frightful, and horrible. They don't dream in shades of things.

Participant One also objected to the use of an African name in a poem. He did not think children could identify with that particular person because they don't know anyone by that particular name. He felt the author included the African name so the poem related the African culture. According to this participant this was not enough information to help a child understand his/her own cultural background.

It's written in America and since pre-slavery days, most blacks, in general, anybody knows this, they're named after Presidents or other people in the Bible. So it really doesn't relate to anything from an African point of view by giving somebody an African name. It would have been better if it was George Washington, Jr. or Grover Cleveland. Because the he [the child] can relate because he's got an uncle. He's got an Uncle George. He's got an Uncle Sam from the Bible. He can relate then because somewhere out there, there is an uncle or aunt George or Flossie or Mary. Sherika or somebody, he doesn't know. They are beautiful names but they are not part of our culture yet. When there

are enough movies with African names then maybe the children can relate to them.

Overall, Participant One felt that the books portrayed African Americans in a positive way. The books generally dealt with dreams and honesty, and valuing friendships. These ideals are appropriate for all cultures.

These are the things that all people of good will value. And Blacks value the same things. We're not different. I think that might be a problem when we try to paint a picture or create an image where we are different. We came from a different place.

An interesting point was made about the book Tar Beach. Participant One enjoyed the book very much. However, he felt that the author should have discussed the issue of African Americans being excluded from unions further. He felt that the students reading this book should be made aware of the fact that Blacks formed their own unions, beginning with the railroad porters, because they were excluded by the unions for white workers.

Aunt Flossie's Hats (and Crab Cakes Later) emphasized the oral storytelling traditions. The stories triggered by the hats were passed from one generation to another. "I think that was nice because each hat held a story and she would bring back something where we, as a group of black people, as a community had a good time." He continued, "We show that we did have community spirit, and still have it."

The book brings back memories for adults that they can share with children. Parts of the book might need some explanation which gets children and adults communicating with one another. For example, one hat smelled of smoke, and you might have to explain what kind of smoke.

Alice Walker's book, Finding the Greenstone, "is a story that can take you all the way up till you are fifty years old or older". Participant One felt that this book was very appropriate for children, though the message might have to be explained by the teacher. He thought the author could have handled the section in the book where the boy was embarrassed by his father's job as a pulp worker differently.

I wish she would have carried that a little bit heavier because I think he does mention that he's working for himself. Which is an outstanding occupation for any man to be in and he should be proud. I mean you don't have to be a doctor or a lawyer to be successful. I thought that was nice of her to have that in there. I would have made it a little bit stronger, but there's no need to complain there because at least she's doing that and that was outstanding.

Participant One felt that the author may have made the mother a doctor in the story simply to compensate for the father's occupation. He does not think that this was necessary nor essential to the story itself.

I went back to look to see if I could find Dr. Oaks before I discovered that Dr. Oaks is Mrs. Oaks. But I do think it was very good because we all, at one time or another, at least in my neck of the wood, felt ashamed of our father's occupations. I've had people say that my occupation as a grocery clerk or grocery manager and or as custodian or janitor isn't very important, which is all the more reason why it would have been nice for Ms. Walker to embellish on blue collar occupations. And

why kids should be proud of their parents . . . I caught the shame . . . I mean the book was written for small kids, but there was a big kid reading it. Me.

When asked about the book, Tar Beach and the idea of the father leaving the family to go and find work, Participant One responded that this was reality and children recognized it as part of their lives.

This is where white people make a mistake. Honesty is important and fathers are absent in many homes. Teachers need to be aware of this fact and sensitive to it in that they might give a child an extra pat on the back or a smile but don't deny it simply because it is unpleasant and might offend someone. Children need to see that there is pain in that household when the father is gone. "The kids hurt and ache every time the father comes back without a job".

But as far as the father being absent, the mother cries, all of that should be brought out. If you don't teach them that that did happen [discrimination] then it [will] happen again. If you don't learn anything from history you are bound to repeat it But if they learn that this was done and this was wrong, then they have become educated and if they're educated, then they won't do it. That's what the school is for. So it should be brought out.

The only point Participant One took offense to in this book was the use of the word "Tar" because it reminded him of a slang term that was used in the South, tar babies, which referred to young African Americans.

When asked whether these books might hurt an African American's self-esteem because they contained references to discrimination he remarked,

I personally don't think any book of knowledge, good or bad, hurts a child's self-esteem when it's discussing

things that pertain to him or other individuals of the same plight or could at one time be their plight.

He felt that teachers had a responsibility to represent the truth when discussing history with children, however they should not try to spare feelings, just because the truth is often unpleasant. As a white teacher I explained that sometimes I feel very uncomfortable discussing racism or prejudice with children because I am afraid it will generate ill will among classmates. Participant One responded "You don't have to be poor to teach a bunch of young kids what it is to be poor." Children learn from our stories and our experiences. "The greatest thing that can happen to a kid is being able to talk to his grandparents and his great grandparents." Through these conversations children learn about the past and how things have changed, both positively and negatively, over the years. One can not deny that racism and prejudice exist. Therefore children must learn to identify it for what it is and make sure that they do not contribute to these feelings.

Participant One did not think it made a difference whether or not someone writing about African Americans was actually an African American himself/herself. He thought, though he did not check on it, that the books he examined were written by African Americans.

I assume, I guess, because you gave me the books. It had a black tone. I could tell. Some of them was

sophisticated. A couple of them might have gone to Harvard or Radcliff or something.... [Referring to Alice Walker] She skimmed across the surface of the real blacks.

He did not feel that the authors' race was important to the authenticity of the stories. The books that he enjoys are often written by white authors.

If the writer claims to be a writer about black life, if he's white it's not going to make a difference because a good writer is going to research it and write from that point of view. If he's a bad writer, he can be black as he wants to be, it'll come through.

Three Wishes was important for Participant One because it taught values and morals. Children could relate to the story and other books could be introduced with this book. He liked the idea that it taught children about certain superstitions, like finding a penny with your birthdate on it on New Years Day. This would open the lines of communication between children and adults about other superstitions and which ones are local and which one come from other places. Children learn by talking to other people. The ideas presented in the books are springboards for other discussions between generations of people.

Participant One felt that we need more books like the ones he read. He stated that he wanted to call one of his daughters last night because he thought about the times she pointed out blatant racist remarks and stereotypes in the literature she read as a teenager. Because he wanted her to

read, and to read well, he always told her growing up, "Don't worry about the messenger, just get the message." But he felt that she would have enjoyed the books in this study almost as much as she would enjoy knowing that he was beginning to understand some of the points she had made long ago. Participant One believed that we need more books, with the exception of Night on Neighborhood Street, like the examples he read.

Participant Two

Participant Two was an African American male approximately forty-five years old. He served as a military chaplain and as a university chaplain. Presently he is a minister, a scout master, and a tutor in an after school program. He was a history major in college and is interested in African American studies. He enjoys working with young people and feels that his presence can make a difference in their lives; particularly the children that need a little extra help or care. He is interested in helping children establish goals for themselves and actually helping children realize their potential. He stated that the presence of a black male in a predominantly southern black elementary school is rare.

Particularly in a predominantly black elementary school, the presence of a black male in a position of authority does have some impact on their lives. The schools can not meet all the needs. In many instances we are

playing catch-up ball. And in many cases we're too late. But I refuse to believe that even the lateness of the hour can't have some impact.

Participant Two's early reading habits were influenced primarily by his mother. She encouraged him to read and she read to him as well. He spent a greater part of his childhood reading books. The traditional folk and fairy tales, including Uncle Remus and Aesop's Fables, were his early reading materials. Storytelling was an important part of his literary background. The majority of the stories, whether written or oral, conveyed a message to the reader regarding values or morals. "There was more behind the story- it was a way of teaching morals and ethics and things of that nature." Though he still enjoys reading for pleasure, the majority of his books are non-fiction.

Occasionally I'll pick up some fiction. One particular series that I really like and has had an impact on me is J.R. Tolkein's book, Lord of the Rings. That's a very powerful series. But I pretty well can go the whole realm from poetry to philosophy.

As a minister, Participant Two uses stories and storytelling as part of his work. Stories are used to convey messages about right and wrong to people. Though he considers Bible stories to be important in that they teach young people the importance of interacting with others in a fair manner, these stories are not reinforced in our secular world. The schools do not place an emphasis on the religious

structure that may be present in the home. For this reason, the morals taught in church may seem isolated and often forgotten.

Participant Two believed that literature for young children has changed considerably in the last twenty years.

For one thing, from an ethnic point of view, you see more children from minority backgrounds involved in the stories and also I would say many of ethnic writers are writing the stories, writing from their point of view which is from a different background. When I was coming up you had a whole lot of stories from the majority culture.

When asked whether or not stories about African Americans should be written by African American authors, Participant Two responded by saying that there was a distinction that needed to be made between someone writing about a particular culture from an observer perspective versus someone writing from a participant perspective. When comparing the two vantage points one would find similarities in the stories, but there also would be some subtle differences.

Participant Two felt that children should be exposed to rich and varied selection of literature. He believed that story is one means of introducing and explaining heritage and cultural traditions.

There is a need for us to have an appreciation of our roots. A person without knowledge of himself is like a tree with no roots. We need to understand the background to our heritage and culture. In many cases

this transcends the American experience. Even though initially everyone may not have come from African or around the islands, we need to take that into consideration and have an understanding and appreciation of the mother culture. This needs to be balanced against the American experience that we are more familiar with in so much that the African American culture in many ways is a little different than the traditional African culture.

Participant Two agreed that the literature for young children has changed. Today's literature is "more confrontational, more enhancing of one's self." It encourages the development of "self-esteem and knowing who you are -no longer feeling ashamed of being black." Though books that portray African Americans positively and realistically are more readily available than in years past, many teachers resist using them in the classrooms. Participant Two feels that this happens because people only use materials or ideas that they are personally comfortable with. The ideas in many of the recent books about African Americans could cause some people discomfort because they discuss unpleasant topics such as racism and discrimination. Teachers do not use these materials because they are uncomfortable with the topics and are unwilling to share their discomfort with their students. "I don't think that there are that many teachers that want to be that vulnerable. They want to be in control and in charge."

We discussed the fact that many of the multicultural books are used for thematic units and are not really part of

the child's library. Participant Two finds the idea of Black History Month patronizing.

I remember when it used to be Black History Week [laughter]. Yes, we have extended it into a month and we tend to know more about the contributions of African Americans on a larger scale yet with the emphasis only on a month and many of our textbooks not really integrating those contributions in the total telling of the story of the African American experience, one tends to feel that it is somewhat patronizing as a Native American would probably say also.

Literature depicting minority cultures and characters are often presented in isolation during a particular week or month in the school year. Oftentimes teachers do not carefully evaluate the materials, rather they select them based on the colors of the characters instead of the content of the poetry or prose. Though the intentions may be good, the result is not positive for the children reading or listening to these stories. Davis (1972) suggested that children may develop negative attitudes towards reading if they are exposed to books that portray their cultural group in a stereotyped manner.

Participant Two pointed out that a flaw in some of the materials published about African Americans was the tendency to depict the characters as perfect and saint-like.

I think we have a tendency to show only the good side of things The tendency on the part of some of the black literature and using black characters, for young children, we tend to shield them from the not so good or not so prosperous aspect of someone's life. We portray them as being a paragon of virtue. We need to see a

person's struggle; to see that they made some poor choices. A child will identify with that more because they will say that that person is like me.

Participant Two emphasized that we need a more balanced presentation of a character's struggle in life. Children need to see part of themselves in the characters. If the story character always wins or is rewarded, then the child may not connect his/her life to that of the character in the story.

Biographies are very popular among teachers during Black History Month because they are available and fairly safe to use in a classroom. Biographies tend to be factual accounts of a person's life. Again, Participant Two stressed the importance of the biographer, his/her research skills, and the honesty and authenticity of the story itself.

According to the participant, the literature during the seventies portrayed African Americans as exceptional individuals. "They were divorced from black life and were stereotypical of a white middle class society." The character created was a response to some of the discriminating characteristics depicted in previous decades. He sees this as the result of the pendulum swing, and that it was merely a reaction to the negative portrayal of African Americans in the earlier literature. The African American created in the seventies was a hard worker, and an example of good thoughts and deeds. He/She was sort of the model

American. Writers could not stray too far from the white, majority culture or else they would not have been published. Therefore some compromises were made by authors so that their materials would be published.

This idea supported the research Rudine Sims Bishop (1982) has conducted in the area of African American literature for children. She described these books as the "culturally conscious" fiction.

Participant Two believed that there are some excellent books portraying the African American culture but you have to search for them. These books are not found in the libraries very often. I pointed out in our conversation that multiple copies of the books selected for this study were not found in the local bookstores. It is a problem of availability. "There are some goods one out there. You just have to search for them. It is my contention that there are white children that need to read those black stories." Participant Two believed that children should be exposed to a variety of literature, not just the type that reflects their own socio-economic class, race, or culture. "What's good for the goose is good for the gander."

When asked about the kinds of books that are appropriate for young children, Participant Two believed that "black and white children are not developing their imaginations." He felt that fantasy and make-believe are important to childhood.

Everything is almost becoming too factual. I know the stories that I loved coming up were stories of make-believe. They took you far away to far away places. Again, balance is necessary. You don't need too much of that. You need reality. But I think that sometimes you need a release from the grueling aspects of reality. And I think children in minority settings and communities are forced to grow up earlier and many times relinquish their childhood.

Participant Two believed that fantasy allowed the mind to think and dream and this is important for children to learn. Through appropriate literary models children learn to articulate fantasy and create their own stories. The first interview ended with instructions regarding the book evaluations. A second interview was scheduled two weeks later.

Participant Two's overall reactions to the books was very positive. "It is good to see that there were attempts being made to portray themes or things that black children would be interested in." He felt that these particular books were appropriate for all young children, not just African American children. He provided a critic of each book individually.

Three Wishes by Lucille Clifton was ranked a four on a scale of 1 to 5 with a 5 = strongly like and 1 = strongly dislike. Participant Two liked this story because it dealt with make-believe. He stated that "the art style was sort of pastels which gave the book a dream-like quality."

Though it was not explicitly stated, it was probably a single parent family and lower socioeconomic status. The father was not mentioned at all.

He did not have a problem with the use of dialect. He felt that all children, regardless of their backgrounds, will use a dialect during informal situations like home. "I think it is realistic and that would probably be the thing that would cause me to believe that it was a lower income family. Not that that is stereotypical of low income families." He continues, "Black children speak black dialect. Even my children do. There's a slang that everyone talks." Participant Two believed that this was an appropriate book for the classroom and that it should be read as written with the dialect.

Participant Two felt that the book, Aunt Flossie's Hats (and Crab Cakes Later , was a positive portrayal of an African American family. He ranked the book a 5. He felt that it reflected an understanding of the African American culture in that the story revolved around the relationships of the younger generation with the elder generation. Many African Americans recognize the importance of the extended family. The girls in the story had a close and personal relationship with their Aunt Flossie. C.M. Anelli (1978) emphasized the importance of family and community in African American literature. She stated that it was an essential

element in literature for children. Participant Two concurred with Anelli. He stated:

Aunt Flossie was a great storyteller. There was a story surrounding each hat and I think that is something that is indicative of the black experience. This reflects the traditional African culture and the art of storytelling. That is something that needs to be recaptured in all cultures. Too often we get away from storytelling.

Participant Two thought the illustrations were excellent because they were so realistic. They pictured the characters as individuals rather than a stereotyped version of an African American. "I liked the illustrations. They were superb. This is Baltimore." He could not find anything that he would change in the story. He thought the text and illustrations complimented each other and he liked the fact that some regional traditions, such as living in Maryland and eating crab cakes , were introduced to the reader.

[The story] introduces them to a different environment. This [referring to the city that we live in] is not considered a big city - rather it is a small rural city. And this book is about a larger city experience. But at the same time it is not overburdensome. The thing here too is the local customs are introduced, like eating crab cakes.

Participant Two did not particularly like the book of poetry, Night on Neighborhood Street, by Eloise Greenfield. Out of the five books this was his least favorite and he ranked it a 3 on the evaluation sheet. His objections were

mainly with the style of the poetry rather than the contents of the poems.

I liked this one the least. I don't know if I can put it into words why I didn't like it. This was like Mother Goose, an urbanized Mother Goose. I gave it a three. I had mixed emotions about it.

He did not think he would use the book in a classroom or at home with his own children. He thought the book raised more questions about life than providing insights into life for a young child. "I felt forced to read this. It lost my interest. It didn't do anything for me."

Tar Beach, by Faith Ringgold, was ranked a 5 by this participant. He felt that it was "creative and definitely speaks to the inner city-neighborhood and experiences of a low income family." He explained that Tar Beach showed how one could use their imaginations to overcome societal problems of poverty, unemployment, and discrimination. The unpleasantness of reality was temporarily alleviated through the imaginative process. Though he had grown up in New York City, he never heard the rooftops referred to as "tar beaches". He felt that the parents in the story were also very creative in their ability to deal with reality. He liked the fact that they turned a potentially negative situation into a very positive one such as having a picnic on the rooftop.

This participant liked the art work in the story. He likened the illustrations to a blending of impressionism and Ancient Egyptian art. "The main character could have been a hieroglyphic." The art style was child-like. The dimensions of the characters and their features were perceived from a child's perspective. "The pigmentation, the color is similar to the art style that children would draw. The pictures unfold, lending to the telling of the story - which is very good."

I asked the participant if the word "colored" offended him. We went back to the story and looked at the context in which the term was used. He responded by saying,

No, it doesn't bother me because you have that term was acceptable back then. Also when you have a mixing of more than one heritage as is the case with being Indian and Black, than the word "colored" is oftentimes used. It is a term that young blacks are not using.

Participant Two gave the book, Finding the Greenstone, by Alice Walker a 5 also. He felt that this was the most imaginative story of the group because the setting was a "special place - a Shangri-La". The book taught about values and morals. The author addressed interpersonal relationships and the need to respect one another- something children need to be taught and shown how to do. Generational problems between the parents and child were discussed openly and honestly. Johnny was ashamed of his father's blue collar job. The mother is a physician. The participant commented:

"It can be very difficult for black men to get jobs. In this case the mother was the highly skilled one. It also shows you that regardless of what position they had they were committed to one another". Participant Two liked this story because it addressed issues of right and wrong in a way that children can understand. The relationships between Johnny and his father and Johnny and his sister were very realistic. Children would be able to identify with the feelings portrayed in this story. It provided a positive lesson for the reader.

In concluding the interview, Participant Two summarized his feelings for all of the books, except Night on Neighborhood Street, by stating that they belonged in the school's media center. He felt that the stories "captured the black experience- the things in major cities and within the culture." When asked, "If the characters were changed from African Americans to whites, would the story remain the same?" he responded, "No". He indicated other things in the story would have to be changed to tell the stories from a white perspective. He felt that the books were a positive and realistic portrayal of the African American experience in this country. He indicated a need for more of these types of books and the need for accessibility to the books. If the books are not being shared with children then they are of no value. Children can not learn about themselves and one

another without the resources. Participant Two felt that four of the five books used in this study provided good literary choices for young children. He also believed that the discomfort of white teachers in using these materials prevented children being exposed to some of the stories that reflected their culture and heritage. Contemporary literature that realistically portrays African Americans not as a group, but rather as individuals, is essential for all children. Children learn about themselves and others through books. By providing a well balanced selection of materials that represent many cultures, not just black or white, children will be better prepared to face the world in which they live. Children's literature has a captive audience. It is the responsibility of the authors and illustrators to convey their message. This message should teach children about themselves and others and how they can live harmoniously in this world with one another.

Participant Three

Participant Three was a female African American approximately thirty-six years old. She has taught elementary school for fifteen years. She is the mother of two children who are teenagers. Presently she is completing a master's degree in educational administration. She has been a colleague of mine for three years.

Participant Three remembered reading the traditional folk and fairy tales as a young child. They were readily available in the encyclopedia and library collections. When asked about her favorite stories she remarked that nothing stuck out in her mind as exceptional. She remembered vividly learning how to read with the traditional basal stories with the characters Dick, Jane, and Sally. She commented that the focus was not on the content but rather on the process of learning how to read. I asked her specifically if she was curious as a child as to why there were no African American characters in the stories she read. She responded:

As a child I did not think it was odd. But now, looking back on it I think there is more of an awareness that has made people think more about it. Going through the sixties and the Black is Beautiful Movement was trying to make kids feel good about themselves.

Children need to relate to the characters in the stories and few people can really identify with Dick, Jane, and Sally. They are not "real" for most children.

The families we deal with on a regular basis are not a mother who stays at home while the father goes off to work. The problems suffered by Dick, Jane, and Sally are trivial and trite. The problems of the children in this neighborhood can be frightening. There are fires, gun shots, nights without dinner. This is their reality. How can they identify with so many of the characters in the books?

Participant Three cautioned that she did not think all books had to deal strictly with reality but the characters

had to in some way speak to the reader. Somehow the reader must be able to experience the story for it to have any meaning for him/her.

White people, according to Participant Three, have many false ideas about African Americans and their culture. These ideas can be addressed indirectly through children's literature. She does not believe that African Americans have been accurately portrayed in the literature until very recently.

I think you see it more and more in black bookstores. The books I have seen that were really cute were in black bookstores. And they (meaning teachers, parents, media specialists) don't buy from those stores. They have darling things. So really the ones we are seeing may come from a white author so of course it is not going to be portrayed accurately.

Participant Three believed that there are few books about African American children in the school because of limited availability from bookstores. It is very difficult to find the books. She cautioned that some teachers used certain books only because they had black characters.

Controversial and difficult subjects such as prejudice and racial discrimination must be handled very carefully according to Participant Three.

I think kids learn their racial stuff and prejudice from adults and there is really no reason to point it out in a book. I don't think that book would help if you had a problem I think you might open a can of worms that you don't have to.

Participant Three felt that morals should be taught through children's literature though she believed that animation may be a better means of transmitting messages to students rather than the usual narrative style.

She felt that children must be able to identify themselves in literature. She stated:

I'm working on trying to build up black books for them to see. You want them to see themselves in the books. I think that builds a sense of importance. You have to stick with them. I went to a workshop and they read a story about a girls and her grandmother making a patchwork quilt. Something that's real like that. A lot of little black kids will see their grandmothers, they still do, making the quilts. Realistic fiction, I guess. Things that really happen in their lives.

She believed that stories are based generally on life experiences and therefore the more authentic literature about African Americans would be written by African Americans unless a white author happened to live in the community and told a story from that perspective.

She felt that the literature for children has changed since her childhood. She considered this a change for the better. The illustrations were more realistic and the stories were more exciting for children. Referring to the book, Talking Eggs, she said that this book was based on a fairy tale. "The concept is the same, just the characters are different."

Participant Three is the mother of two teenagers, one daughter and one son. She remembered her son watching

television when he was about three and a half or four years old. He saw a commercial for UNICEF and remarked: "Look at that black boy. He's too dumb to get the flies off. That boy is stupid." She was horrified to hear her child speaking in such cruel and harsh tones. As she looked back on that incident she realized that oftentimes blacks were portrayed as the ignorant character or buffoon in television programs. Her son did not see himself as a black person like the little boy in the UNICEF commercial begging for food. He did not see any similarities between himself and that child or the people that were portrayed as foolish on television. Participant Three felt that we need more literature that gave children a better sense of themselves and how they fit into the world.

After we formally ended the interview Participant Three informally looked at the books. Her comments were positive. She remarked that she liked what she saw and was looking forward to reading each of the books.

Collectively, Participant Three liked the books. She particularly enjoyed Aunt Flossie's Hats (and Crab Cakes Later), Finding The Greenstone, and Tar Beach. She rated each of these books with a score of 5 which = strongly likes. She said they were so realistic and interesting that she shared them with her students.

They were so realistic and so exciting I read them to the class. They were really attentive and

listening. I think the illustrations helped as well. They're just beautiful.

I asked this participant if any of her students commented on the fact that all the characters in the books were African Americans. She replied, "No, not one."

Participant Three did say that the children were able to identify a lesson in the story, Finding The Greenstone. The students were also very interested in the stories told by Aunt Flossie in the book Aunt Flossie's Hats (and Crab Cakes Later). They seemed to relate well to the idea of storytelling because just recently an African American storyteller had been to their school. Participant Three viewed this particular book as an excellent teaching model. "It was perfect because we are doing adjectives and we're trying to get them to put adjectives in their stories."

Participant Three felt that collectively the books contained a rich and varied vocabulary. She believed that characters were realistic enough so that her students could relate to them. These stories were about real people. During free classroom reading time, the children wanted to read these particular books.

Three Wishes raised some issues for this participant. Though she liked the story, she did not like the fact that it was written in a dialect. She rated the story a 4, with a score of 5 = strongly likes. Her major objection was with the language.

The very things I'm working with my children like, "me and so and so go" and I have the hardest time teaching phonics because they never get the ending sound. I guess this [referring to the book, Three Wishes] would be a way to teach that though. If you are reading this book you really have to know how to read it to make that point. I don't know, I just have a problem with the overall stereotype that black people talk like this. And I think this book would reinforce that idea, especially with younger children. Because they would say, "Well, that's what they say in that book, me and my friend, and so and so." Whereas an older child maybe could learn the correct way of saying it. I think, like I said, that's my bias and I would be challenged by this author and many of other professional people that they need to hear stories in the way that they talk. But we are trying to correct that.

Participant Three, as did the practice participant, objected to the use of dialect in the story. They looked at the use of dialect from a teacher's perspective and the fact that schools emphasize the use of standard English. Both pointed out that all dialects are not the same, and speaking in a dialect is not universal to African Americans. Participant Three felt that traditional literature, such as the Uncle Remus stories, used language other than standard English and that was acceptable because it marked a particular point in history. However, today school age children are expected to use correct English.

I gave it [Three Wishes] a four anyway because after I read it it was really a good story. But, like I said, that's my bias [referring to the fact that she did not like the use of dialect]. I think once something is put on the T.V. or the radio or published then it's accepted as right.

Participant Three preferred contemporary fiction for young children be written in standard English. Though she liked the morals and values emphasized in the book, Three Wishes, she would not use the book with her students. Both this participant and the practice participant felt that the book might be used for instructional purposes by having the students rewrite the story using correct grammar.

This participant believed that authors are responsible for presenting a realistic story to children. She did not object to the use of the word "colored" in the story, Tar Beach, because it was a term used historically.

I have no problem with that—that's real. I think kids need to have a realistic picture because the ones that have a big big problem get out here and think I'm not going to be treated with any prejudice.

Though the word "colored" did not bother her, she did not like the fact that the author made a reference to the family eating fried chicken, watermelon, and drinking beer while playing cards on the rooftop. In this particular socioeconomic class this meal and activity was probably realistic but the participant believed that it reinforced a very common stereotype that the majority culture seems to have about African Americans. "I don't like stereotypes and that's a pretty standard one. That's the one you hear jokes about."

Participant Three felt that the story was realistic and the children at this particular school could identify with the main character. Though they do not have a "tar beach" they do have dreams and hopes of a good life.

She ranked Night on Neighborhood Street a 4. She felt that in general that the poetry was good even though she did not consider herself a "poetry person". The poetry reminded her of Langston Hughes' poetry that was popular during her young adulthood. Knowing how to read this poetry was important to this participant.

I think you really have to know how to read it to keep the interest of the children. This is the type of poetry I heard and was spellbound like the storytellers. They could really tell this and you would sit up and listen. So it is a matter of knowing how to read it and in a lot of instances getting the right dialect.

This participant felt that the children could relate to the contents and illustrations in the book Night on Neighborhood Street. The illustrations were very realistic and portrayed characters that the children recognized as someone who looks like themselves.

Her favorite characters were those portrayed in Aunt Flossie's Hats (and Crab Cakes Later). She particularly liked the strong emphasis on the family and the importance of the extended family. "That's how it is with black families. You have an Aunt Flossie or great grandma or someone like

that." They are generally active in the family and play an influential role in children's lives.

Participant Three thought the characters in these books were a positive portrayal of the lives of African Americans. She felt that the stories were realistic and that the characters were credible. When asked, "What would you like to change in any of these stories?" she replied, "Only the use of dialect in Three Wishes and the part about fried chicken in Tar Beach."

She felt that these books were important for all children, not just one race. Availability of the books was a concern mentioned by the participant. Because they were relatively expensive and not readily available in libraries and media centers, many children would not have an opportunity to read these books. It has been her experience that most of the books about African Americans were only available in "black bookstores".

One final comment made by this participant was the idea that teachers from the majority culture need these books. By using these materials teachers can see that not all African American children are poor, inner city children who are miserable. "These books tell a different story." Maybe by seeing the characters in books as individuals teachers will begin to see their African American students as individuals as well.

Participant Four

Participant Four was a thirty-eight year old African American woman and mother of one child. She and her husband own a home within walking distance of the school which their daughter attends. The participant was raised in a rural community approximately thirty miles from this city. She was at one time a school teacher but decided to stay home and raise her daughter. She is a volunteer in her daughter's classroom and in the school.

Participant Four described herself as an avid reader, particularly during her childhood. She acquired her love for reading from her father. Though he was drafted into the service in seventh grade, he is a self-educated man. He instilled in his daughter a love for learning and literature. She would sit in her closet for hours at a time devouring the classics until someone interrupted her. She recalled:

I would just read anything. I just enjoy stories period. During my childhood years, there were few black books or books that portrayed blacks. You had books like Souder that had more to do with slavery and sharecropper type thing. Maybe you could get a book that had to do with black inventors or scientists or whatever. But as far as actual literature and stories, you did not have many. If you did, it was more like the face was painted black and the story was white like the Sambo book.

As a young child she read the fairy tales, "which were white, middle class stories." She remembered that many books which were written from a white perspective contained derogatory language and stereotypes about African Americans. However, as a child these books did not present a conflict for her. "I just enjoyed the books for the sake of the story."

Though her grandparents would tell ghost stories, she did not recall a lot of oral storytelling in her home. "We didn't have the kind of stories you pass down." Other than ghost stories she remembered reading and listening to the traditional folk and fairy tales. Participant Four did not recall any specific stories from her childhood. Though as a college student she remembered buying a particular book at a sale.

I do remember picking up some books about blacks. That was during the era of blacks [being] interested in their blackness or whatever. I remember going downtown to the bookstore sale that dealt with the black or African American. I remember picking up a book, and I can't tell you the name of it. I didn't get into reading all about Malcolm X. They were buying those books and having us find out about that but I wasn't into that. I just enjoyed a good book, based on the story. I got a book that I purchased, this is before I was married, for the day that I had a daughter. It is a paperback that I have up in the attic waiting for her [referring to her daughter] to read It's about a little black girl. It was rare that you saw a paperback of that nature with a little black girl on the cover This was a little girl and she looked like she might have been in fifth grade Her hair was plaited. She was a real little black girl. You understand, it was like if I took a picture of my daughter and put it on a book. That versus doing a

drawing or such. It seems to me that for a long time that books were done in the watercolor type thing.

This participant stated that she is an American citizen with African ancestry. She did not believe that all books needed to tie into the African experience. The books about the majority culture did not trace their ancestry in everyday stories so the same should hold true for stories about African Americans. Contemporary children's literature should reflect the everyday experiences of children, according to this participant. The books should tell stories that appeal to children based on their daily experience.

I think they need a book that they can relate to from an everyday standpoint. I think they need to see more books about black families. I think that it is the same type of things that we already have out there with the white kids and white stories. We just need to look at it from the black home environment.

Participant Four believed that family values influence to a degree how people interpret stories. She was not raised to segregate herself from the majority culture and she therefore did not have a problem with stories that are written about the majority culture.

There were black families in our community that were somewhat segregated. But that's not the way mother and daddy raised us. They did not raise us to feel that we could not relate. If you've been raised to feel that you could not relate, then you didn't relate. Yes, there were color differences, and there were cultural differences, but that didn't mean you couldn't relate.

She mentioned that some stories about African Americans were really a white story with the characters having darkened faces. She felt this characterized many of the books published during the sixties and seventies as a result of the Civil Rights Movement. In some ways it was good to see African Americans in literature, however sometimes the stories were not very believable. This idea was discussed by Rudine Sims Bishop in 1982. She stated that the "melting pot" books only recognized the physical differences among the characters. When I asked the participant to elaborate further, she remarked that "sometimes the characters were too good to be true."

Concepts such as prejudice and discrimination needed to be addressed in children's literature because it is part of reality according to this participant. She felt that authors were responsible for portraying these issues as wrong and unfair.

I think it can be an avenue to helping them, children of all races, to see that it is harmful. It would be good to have books that dealt with that and show them that is harmful.

According to Participant Four, children develop attitudes at home. If families teach prejudice against groups of people because of their race, or sex, or culture, then a child will also develop these attitudes. She illustrated her point by saying that coming to my home would

be an awkward experience for herself and her daughter if they disliked people based on their color. Though her daughter was not raised in a household that discriminates against people who are different from themselves, she would not object to a book that discussed it simply because it does and continues to exist. Participant Four did not think you could shelter children from some of the injustices in this world. She felt that we needed more books depicting many races and cultures, not just the black and white experiences.

I think in this society we should not eliminate books that speak to black children and those that speak to white children. I think you need to have enough that speak to both. You need a mixture in there. I also think it should not be based on black and white. I think it should be based on all races. We should not be writing books about only two cultures. We should be writing books that depict the multicultural [world] that we are living in.

Most children, according to this participant, are not exposed to people who are different from themselves. Neighborhoods in this city are segregated by income and race. Children tend to live, play, and go to school with others just like themselves. They do not have opportunities to learn about other cultures if we do not introduce a variety of literary experiences. She wished that her particular neighborhood had a variety of racial and ethnic groups in order that her family would get to know and understand other people. After looking over the titles of the books for this

study and explaining the rating scale we concluded this initial interview.

The second interview focused specifically on the books being reviewed. Her general impressions were, as the other participants, favorable. Specific opinions about individual titles were in some cases different from the other three perspectives.

In the book, Three Wishes, she felt that the environment was realistic and something that the children in this particular school could relate to. She felt that the illustration of the mother's afro hairstyle was a little outdated, however, it is a style that seemed to be coming back today. The use of dialect did not bother her because some children do use a dialect so the story would speak directly to them. Like the minister, she felt that how one spoke at home tended to be different than how one spoke at work or at school. She believed that children were able to discern the difference. She rated the story with a score of 5 =strongly likes.

Aunt Flossie's Hats (and Crab Cakes Later) was also "real" for this participant. It brought back very fond memories of her aunt and the times she would spend at her house listening to stories and playing with her belongings. Of the five books, this one was her favorite because it was a very positive portrayal of African Americans. It was a book her daughter could relate to. There was a two parent family

and then the close relationship with the extended family member. She liked the illustrations and felt that they were beautifully done. This book was also rated 5 =strongly likes.

She also liked the illustrations in the book, Night on Neighborhood Street.

The pictures are real life. If you look at this picture here "New Baby Poem I" and "New Baby Poem II" my baby looked like that. [She takes baby pictures of her daughter out of her wallet]. See, it is what she looked like.

She felt, unlike the other three participants, that the children could really relate to the poetry in this book. Even though she personally does not enjoy poetry anymore, she felt that the children could relate to the illustrations.

When they are told to pick a book on poetry or something they have a book [referring to Night on Neighborhood Street] that they can relate to instead of having one that is totally white.

She also thought that children could relate to the poetry.

They can relate to being on the floor playing games. They can relate. The pictures are real life. The pictures are real black people. In times past, they didn't depict the various skin colors, the changes that black people have. They were all the deep dark skin color and afros. And some say that went from that to making them look white so they just painted their faces with the hair that was white looking. These [referring to the pictures in the book] are reality. This looks like my little girl's hair when I part it in the middle. This is like my baby's head when she was born. Do you

see why I said it looks like my baby? That's the reality. Those are real.

Her daughters' baby pictures really did look like the picture of the child in the book of poetry. This participant said that the students in this school will have younger brother and sisters who resembled the illustrations. She cautioned however, that the poems themselves would not be as effective for young children. The illustrations with the poems will give children a sense of identity. Participant Four indicated that she strongly liked Night on Neighborhood Street by rating it a 5 on the scale.

Interestingly, she did not particularly like the book, Tar Beach, and rated it a 2. The title of the story was not appealing and reminded her of the phrase "tar baby"; a term used by whites when referring to African American children. She did not believe that children in the school community could relate to going to the rooftop of a building and having a picnic. Participant Four strongly objected to the illustrations in the story.

I don't like the illustrations. They are too much like what is already out there. We need more reality. If the illustrations would have been better it could have been a cute story.

I asked her to explain specifically why she disliked the illustrations and she responded:

The illustrations are lousy. For instance here, "and BeBe my baby brother, lying real still on the mattress" – this boy here looks like he's dead. It doesn't really look real. She's not really flying. She is just there on the paper. She is just there on the page. They're flat. I just can't relate to that. I think children relate more to things that are real.

Children who have families that live in New York City may be able to relate to the story only because they have heard their families tell stories about the city according to this participant.

I asked this participant if the word "colored" offended her and she replied, " No, because it's reality, it's what people said and still say." She explained:

I still know a lot of white people from homes as well as from my own black community that still use the word colored. It's from the older generation.

Though we discussed the idea that this was a quilt story, this participant really felt strongly that the illustrations detracted from the story. The idea that the father was discriminated against because of his color was an appropriate concept to introduce to young children according to this participant. She saw this as a much broader problem, a multiracial problem, that involved more cultures than just blacks and whites. Literature is one means of addressing this problem and helping children recognize that discrimination is wrong.

This participant did not find fault with the issue of fried chicken, watermelon, and beer. She did say it was a very common stereotype that often held by the majority culture; however, it did not bother her. She believed that she did not find this offensive because she was raised to believe that

. . . if you allow someone to intimidate you or allow someone to attack you, if you allow yourself to accept their racial slurs and you allow that to anger you you're more apt to hear them over and over again. But if you were raised to look upon them as ignorant then whatever came out of their mouth didn't upset us that much because we knew they were ignorant.

Though Participant Four attended an all black school through the eighth grade, she was exposed to white people through community activities such as the Homemakers Extension Service and 4-H Club. She learned at an early age that people may come from different backgrounds but you can still relate and interact with them. She realized that people are individuals and you can not make generalizations based on race or creed.

Participant Four recommended that Tar Beach be placed in a library or media center and children could select it if it met their particular needs. She said that some children who spend time with relatives in New York might enjoy reading the book.

Let it appeal to whomever it appeals to. But it is not a good book to teach with because our society has a

tendency to be prejudice of all kinds. Rather than trying to rid itself of some of the prejudices it seems to be fostering them more- again. And they [children] have enough around them everyday to insight them to become bitter and angry and upset so why would we want to give them something like that. They have enough of that.

Participant Four enjoyed the book, Finding the Greenstone, and rated it a 5 = strongly likes. She liked it because "it is an avenue to teach about right and wrong behaviors." Values and morals are important to this person and she believed that children must be taught what is right and what is wrong. The illustrations in the book were very realistic and she believed that individuals can actually find themselves on some of the pages.

We discussed the section of the book where the boy admitted that he was ashamed that his father was a laborer. This participant felt that this emotion was portrayed realistically because many children often at this age feel ashamed of their families because they are not rich.

Though the story itself was somewhat of a fantasy, this participant felt that the characters were very realistic. The main character had a personality. "The characters are fine. They look like real people. They act like real people." She enjoys these types of stories because they have a moral.

This story was long and the participant felt as though it would be more appropriate for first, second, and third

graders, rather than children ages three to five. Though she believed that her daughter would be able to sit and listen to the story, she did not think many young children would enjoy nor understand the story.

Participant Four felt that four out of the five books, with the exception of Tar Beach, were very appropriate for all children. Though issues of prejudice and discrimination were referred to in some of the stories, it was done in an appropriate manner. She felt that four of the books portrayed African Americans realistically and promoted an understanding of racial and cultural differences. These books would help a child recognize their commonalties with people who looked differently from themselves. This participant would like to see more books like Night on Neighborhood Street, Three Wishes, Aunt Flossie's Hats (and Crab Cakes Later), and Finding the Greenstone. These books realistically portrayed African Americans in a positive manner. The illustrations looked real and children would be able to find themselves or members of their families in these books. This participant felt that these four books promoted a positive self-image for African American children. These books were different from the ones she had as a child. "They are more interesting, more believable, and more realistic."

These interviews revealed to the researcher insight into how each individual's personal history and childhood experiences influenced their criteria for selecting quality

children's literature. Each person's perspective was in part shaped by their experiences with literature. It was interesting to note that all four participants enjoyed reading as young children and were encouraged at home to read. Though only the grandparent could recall the specific stories of childhood and how they related to his social development during later years, all four appeared influenced to some degree by the traditional literature. This perhaps was why all felt that values and morals should be part of contemporary children's literature.

The data collected from these interviews has been categorized into four themes. These themes revealed some common threads of conscience and will be discussed in Chapter Five. Additionally, the criteria the participants used for evaluating children's literature will be presented in the recommendations section of Chapter Five.

Summary of Participants' Responses

<u>Title</u>	<u>Participant 1</u>	<u>Participant 2</u>	<u>Participant 3</u>	<u>Participant 4</u>
<u>Three Wishes</u>	Traditions and superstitions explained realistic relationships, teaches values. <u>rating on likert: 5</u>	Dream-like quality. Dialect was appropriate for the story. <u>rating on likert: 4</u>	Enjoyed the story but did not like the use of the dialect. <u>rating on likert: 4</u>	Use of the dialect was appropriate for the story. <u>rating on likert: 5</u>
<u>Aunt Flossie's Hats (and Crab Cakes Later)</u>	Strong emphasis on oral storytelling brings back memories. <u>rating on Likert-type: 5</u>	Positive portrayal of African American family emphasized extended family. <u>rating on likert: 5</u>	Students related to storytelling. <u>rating on likert: 5</u>	Generated memories of her own relationships with family. Liked two parent family. <u>rating on likert: 5</u>
<u>Night on Neighborhood Street</u>	Poetry "soft", illustrations beautiful. <u>rating on likert: 3</u>	Did not care for the style of poetry. <u>rating on likert: 3</u>	Liked the poetry, illustrations very realistic. <u>rating on likert: 4</u>	Illustrations look real. <u>rating on likert: 5</u>
<u>Tar Beach</u>	Realistic and honest. The idea of unions needed to be expanded so children realized minorities started their own. <u>rating on likert: 5</u>	Creative and realistic. Emphasized the positive, artwork excellent. <u>rating on likert: 5</u>	Liked the book. Only objection was the reference to eating fried chicken and watermelon. <u>rating on likert: 5</u>	Disliked illustrations and title. <u>rating on likert: 2</u>
<u>Finding the Greenstone</u>	A book for a lifetime. Needs more emphasis on the positive aspects of being a blue-collar worker. <u>rating on likert: 5</u>	Emphasized values and morals. Honestly deals with a child's emotions. <u>rating on likert: 5</u>	Emphasized the difference between right and wrong. <u>rating on likert: 5</u>	Emphasized morals and values. <u>rating on likert: 5</u>

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to gain insights into the attitudes of a select group of African Americans towards the portrayal of African Americans in contemporary children's literature. Five children's books, that were published in 1991 or 1992 were selected. These books contained an African American protagonist as well as secondary characters. The authors were African Americans and two of the illustrators were African Americans. Four texts represented realistic fiction and the other book was a collection of poetry. These books met the most important criteria for evaluating literature, they told a good story. The participants evaluated each book using a Likert-type scale. This chapter discusses the four themes that identified in the interviews, the criteria the participants collectively considered important for evaluating children's literature, and recommendations for publishers, teachers, and media specialists involved in the selection of literature for young children.

The participants in this study represented various age, gender, and socio-economic backgrounds. Because parents, teachers, grandparents, and ministers have contact with young children, they have the ability to influence the types of

reading materials the child sees. I asked a person from each of these categories to participate in the study. Though they did not know one another personally, they were related to one another because of their ties to a small, predominantly African American elementary school in our city. Each person was interviewed by the researcher two times. The first interview was designed to gain understanding and insight into the importance books played in each person's life and to understand their criteria for evaluating children's literature. The researcher wanted to understand each person's perspective or window for evaluating literature and examine the factors that influenced the development of these criteria. The second interview served as the application phase of the inquiry. The participants were able to discuss the books and comment on specific issues in contemporary children's literature about African Americans. Their attitudes towards the books were discussed specifically. General recommendations for selecting children's literature were discussed. The information collected in the interviews was organized around four themes or issues in children's literature. The first part of this chapter will discuss these themes and cite examples from the interviews to support the ideas. The second part of this chapter will discuss the recommendations the participants suggested for writing, selecting, and evaluating contemporary children's literature with African American characters.

Theme One: Life Experiences as African Americans

All of the participants remembered traditional literature as part of their early childhood experiences. The folk tales and fairy tales, which participant Four described as "white stories", and later the myths and fables were the most frequently read genre of literature. These materials were readily available in the school libraries and in encyclopedias which all of the participants had access to in their schools. Each participant was encouraged by their parents to read. Three of the participants considered their mother as the most influential person in encouraging reading, while the fourth participant cited her father as the most influential person in developing her love for reading. Though each was familiar with the traditional African American tales, like Uncle Remus, no one mentioned these stories as playing an important role in their childhood. One participant mentioned that a story that has meaning for him as an adult was the African folktale, Anansi, The Spider. Fairy tales, myths, legends, and fables were the stories remembered by the participants from their childhood.

The home and school were instrumental in presenting literature to each participant when they were children. These stories were important to them and influenced the criteria they used in evaluating children's literature. All

four participants liked stories that had a moral or taught a lesson. This was because the stories they grew up with emphasized values. States the grandparent:

Stories the I remember growing up well that's easy. Most of the myths and fairy tales from Alice in Wonderland and the Seven Dwarfs, Uncle Remus, Greek myths. I went to school during the days of segregation when most schools were different. They claimed we were getting an inferior education but by and large most of the time the black schools were trying to at least copy if not better the white schools. From that point of view, we covered just about everything that the white or middle class kids covered.

Each participant felt they were exposed to quality literature as children. Though Participant Four could not recall a specific story from her childhood, she remembered, as did the other participants, reading being very important in her house. Her father, though drafted before completing the seventh grade, was a self-educated man through books and life experiences. He instilled in his daughter a love for literature and learning which she has passed down to her daughter.

All of the participants in this study read materials that were written from a white middle class perspective, yet none of them recall thinking as a child that this was odd or unusual. Participant four explained that she was not raised to segregate herself from white people. She had contact with white people in her rural community and therefore did not

expect them to be any different, other than color, from the other people she knew.

The absence of African American characters in literature did not concern the grandparent until his teenage children began complaining that "blacks were being discriminated against in books." They would come to him and show him examples of stereotypes in their books.

The books they had were basically [about] middle class white folks. There were blatant stereotypes in there and there was blatant racism, yes, there was. Well a lot of it they recognized. They have pointed out umpteenth stories that were just plain racist, they would call it. As a matter of fact, that word, they use it so much that I've learned to hate the word.

The teacher, Participant Three, explained her students have complained in the past about the inconsistencies in stories about the majority culture. These stories presented a white middle class perspective .

Even in social studies you talk about families. And they [the textbook] got the nice little white family with a mom and a dad and the kids and they're playing on the lake with the ducks. It doesn't mean anything to them [referring to her students who are mostly African Americans from a lower socioeconomic status].

Each participant felt that there was not much literature with which they could identify with as a child. Because there were not more books about African Americans, the grandparent encouraged his children to read the same books he was exposed to, meaning the traditional literature,

as well as anything else that was available. They all agreed that children's literature had improved dramatically in recent years. Each individual referred to literature as being more "multicultural", writing about children and settings that were different from the majority culture. Today more ethnic groups are represented; the trend is a positive step; however, more books are needed about African Americans in everyday situations.

The trend to have more African Americans in contemporary children's literature was influenced according to these participants by the Civil Rights Movement. All felt that the literature had changed since they were children.

Participant Two: Yes, I would say that it has changed. For one thing from an ethnic point of view you see more children from minority backgrounds involved in stories also. I would say a lot of ethnic writers that are writing the stories are writing from their point of view which is a different background from when I was coming up where you had a lot of stories from the majority culture.

Participant Three feels that African Americans had not been portrayed authentically in children's literature until quite recently. The availability of books is still a problem according to this participant.

The books that I have seen that were really cute were in black bookstores. And they [meaning teachers, librarians, parents] don't buy from those stores. They have darling things. Really the ones we are seeing may come from a white author's perspective so of course its not going to be portrayed accurately.

Nancy Larrick (1965) quantitatively proved this point in her study, "The All-White World of Children's Books". She found that less than one percent of the books published between 1962 and 1964 contained black characters.

The issue of author's orientation has been debated by the experts in children's literature as well as the participants in this study. The teacher and minister felt that a white author may be unable to capture the African American experience in the United States as well as an author from the culture itself. Stated Participant Two:

Okay, I think what happens there is that we have to distinguish an observation from someone outside the culture writing about it as an observer as opposed to someone who writes as a participant inside the culture. I think that if you compared both of them there would be some similarities but also some differences.

It is the differences in the author's personal experiences that contributes to the authenticity of the story. All participants felt that the stories they read as children did not have characters that they could relate to personally. This particular criteria for quality literature was mentioned by all of the participants as being important. Additionally, only the minister cited the fact that we needed more stories that introduced the African culture and traditions in stories for young children. He stated:

I think there is a need for us to have an appreciation of our roots. A person without knowledge of himself is like a tree with no roots. We need to understand the background to our heritage and culture which in many cases transcend the American experience. Even though initially everyone may not have come from Africa or around the islands we need to take that into consideration and have an understanding and appreciation of the mother culture. This needs to be balanced against the American experience that we are more familiar with in so much that the African American culture in many ways is a little different that the traditional African culture. This has to do with Black Americans when they came from outside the American continent, they came from Africa and the Caribbean and so forth. Many cases have to take on a new experience and a mixing and blending of the two in producing something totally different.

The majority of books about African Americans used in the schools are biographies. Teachers tend to rely on these books during Black History Month and then pack them away on the shelves. Participant Four recalled this from her childhood; "maybe you could get a book that had to do with telling you about the inventors, the scientists, that type of thing." Though the situation is improving, stories about African Americans are not used throughout the school year. Participant Two found the concept of Black History Month patronizing.

In some ways its a little patronizing. I remember when it use to be Black History Week. Yes, we have extended it into a month and we tend to know more about the contributions of African Americans on a larger scale yet with the emphasis only on a month and many of our textbooks not really integrating those contributions in the total telling of the story of the American experience, one tends to feel that it is somewhat patronizing as a Native American would probably say also.

Participant Three felt that the African American experience in this country needed to be integrated into our school curriculum. Teaching about the African American culture in isolation lessens its importance in the minds of the students and teachers. Stated Participant Three:

I think it will have to be in the books more. The direction we are heading is getting it into the textbook because of the time restraints. We have so many things to get into the day that we don't have time to set it aside as something extra [referring to the teaching about African Americans]. For one thing, it says it's not that important. And two, you may have time to get to it but you may not. Getting it into these history books, changing these history books and putting the true history in there. We should surely be included because we were there.

All of the participants felt that it was necessary to portray families, from many different ethnic groups, realistically. Stories from a white middle class perspective, do not address the needs of most children. Children recognize the inconsistencies between the characters in these stories and their own lives and the lives of their friends and families. Participant Three believed that only using stories that present one type of situation may create conflicts for children. She stated:

Some of the children feel bad about it you know. We have some kids that stay with grandma and never see their moms. They really can't identify with it [referring to the families shown in textbooks with a mom, dad, and two children.] There are some children

who may not feel good about themselves because they wished they had that situation.

Another issue for these participants was the quality of presentation of African American characters in contemporary children's literature. They did not feel that the characters had to be perfect so as not to offend anyone. They believed that children needed reality. The characters must be three-dimensional, with well defined personalities, for children to identify with them. Participant Two explained:

Well, I think we have a tendency to show only the good sides of things. From the standpoint of biblical stories, the character's attributes were only presented. You didn't find out about their down side until much later. The tendency, not only using black literature, but using black characters period, for young children, we tend to shield them from the not so good or not so prosperous aspect of someone's life. We need to see a person's struggle; to see that they made some poor choices. A child will identify with that more because they will say that person is like me, "I don't always think good thoughts." Even if we select the ones, generally we have a vested interest in selecting characters that show a more balanced presentation of some of their struggles.

This participant felt that the creation of "perfect" characters was a reaction on the part of authors to the stereotypical literature that was used in the past. The characters were exceptional in the fact that they were "divorced from black life."

Participant One stressed the need for authenticity of the culture described in a story. He was insulted by stories

that included a reference to Africa or Africans so that it could qualify as multicultural material.

If you tell me about the African culture and all the kids did is sit around all day and throw coconuts at each other or some kind of game, that doesn't have any redeeming value to me unless it's a game that is in a national type sports-type game. I can see where some would want it because it's black. But just because it's black doesn't make it right . . . I don't think we should pick things based on color. Sometimes we worry so much about what the white man did or is doing or the type books he has, that we find something wrong with them and then we take home a book that's much worse than something that the devil might would have projected on us.

All of the participants in this study believed that it was important for white children to read about the African American experience. If the story is well written and exciting, then all children, regardless of their cultural or ethnic backgrounds, should read it. Reading about others enables the reader to come "backstage" (Goffman, 1959) and learn about another culture. Individuals do not have to look alike to have many things in common. These participants believed that contemporary children's literature should portray African Americans as individuals in a variety of settings and family structures. They stressed the need for balance between make-believe and reality in children's literature in order to develop children's imaginations. Participant Three stated:

Everything is almost becoming too factual. I know the stores I loved were stories of make-believe. They took

you to a far away place. Again, balance. You don't need too much of that. You need reality. But I think sometimes you need a release from the grueling aspects of reality. And I think children in minority settings and communities are many times forced to grow up earlier and many times relinquish their childhood. There's a need for developing the capability of thinking and dreaming.

The idea of the extended family in the book, Aunt Flossie's Hats (and Crab Cakes Later) described an important aspect of African American life. The family is emphasized and valued throughout the African American culture. Many children establish close and lasting relationships with grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. Stories should celebrate these relationships between generations because it is something our society neglects. Participant One believed that books had the capacity to inspire children and teachers.

I think that's what education is about. You don't have to be poor to teach a bunch of kids what it is to be poor. They should at least know it and do papers on it, research papers on it, get out and talk to some, same thing with old people. Talk to some old people. Not just read a book about it. Ask them how they feel about things. The greatest thing that can happen to a kid is being able to talk to his grandparents and his great grandparents.

The greatest cause for concern the participants saw in contemporary children's literature was availability and access. All four commented that they had never seen these particular books before and asked where I purchased them. African American literature may be published but it is not easily accessible for many people. They felt that a wide

selection of books about African Americans were not available to children.

Three of the participants vividly recalled storytelling as an important part of their childhood. Folk and fairy tales were told over the dinner table or at night before bed. The fourth participant recalled that her grandparents told her ghost stories when she was younger. The tradition of storytelling was part of the African American heritage and books like Aunt Flossie's Hats (and Crab Cakes Later) celebrate the tradition of storytelling. Because the participants considered this an important and pleasurable part of their childhood, they liked the idea of storytelling in books for children. Participant One saw this story as a springboard for getting children to communicate with their elders and learn from their life experiences. He recommended that children be encouraged to talk with their grandparents, aunts, and uncles, to obtain oral histories about their lives and perspectives.

Theme Two: Beauty

The concept of beauty was a theme that emerged primarily from the interviews with the two female participants. Though all four individuals stated that African American children needed to see themselves in literature, the female participants were specific about this idea.

Beauty is an idea created and perpetrated by the media. Magazines, television, movies, and novels glamorize certain individuals and create an image of a "beautiful" person. They represent a type of person that few people recognize in their daily lives. The people in the media do not look like ourselves or the people we know, yet we still read about them and watch them because at some level we want to be like them. We purchase the products they endorse and patronize the theaters they play in. It is from these images that we form our attitudes about beauty and develop criteria for deciding who is beautiful.

Until recently most of the people portrayed as beautiful were white. Models, actors, and actresses, and television personalities have been, until quite recently, predominantly white Anglo Saxons who represented a middle or upper middle socioeconomic class. As Participant Three stated:

I knew the concept of beauty was a white woman and all that stuff exists because we have some kids now that, like _____, (a child in the class) who every time she drew herself she drew herself blonde with blue eyes. She is a beautiful little black girl but I think that starts from seeing as a child white people in the books. So you see it but you really don't think about it. It's not a conscious thing that develops within you. I know some people that are having trouble with that now.

The idea of beauty is closely related to the development of self-esteem. Participants Three and Four believed that children must see people who belong to the same race as themselves in books in order to feel good about themselves.

valued. Minority children do not feel as valued when they are drawn as white characters with darker shading and no distinguishing physical features. All of the participants stressed the importance of children seeing themselves portrayed realistically and positively in literature. Children, of all races, need to recognize that African Americans are individuals, with different skin coloring, different hair styles, different speech patterns, and different life styles. In order to promote pride in one's culture and acceptance by others, the uniqueness of individuals within the group must be represented accurately. Participant Four pointed out that the illustrations in the text, Night on Neighborhood Street, looked just like her little girl. As she compared her child's baby pictures to the text illustrations one could really see the resemblance. A child would see this resemblance as well and see the features of the baby in the picture and be reminded of someone he/she might know personally. When we see part of ourselves in a book it confirms the idea that we are important and valued. Children love to hear stories about themselves and need to have the confirmation that their lives and experiences are worth writing about.

Participant Four pointed out the importance of children seeing themselves in literature as she referred to the illustrations in the book Night on Neighborhood Street:

The pictures are real life. The book itself would probably be enjoyed because it portrays real life pictures. The setting. This is real life to them. They play out in the street. They have friends. This is what my baby looked like. She was suppose to bring a miniature picture album so she could show you her baby pictures. This is pretty much real life. It would be reality. It's good. I'm delighted to be reading this type of thing right now.

She liked all of the books, with the exception of Tar Beach, because the illustrations were realistic.

They [referring to the children] can relate. The pictures are real life. The pictures are real black people. In times past they didn't depict the various skin colors, the changes that black people have. They were all the deep dark skin color and afros. Some say that they went from that to making them all look white so they just painted their faces with the hair that was white looking. These are reality (referring to the illustrations in the book, Night on Neighborhood Street). This looks like my little girl's hair when I part it in the middle. This is like my baby's head when she was born. she looked like that when she was born. You've got to see her baby pictures. (After looking at baby pictures we continued...) Do you see why I said it looks like my baby. That's the reality. Those are real.

Participant Three pointed out that not only was it important for African American children to see African Americans portrayed as individuals with different physical characteristics, it was equally important for other children to recognize the fact that African Americans are beautiful. It is important that African Americans are portrayed as attractive and unique individuals. Physical stereotypes must be eliminated. Just as Anglo Saxon children do not look

alike, neither do African American children. This participant discussed the fact that white people knew very little about African Americans hair. She recalled explaining to many co-workers what happens when an African American gets a hair permanent. A permanent straightens her hair, whereas it may curl a white person's hair. We also discussed the fact that many African American women feel a need to imitate the hairstyles of white women because those are the styles considered fashionable in today's society. So much of what is considered beautiful is based on the physical descriptions of a white female. She supported her statement with a reference to the fact that African American contestants and winners for beauty pageants do not "look like real black people-their hair and skin looks like a white person's." They look like white women except for their skin coloring.

Participant Three stressed that so many African American children draw themselves as white children because that is what they see most frequently and that is what is depicted as being acceptable. She believed that this collection of books took steps towards validating the beauty of the African American. The characters in these stories were physically attractive and they were distinctly African Americans. They did not look like white characters with darkened faces. She believed children who see people like themselves in the literature, will be more comfortable with themselves and others.

The theme of beauty was a surprise for me in conducting this research. Though I anticipated some of the other themes that emerged during the interviews, I did not recognize the connection between the type of characters traditionally represented in the literature and how African Americans view themselves in terms of physical attractiveness. Because as individuals we derive part of a self concept from how we view our bodies, it is imperative that children see themselves in literature as physically attractive and realistically illustrated. Paul Deane (1989) found that African Americans were often portrayed as unattractive and rather comical figures in the early children's fiction series. Their physical features were often exaggerated in order to create the impressions that the characters were not intelligent.

Children must see themselves positively portrayed in literature in order that they develop and maintain positive self-esteem. The people and ideas presented in books convey to children what society considers good and valuable. If a child only sees individuals from his/her cultural group portrayed in stereotypical roles or cast always in lower socioeconomic settings then they will quickly learn that this is the expectation of society for their particular group. These participants have articulated clearly the need for literature to represent individuals within a particular culture. Through illustrations and settings, children are made aware that African Americans are as different from one

another physically as are members of the white race. Through different settings, children realize that African Americans are represented in all socioeconomic groups. It is important that these characters and settings create a positive image rather than a negative one in order that African American children feel good about themselves as individuals and feel a sense of pride in belonging to their particular cultural group. Children from the majority culture must recognize the fact that African Americans are individuals and that having a different skin coloring is not a negative attribute.

Children will learn to appreciate the beauty in others if they are depicted in positive and meaningful roles in literature. The participants in this study emphasized the need for reality in literature. They did not want African American characters glamorized, nor did they want them to look like their white counterparts with darkened skin. Individuality needs to be emphasized when representing African American characters. The aspects of culture can then be related within the context of the story. The qualities that relate to being part of the African American culture in our society include : an emphasis on family and extended family; a respect for religion; and a tradition of storytelling. These ideas can be related within the story itself. These ideas instill pride in members of the cultural groups and respect for the group by nonmembers.

Participant Three stated that she believed children must see themselves in literature in order to understand themselves and others better. She said:

I think its good for kids to see themselves in books so that they know they are important. I still have some kids that are real conscious of their hair. Their hair is not straight like the whites who they usually see in books and usually see on T.V. So therefore you'll see them playing in the little white girl's hair and wishing theirs was like that and thinking they are ugly. But if they see themselves more in books and they look good and people talk about it then they can think differently about themselves.

This participant particularly liked the pictures of the characters in the book, Three Wishes. She felt that the skin coloring was well done and the hair styles were flattering and realistic. The mother's short Afro haircut was stylish though not contemporary in this part of the country. She felt that children would recognize themselves in the book. Interestingly, the illustrator used photographs to create the pictures for this book.

Beauty is a difficult concept in that it means different things to different people. In the past, African Americans were often ridiculed through the illustrations in a book. Their features were sometimes exaggerated or their expressions indicated confusion and ignorance. Later, the impact of the Civil Rights movement was felt in the publishing industry. Textbook illustrators were told to "color in" every tenth face so that the books would contain

African American characters. Though they tried to convince people that they were providing equal representation the African Americans in this study objected to the portrayal of the "universal black person."

Theme Three: Racism, Discrimination, and Stereotypes

The theme of racism, discrimination, and stereotypes was acknowledged and discussed throughout the interviews with each participant in this study. As a teacher and a researcher, this topic was and to some extent still is the most difficult for me personally to address in terms of literature for young children. As a kindergarten teacher, I have emphasized working and playing together as a group. Like most of my peers, we tend to point out how we are alike, rather than how we are each different. I think teachers go to great lengths to avoid talking to children about the past with respect to discrimination and racism. We rationalize our actions by saying that we do not want to instill feelings that are not there and we do not want to hurt anyone's feelings by bringing up uncomfortable subjects. If we use books that have African American characters, they tend to be very "safe" books or "melting pot" books as described by Rudine Sims Bishop. I personally tend to pull out the biographies and informational books during Black History Month because I feel that they are "acceptable" and no one

can question my motivation for using them. When initially thinking about this study, I knew that I would probably never consider using a book like Tar Beach or Three Wishes in my classroom. Though the book fit the criteria for good literature, I had some difficulty with the idea that the word "colored" was used in Tar Beach and discrimination was mentioned. I would not have used the book, Three Wishes because it was written in a dialect. Though I teach in a predominantly lower income minority setting, I felt that these books might generate negative feelings among my students. In examining these feelings, I realized that I would not have used the books because I am uncomfortable discussing these ideas with children. The most interesting part of this study for me was the fact that books dealing with racism and discrimination were not an issue for these participants. Collectively, they believed that these were necessary and important topics for children to learn about. Participant One stated that books dealing with the topics of racism, discrimination, and stereotypes are important for children but they must be written honestly. He said:

It must be handled clearly. I mean if we are dealing with poverty, we should show the poverty. We should enunciate why the poverty is there, but not make holier than thou excuses for that poverty. When possible, we should show not only the cause or the results but the responsibility for the cause. Books about discrimination are necessary. Stories about discrimination are necessary. But it should be presented by instructors who know what the heck they're doing. I mean, they should be qualified to be teaching

and bring the message home. In other words you can make up a story about someone being discriminated for a job, or a spot on a team, but tell the truth about it.

The other participants felt that these ideas must be dealt with honestly in the literature. If children have any hopes of avoiding the mistakes made in the past, they must recognize discrimination, racism, and stereotypes, for what they are and learn ways of dealing and eliminating them. When we avoid or ignore issues of racism, discrimination, and stereotypes, we deny their existence or convey the attitude that they are unimportant or nonexistent. All four of these participants felt that these issues must be confronted honestly and openly with children, regardless of their ages. They also felt that literature was an appropriate media for discussing such issues. They felt that these topics must be dealt with realistically, without glamorizing the roles or contributions of the African American. The African American character does not have to be superior in order to be acceptable. Participant Two stated:

The tendency on the part, not only in using black literature, but using black characters period, for young children, we tend to shield them from the not so good or not so prosperous aspect of someone's life. we portray them as a paragon of virtue and we need to show a balance. We need to see a person's struggle; to see that they made some poor choices. A child will identify with that more because they will say that person is like me. "I don't always think good thoughts." But still, he or she was able to overcome those areas that were not so great. Even if we select one, generally we have a vested interest in selecting characters that show some overcoming, some sense of victory, sense of triumph over

obstacles, we need to show a more balanced presentation of some of their struggles.

It is the discussion of these struggles that are so often avoided either in the literature or the discussion of the literature because it can be uncomfortable if we are honest in our presentation.

It is interesting to note that only the teachers in this study, one as the participant, and the other as a practice participant, had a problem with the use of dialect in the book, Three Wishes. The parent, the minister, and the grandparent felt that use of dialect was appropriate in children's literature and it was something the individual child might relate to. They did not see it as negative stereotype. The teachers, on the other hand, reacted from a professional, rather than personal, point of view. They felt that the use of dialect was inappropriate because it was not acceptable in the business and academic worlds in which children will have to compete. Participant Three felt that the use of dialect in literature promoted the idea that it was acceptable to use non-standard English, when in reality it is not. She also stressed that "it is not all of our dialect." She recognized that this was a personal bias, however, she felt strongly that the use of dialect perpetuated the stereotype that "all black people talk like this." Furthermore, when it is put in print we are saying that it is acceptable, but in reality it is not; "this is not

the dialect that is going to help them function and get jobs." She stated:

I just have a problem with the overall stereotype that black people talk like this. And I think it would reinforce it especially with younger children because they would say, "Well, that's what they say in that book." Like I said, that's my bias and I would be challenged by this author and a lot of other professional people that they need to hear stories in the way that they talk but we're trying to correct that.

It is interesting to note that the practice participant, who was also a teacher, objected to the use of dialects because she felt that they had a tendency to be stereotypical and in the past used to point out the ignorance of African Americans. The other participants did not object to the use of dialect mainly because it was realistic, and some families do use dialect when communicating. The minister did not find it objectionable because it . . .

. . . was sort of realistic and that would probably be the thing that would cause me to believe that it was a lower income family. Not that that is stereotypical of low income families. Many black children speak black dialect. Even my children do. There's a slang that everyone talks.

All four of the participants in this study, and the practice participant, felt that racism, discrimination, and stereotypes had to be confronted openly with children and that literature was an effective medium for presenting, discussing, and clarifying these issues. Topics addressed realistically, without glamorization or exaggeration, were

essential for young children. Participant Three emphasized that the presentation must be authentic and realistic, otherwise, we are unintentionally setting children up for disappointment and failure. We discussed the section of the book, Tar Beach, where Daddy was excluded from the union because of his race. Participant Three remarked that:

I have no problem with that because that's real. And I think kids need to have a realistic picture because the ones that have a big, big problem get out here and go they think I'm not going to be treated with any prejudice. They have problems. So I think that's realistic. That's real. That's the real world.

This participant believed that Tar Beach did in fact unintentionally perpetrate a cultural stereotype by having the family up on the rooftop eating fried chicken and watermelon, drinking beer, and playing cards. She stated:

The only thing that really, another one of my biases, was these stereotypes here [she points to the book, Tar Beach]. Fried chicken, watermelon, beer and cards. And here, in this environment, the inner city, at "tar beach", that is probably what happened. But that is the only thing is I said, "Ugh, why did they do that?" I don't like stereotypes and that's one that really is pretty standard. That's the one you hear the jokes about. And that seems to be reinforced. Here again, you know, I listen to other friends who go to movies that portray blacks in these negative ways, and it bothers me. I think it bothers me because I work with children and that's so real to families and we're trying to correct it. I think they look at it as entertainment. And they would look at these as entertainment. So it wouldn't be a problem. I think my opinions are biased because I am a teacher.

I asked this participant for clarification about her comments regarding the stereotypes being viewed as entertainment. She explained that today many stereotypes are used to promote comedy. African Americans are still the objects of jokes and ridicule. To make matters worse, children as well as adults, laugh at these stereotypes and think they are funny. She believed that children must be taught that stereotypes are wrong, regardless of the fact that they are in the media. Children also need to be taught how to identify stereotypes from factual information. Many children lack the higher level thinking skills to distinguish between fact and stereotypes.

The other participants did not object to this stereotype because they felt eating fried chicken and watermelon was what people did on a picnic, regardless of their race or socioeconomic status. Children could relate to the situation. Children generally associate these foods with fun and festivity, so they would deduce that this family was having a good time. Participant One felt that sometimes people go to great lengths to find ideas and comments that were objectionable, when that is not how they were intended. In the northern part of our country, where this story took place, no one would see eating fried chicken and eating watermelon as objectionable or discriminatory, "but in the south, well now, that is a completely different story now." The minister and parent believed Faith Ringgold included

fried chicken, watermelon, beer, and cards because that is a realistic picture of what happens on the rooftops of the high rise apartment buildings in New York City.

As a teacher I initially thought that I would not use the book *Tar Beach* in the classroom because it used the word, "colored" and it made the following statement, "and mommy won't cry as much when he goes to look for work and doesn't come home." Initially I thought these were stereotypical remarks and they should not be used in children's literature. I also believed that this book might possibly offend some children who have had similar experiences with their father leaving to find work and not returning home. I was extremely surprised at the responses of the participants in this study. None of them found these two ideas offensive or discriminatory. They believed that children would find comfort in the fact that other children have had the same experiences as they have had. Participant One explained that children have fears and if we deny the existence of these fears by not discussing them honestly and openly, then we make the fears worse. Children need to talk about things that really happen. Daddies do leave and mommies do cry. He also pointed out that these fears of a parent leaving and not coming back are not just true for lower income African American families. Children are afraid of things they don't understand, and separation, divorce, and abandonment are color blind. But reading a book like *Tar Beach* gives a

parent, teacher, counselor, or just an individual reader, a chance to see that other people experience these feeling also. It is okay to be upset by it and even though things may not work out as you hoped they would, the child is still taken care of and loved. Participant One explained:

Don't deny the children. If it is, it is. The father is absent from the home, and teachers especially would take the time and think about that and remember it all day. They can still teach the same way, but remember that some kids need an extra pat and extra push because there is no father at home. It's not just the black kids. You're denying reality if you think it is just a few homes, or just the homes of poor children. It happens to the children of lawyers and doctors too. See, don't deny it. Accept it and deal with it honestly and openly. As far as the father being absent, the mother cries, all of that should be brought out. I mean it should be mentioned. It shows that there is pain and agony in that house. That there's not a bunch of dancing and jumping around and everybody's happy. The kids hurt and ache every time the father comes back without a job.

This participant felt that it was also important for the author to include the part about the father being discriminated against by the unions because of his race. He believed that if "you don't teach them that this did happen, then it will happen again." He believed that education has a responsibility to portray discrimination as wrong and help children identify stereotypes so that they will know what is wrong. He suggested that the author of Tar Beach could have taken the exclusion from the unions a step farther and explained how African Americans started their own unions because they were not included in the existing ones This

would be an excellent opportunity for children to learn about ways others dealt with discrimination.

Participant One and Four took exception to the title, Tar Beach, because of the word, "tar". Both said that it reminded them of the phrase, "tar babies", a reference to African American children. They considered this a derogatory term and wished that the author could have replaced the word with something else, though neither had a suggestion that they believed was suitable for the story. The other two participants did not object to the title because they saw it as a descriptive phrase of the rooftops of high rise apartment buildings.

The use of the word, "Fambly" in the poem, "Fambly Time" was also a stereotype according to Participant One. "That might be how we talk, but we don't think we're saying it that way, we think we are saying it as "family". Participant Four felt that the use of the word "Fambly" made the poem more childlike, the perspective from which it was written. She thought that it was appropriate and did not feel as though it was a negative point.

In discussing issues of racism, discrimination, and stereotypes in this study, I found that the criteria used by individuals in identifying stereotypes, racism, and discrimination, are based on their personal experiences and what may be considered inappropriate for one person may not be for another. I am able to conclude from the interviews

with these participants that they do not object to the presentation of historically correct information in literature for young children. The idea of discrimination from the unions, single mother households, a parent as a laborer, are realistic and are appropriate for young readers, regardless of their race or socioeconomic status. Other less objective ideas are controversial with these participants. For example only one of the four participants in this study said that they considered the use of dialect inappropriate in children's literature. She objected to this both from a teacher's perspective and from a cultural perspective. She believed that African Americans are often stereotyped as using non-standard English and this in some ways made them less than equal from the majority class members. The other participants stated that they did not find this discriminating because it was realistic. It was interesting to note that Participant One did not object to the use of dialect in Three Wishes, however he did object to the use of the word "Fambly" in the collection of poetry, Night on Neighborhood Street. He found it offensive in this instance because he had the impression that it was mocking African Americans' speech. The participants differed in their attitudes concerning what types of things were discriminating. It was interesting to me that the points I took exception to were not issues for these participants and I was unable to identify points of contention for them.

Collectively, the participants found the books in this study appropriate for all children, regardless of their cultural backgrounds. Though there were some controversial issues discussed in regards to racism, discrimination, and stereotypes, none were found to affect the participants rating of the book. These participants did not want culturally neutral books. They wanted books that related the African American heritage to children and they wanted authors to deal with issues of racism, discrimination, and stereotypes honestly in order to help children identify them as wrong.

An interesting point was made by each of the participants which I coded as Individual vs. Group Identity. Authors should be cautioned that African Americans have a shared culture, however, the individuals within the culture are unique and different. In the past, minorities have been portrayed in the literature as either superhuman characters or a lower socioeconomic status characters living in single parent low income housing. They were physically the same, so that one character and story could not be readily distinguished from the next. The greatest strength of this collection of books, according to the participant, was that they emphasized the uniqueness of the individual characters within the context of the African American culture. For example, the characters in Aunt Flossie's Hats (and Crab Cakes Later), are realistically illustrated and developed

while at the same time the traditions of storytelling and the value placed on the extended family are shared with the reader. The participants felt that the African American culture must be shared with children however not at the expense of individuality. Children from the majority culture look and live differently and simultaneously share a heritage. The same is true for African Americans. They have a rich tradition yet at the same time they are part of the American culture. All of the participants felt it was important for children to understand where they came from, but it was equally important for them to understand where they were in context to a multicultural society.

Theme Four: Morals, Values, and Life Lessons

The fourth theme that arose from the interviews with the four participants was morals, values, and life lessons. Three of the participants felt literature had played an important role in their personal lives and in their moral development. The traditional literature, particularly the fables, fairy tales, myths, and legends usually taught a lesson which the participants felt impacted upon their lives. Many of these stories taught a child the difference between right and wrong. The minister recalled:

As I think a little bit more, there are some stories that impacted my life like the Uncle Remus tales, Brer Rabbit, Brer Fox and their escapades. Fairy Tales, and

Aesop's Fables with the moral implications come to mind. There was more behind the story. It was a way of teaching morals and ethics and things of that kind of nature.

Bible stories also convey ideas about fairness and justice however Participant Two felt that our secular environment doesn't reinforce these types of stories. They are not part of the public school curriculum because of laws governing separation of church and state. These stories are not shared in the home as much today as they were in the past according to Participant Two, who is a minister. He felt that the role of the church was to help shape the lives of young people, however they have fewer opportunities to impact upon the lives of children. The role of the church has changed for many families. They do not have the same commitment to an church that their parents and grandparents once did. This participant tries to reach out to children by serving as a tutor in an after-school program. He feels a strong responsibility towards helping children maximize their potentials, academically, socially, and emotionally.

I have an interest in developing character and also making sure that children, particularly those who have a need for extra help, receive extra help. This is my little contribution to help the cause.

Participant Two believed that children learn from stories, whether they are oral or written and that good literature promotes understanding. Children need to learn

the difference between right and wrong, and oftentimes the characters in books are "safe" in that they do and feel things that we may also do but we can discuss them more objectively because we have distance from the problems. This participant felt that teaching morals, life lessons about right and wrong, and values was an important component in all of the books in this study. Though he liked some more than others he felt that each author tried to teach the reader something about life and our interactions with others.

Participant One felt that this collection of books emphasized the importance of family. The African Americans in these stories were portrayed in a positive and realistic manner. With the possible exception of Night on Neighborhood Street, "these books discuss topics that all people of good will value." He continued:

Blacks value the same things as whites. We're not different. I think that might be a problem when we try to paint a picture or create an image where we are all different. We came from a different place. I can remember someone telling me we all came on the same boat, we were just in different positions on that boat. So we bleed the same, we eat the same, we thing the same, our religion is the same. We might have drank from a different water fountain but we drank water. And the water was good. There was no difference.

Participant One believed that children's literature must emphasize our commonalties with humankind and one area in which this can be done is morals and values. These are our common denominator with the rest of the world, regardless of

their ethnic, religious, or cultural background. That is why he felt the traditional literature has stood the test of time, because moral and values are ageless. The basic issues of right and wrong, good and bad remain the same from generation to generation. Literature helps stimulate a child's development of conscience. Through fictional characters, children learn the importance of family and friends, about loyalty and forgiveness, honesty and fairness.

Participant One recalled stories like The Little Engine That Could and The Tortoise and the Hare serving him well in his days at a boot camp in South Carolina. Hard steady work and positively thinking helped him obtain the goals he set for himself. Though sometimes children may need assistance in understanding the author's message it is still meaningful and perhaps will be remembered if the child has a similar experience. In reference to the book, Finding the Greenstone, Participant One stated:

It will have to be explained, but once you explain it to them once, when they mess up later, if it's your own kid, then you can bring back up the story. This story can take you all the way up till your fifty years old. On how you value friends and how you value things . . . so I think the story can stay with you and good teachers can be able to embellish on it all the way up.

Participant One discussed the shame that the boy felt because his father was a pulp worker in the book Finding the Greenstone. Participant One believed children are often ashamed of their parents because of their jobs or home or

some other material possession. He believed that the job of laborer was something to be proud of and Alice Walker indirectly pointed this out to the reader.

It caught me just now. I caught the shame. I didn't do much critical thinking on that because a lot of it was bringing back memories. I mean the book was written for small kids, but a big kid was reading it, me.

He believed more value needed to be given to blue collar workers in this society. The fact that many of them are self employed as a mason or plumber and they own their own businesses is often overlooked because our culture places more value on a job that someone wears a coat and tie to work each morning.

Each of the participants mentioned the fact that these books emphasized the importance of family and friends and how they enrich our lives. Participant Four acknowledged that there were cultural differences between people but she believed that "morals and values are a commonality-a way of connecting us together. It is something we share regardless of color." Participant Three felt that books for young children should primarily be exciting and "if you can teach morals through it then so be it." She did not feel that values should be imposed upon a story. If it naturally evolves from the context, then the reader will relate to it better and it will be more meaningful personally. She felt

that this collection of books was appropriate not only for children, but for teachers as well:

Teachers need these books as much as the kids. I think teachers so often don't expect enough of the kids because they say, "How can you expect them to do any better, look at where they come from, look at what they have to deal with. " Well you have to expect more from those kids. And if you understand that this is real (referring to the books) that these people don't look depressed, this girl still has her dreams (Tar Beach) to get out. But somebody has an expectation for her; nobody's saying, "Poor little thing, you live here, and your Daddy can't get a job and this and this." They still expect something out of her. That is where we are losing these kids. Because they're saying, "But they're poor, how can we expect them to do any better. Look at how they have to live. Look at their Mom." But if we don't have high expectations for them when they come to us at school, where are they going to get them?

Conclusions and Recommendations

Summary:

The purpose of this study was to examine the attitudes of a select group of African Americans towards the portrayal of African Americans in contemporary children's literature. A qualitative research design, based on in-depth interviews, was used to gain insights into the world of children's literature as perceived by individuals who had no specific training in evaluating and critiquing children's books. Autobiographic statements, interviews, and ratings scales were used to analyze, synthesize, collaborate, and verify the data collected during this inquiry.

Five individuals participated in this study, one of whom agreed to serve as the practice participant. She helped formulate questions used for the interviews. She examined the Guidelines for the First Interview and Guidelines for the Second Interviews for potentially offensive or insensitive language. Most importantly, she reassured me that the questions were appropriate and relevant to the education of children. The other four participants were related to one another in that they worked directly (as an employee) or indirectly (as a parent volunteer) with the children attending a small predominantly black elementary school in the community. Because parents, teachers, grandparents, and ministers are influential role models within the African American culture, an individual representing each of these categories was asked to participate in the study. Two female and two male individuals were part of the study. Access into the field and the use of judgmental sampling was possible because I have worked at this particular school for three years and in this particular community for approximately six years.

Informal interviews were used to obtain the data for this study. Though guidelines were established to provide structure and direction, the interviews were interactive and became a dialogue between the researcher and participant. The use of conversation, rather than a question -answer format yielded thoughtful and insightful comments from the

participants. The initial interview was designed to explain in more detail the purpose of the study, obtain autobiographical statements, and the general impressions and attitudes of the participant towards children's literature. At the end of the first interview the participant was given the five books selected for evaluation in this study. The rating scale was explained and a second interview was scheduled. The second interview was designed to examine the reactions of the participants to the books they read. Though contradictions between the first and second interviews did occur, though the participants recognized this, and through discussion were able to concretely explain their position on a specific issue or idea.

The tapes from each interview were transcribed and corrected. Information was coded and synthesized into categories. These categories were then organized into four themes which included:

Life Experiences as African Americans.

The Concept of Beauty.

Racism/Discrimination/Stereotypes.

Morals, Values, and Life Lessons

Conclusions

The participants in this study believed that African American children must see themselves, their families, and

their friends, in order that they may develop positive self-esteem and respect for their culture. Each participant stressed that it was equally important for other children to read books in which African Americans were portrayed in a positive way in order that they may understand cultural differences and develop a respect for individuals who may look different from themselves. Each participant believed that literature was an effective medium for helping children and teachers recognize our commonalities with one another. The participants felt that the books selected for this study realistically and authentically illustrated African American children. In the past, they objected to the "universal black character" which was nothing more than a white child with a darkened face. The illustrations in the books for this study portrayed African Americans as individuals, with different physical characteristics. The children were attractive and realistic. This particular group of participants stressed the importance of representing African Americans from all socioeconomic classes in literature for children. They believed books, depicting real life situations, as opposed to the biographies, were the most important for young children. Though collectively they felt that these books were heading in the right direction, they stressed the fact that more books were necessary and they had to be more available to the general public.

Though none of the participants had specific training in evaluating children's literature, other than the teacher who took a course in children's literature as part of her course work in undergraduate school, their criteria for selecting appropriate books for young children were quite specific and similar to the guidelines recommended by the experts in the field of children's literature. The participants' criteria for selecting appropriate children's literature included:

1. The story must be realistic. The characters and plot should be believable.
2. The story should encourage imagination and creativity
3. The story must deal honestly with sensitive subject matter such as prejudice and discrimination.
4. The illustrations must be authentic.
5. A variety of settings and characters should be represented.
6. Characters must be portrayed realistically, with strengths and weaknesses described for the reader.
7. The story should encourage the development of values, morals or insights into life.

The characters in the stories must maintain their individual identities within their cultural context. These participants felt that books for young children should instill pride in one's cultural heritage, while maintaining

their individual identities. They would like to see African Americans in a variety of settings, not just low income, single parent homes.

The participants felt that realistic stories, in which the characters and plot were believable, were the most appropriate for developing positive self-concepts and identity for African American children. The use of fantasy, as in the book Tar Beach, helped children develop their imaginations as well. These participants stressed the fact that children needed to see themselves in books. If the characters were portrayed as perfect then children could not identify with them. Books that show everyday situations at home, school, and in the neighborhood were the most appropriate for promoting understanding and acceptance of cultural differences.

Traditional literature was significant in the lives of three of the participants in this study. It is interesting to note that these three feel that the teaching of morals and values is important in children's literature. The one participant who does not remember any particular books from her childhood does feel that the teaching of morals and values is secondary to telling a good story, one that is entertaining. All of the participants did stress the importance of literature helping children understanding their commonalities as Americans with one another. Though one participant felt that it was important that children

understood where they came from, their "roots", the other participants emphasized the importance of American culture and African Americans within this culture than on the African culture in isolation.

The participants in this study felt that the African Americans portrayed in this collection of books were generally positive and realistic. Though their were mixed feelings about the content of some of the books, specifically the poetry in Night on Neighborhood Street, all felt that the illustrations in Night on Neighborhood Street, Three Wishes, and Aunt Flossie's Hats (and Crab Cakes Later) were beautiful, realistic and instilled a sense of pride in "being black" for young African American children. It also showed other children that "black is really beautiful."

Recommendations

The participants in this study stated that there was a need for more realistic fiction in which minority characters were portrayed in a variety of settings. They believed that children develop positive self-concepts and a sense of personal and cultural pride when they see African Americans, who are attractive and realistic, in the books they read. They extended this idea to include all minorities, not just African Americans. These participants have seen changes in children's literature that are positive but insufficient.

They feel that it is imperative that more books, containing minority characters, be published and made available to the general public. Availability was a problem cited by several participants. The teacher commented that she had difficulty finding suitable literature about African Americans in the public libraries and often had to go to a "black bookstore" to find simple stories about African Americans for her students.

The participants felt that all children, not just minorities, needed to read books about individuals who are members of different racial, ethnic, and cultural groups because we are a multicultural society. If today's children are to be successful in terms of their personal and professional relationships, they must develop understanding and appreciation for individuals that are in some ways different from themselves. Literature, according to these participants, is a way to promote communication about cultural and racial differences. Through this communication children can identify not only their differences, but their commonalties as well. It is the things that we have in common that help bond us together.

Literature for young children must be honest. The characters should be portrayed realistically by including their strengths and weaknesses. African American characters do not have to be super humans with only their virtues described in the story. On the other hand they do not always

have to be the down trodden victim who is always at the mercy of the white protagonist for guidance and protection. The characters must in some ways mirror the social, emotional and moral development of the reader in order that they may be believable. The participants in this study believed that children learn from the conflicts and crises presented in books. Honesty is an important consideration when evaluating appropriate materials for children. The participants did not have objections to references in the stories of discrimination because it was and oftentimes still is part of the African American's life. Children must understand that discrimination is wrong if they are going to recognize and correct this for their generation.

The participants in this study did not read about African Americans when they were children. They consider it important that children be exposed to many different types of literature, however, books about the African American culture, as well as other minority groups, needs to be part of each school's and public libraries children's collection. The participants did caution that writing a white story and putting a black character in it would not be acceptable. They wanted the traditions and heritages of the African American culture reflected in the literature for children.

The purpose of this study was to examine the attitudes of a select group of African Americans towards their portrayal in contemporary children's literature. The

participants in this study had definite criteria for evaluating appropriate literature for young children.

The thoughts and feelings of these participants can not be generalized to any other individuals, however the thoughts, insights, and reflections have serious implications for teachers. This study has had serious implications for me personally as a teacher of predominantly black kindergarten students. In the past I have been one of those teachers who only used African American literature sporadically throughout the school year. Though the majority of my students have always been black, I could count on two hands the number of books I used containing African American characters each year. This study has raised my level of consciousness. I am aware that I need to integrate the materials I use with my students. Additionally, this study has given me permission to use contemporary realistic fiction that contains African American characters without the fear that I might unintentionally hurt someone's feelings.

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of this study:

1. Inservice must be provided for all teachers in helping them identify, locate, and use contemporary children's literature that represents African Americans and their culture.

2. Media specialists need a suggested list of multicultural materials for the school's library.
3. Workshops need to be conducted so that contemporary children's literature that depict African Americans accurately and authentically may be shared with parents. This may be part of the school's Parent-Teacher Association meetings.
4. Preservice teachers need to be aware of the materials available and have opportunities to develop units which integrate the contemporary children's literature with African Americans into the curriculum.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Alexander, R. (1985). What is a racist book? In D. MacCann & G. Woodard (Eds.), The black american in books for children: Readings in racism (pp. 52-56). Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press.
- Anderson, R. C., Hiebert, E. H., Scott, J. A., Wilkenson, I. A. G. (1985). Becoming a nation of readers: The report of the commission on reading. Washington, DC: The National Institute of Education, US Department of Education.
- Anelli, C. M. (1978). The afro-american heritage in children's fiction. In E. R. Dyer, compiler, Cultural pluralism and children's media (pp.26-40).Chicago: American Association of School Librarians.
- Armor, D. J. (1972). The evidence on busing. The Public Interest, 28, 90-128.
- Asher, S. R. (1979). Influence of topic interest on black children's and white children's reading comprehension. Child Development, 50, 686-690.
- Au, K. H. (1980). On participation structures in reading lessons. Anthropology and Education Quarterly, 11, 91-115.
- Banfield, B. (1985). Racism in children's books: An afro-american perspective. In D. MacCann & G. Woodward (Eds.), The black American in books for children:

- Readings in racism. (pp.23-38). Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press.
- Banfield, B. & Wilson, G. (1985). The black experience through white eyes- the same old story once again. In D. MacCann & G. Woodard (Eds.), The black American in books for children: Readings in racism (pp. 192-200). Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press.
- Banks, J. A. (1989). Integrating the curriculum with ethnic content: Approaches and guidelines. In J. A. Banks & C. A. McGee (Eds.), Multicultural education: Issues and perspectives (pp. 189-207). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Bing, E. (1963). Effect of childrearing practices on development of differential cognitive abilities. Child Development, 34, 631-648.
- Birtha, J. M. (1985). Portrayal of the black in children's literature. In D. MacCann & G. Woodward (Eds.), The black american in books for children: Readings in racism (pp. 57-65). Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press.
- Bishop, R. S. (1987). Extending multicultural understanding through children's books. In Bernice E. Cullinan (Ed.), Children's literature in the reading program (pp. 60-67). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Biklen, S. K. & Bogdan, R.C. (1982). Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

- Borke, H. (1971). Interpersonal perception of young children: Egocentrism or empathy? Developmental Psychology, 5, 263-269.
- Bradley, R., Caldwell, B. M. & Elardo, R. (1977). Home environment, social status, and mental test performance. Journal of Educational Psychology, 69, 697-701.
- Brezinski, J, E. (1964). Beginning reading in Denver. Reading Teacher, 18, 16-21.
- Briggs, c. & Elkind, D. (1977). Characteristics of early readers. Perception and Motor Skills, 14, 1231-1237.
- Broderick, D. M. (1971). The image of the black in popular and recommended american juvenile fiction, 1827-1967. New York:Columbia University Press. University Microfilm # 71-4090.
- Brophy, J. (1970). Mothers as teachers of their own preschool children: The influence of socioeconomic status and task structure on teaching specificity. Child Development, 41, 79-94.
- Brophy, J. & Good, T. L. (1974). Teacher-student relationships. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Brophy, J. & Good, T. L. (1970). Teachers' communications of different expectations for children's classroom performance: Some behavioral data. Journal of Educational Psychology, 61, 365-374.
- Brown, S. A. (1969). The negro in American fiction, negro poetry, and drama. New York: Arno Press.

- Brubaker, Dale. A conversation with Seymour Sarason: A poetic journey. Unpublished conversation.
- Bruner, H. D. (1981). Developing positive multiethnic/multicultural learning environment. In W.E. Sims & B.B. de Martinez (Eds.), Perspectives in multicultural education (p. 139). Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- Burgess, R. G. (1984). In the field: An introduction to field research. London: Allen & Unwin.
- Butkowsky, I. S. & Willows, D. M. (1980). Cognitive-motivational characteristics of children varying in reading ability: Evidence for learned helplessness in poor readers. Journal of Educational Psychology, 72, 408-422.
- Butler, D. (1989, September). Saying it louder. School Library Journal. pp. 155-159.
- Carlson, J. A. (1969). A comparison of the treatment of the negro in children's literature in the periods 1929-1938 and 1959-1968. Storrs, CT: University of Connecticut.
- Carter, D. B. & Patterson, C. J. (1982). Sex roles as social conventions: The development of children's conception of sex role stereotypes. Developmental Psychology, 18, 812-824.
- Chall, J. S. (1980). The great debate: Ten years later, with a model proposal for reading stages. In L. R. Resnick &

- P. A. Weaver (Eds.), Theory and practice of early reading. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Chall, J.S., Radwin, E., French, V.W., Hall, C.R. (1985). Blacks in the world of children's books. In D. MacCann & G. Woodward (Eds.), The black american in books for children: Readings in racism (pp. 211-221). Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press.
- Chomsky, C. (1972, February). Stages in language development and reading exposure. Harvard Education Review, 42(1), 1-33.
- Chomsky, C. (1971). Write first, read later. Childhood Education, 47, 296-299.
- Chukovsky, K. (1963). From two to five (M. Morton, Trans. and Ed.). Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Clark, K. B. & Clark, M. P. (1947). Racial identification and preference in negro children. In T. M. Newcomb & E. L. Hartley (Eds.), Readings in social psychology. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Clifton, L. (1982, February) Profile. Language Arts, 59(2), 160-167.
- Cohen, S. (1972, November). Minority stereotypes in children's literature: The Bobbsey Twins 1904-1968. The Education Forum, 34, 119-125.
- Coleman, J. S., Campbell, E. Q., Hobson, C. J., McPartland, J., Mood, A. M., Weinfield, F. D., & York, R. L. (1966). Equality of educational opportunity. Washington, DC:

Department of Health, Education, & Welfare, US
Government Printing Office.

- Cook-Gumperz, J., Gumperz, J.T. & Simons, H. (1981). School Home ethnography project (Final report). Washington, DC: National Institute of Health.
- Cornelius, P. (1971) interracial children's books: Problems and progress. Library Quarterly, 41, 106-127.
- Cross, D.E., Baker, G.C., Stiles, L.J. (1977). Teaching in a multicultural society: Perspectives and professional strategies. New York: Free Press.
- Cullinan, B. (1957). Inviting readers to literature. In Bernice Cullinan (ed.) Children's literature in the reading program (pp. 2-14). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Dalta, L., Schaeffer, E. & Davis, M. (1968). Sex and scholastic aptitude as variables in teacher's ratings of the adjustment and classroom behavior of Negro and other seventh graders. Journal of Educational Psychology, 59, 94-101.
- Davis, M. W. (1972). Black images in children's literature: Revised editions needed. Library Journal, 97(1), 261-263.
- Deane, P. C. (1989). Black characters in children's fiction series since 1968. Journal of Negro Education, 58(2), 153-162.

- Deane, P. C. (1985). The persistence of uncle tom: An examination of the image of the negro in children's literature. In D. MacCann & G. Woodward (Eds.), The black american in books for children: Readings in racism (pp.162-168). Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press.
- Dieterich, D. J. (1972, November). Books that lie and lullabye. ERIC/RCS Report, Elementary English, 49(7), 1000-1009.
- Dyer, E. R. (1978). Children's media for a culturally pluralistic society. In Esther R. Dyer, compiler, Cultural pluralism and children's media (pp. vii-ix). Chicago: American Association of School Libraries.
- Dillon, W. R., Madden, T. J., Firtle, N. H. (1987). Marketing research in a marketing environment (2nd ed.). Homewood, IL:Irwin.
- Dix, M. (1976). Are reading habits of parents related to reading performance of their children? Paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Council of the teachers of English.
- Entwisle, D. R. (1979). The child's social environment and learning to read. In Reading research: Advances in theory and practice (Vol. 1). New York: Academic Press.
- Entwisle, D. R. & Hayduk, I. A. (1978). Too great expectations: The academic outlook of very young children. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

- Faludi, S. (1991) Backlash: The undeclared war against american women. New York: Crown Publishers.
- Fetterman, D. M. (1989). ethnography step by step. Applied social research methods series (Vol. 17). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Gast, D. K. (1970). The dawning of the age of Aquarius for multiethnic children's literature. Elementary English, 47, 661-665.
- Geertz, C. (1973). The interpretation of cultures. New York: Basic Books.
- Gelman, R. & Spelke, E. (1981). The development of thoughts about animals and inanimate objects: Implications for research on social cognition. In J. H. Flavell & L. Ross (Eds.), Social cognitive development. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Goffman, E. (1959). The presentation of self in everyday life. Garden City: Doubleday Anchor Books.
- Good, T. L. & Brophy, J. (1977). Educational Psychology: A realistic approach. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Good, T. L., Cooper, H. & Blakely, S. C. (1980). Classroom interaction as a function of teacher expectations, student sex, and time of year. Journal of Educational Psychology, 72, 378-385.

- Goodenough, W. (1971). Cultural languages and society.
Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Goodman, M. (1952). Race awareness in young children.
Cambridge, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Goodwin, W. & Sanders, J. (1969). An exploratory study of the effect of selected variables upon teacher expectations of pupil success. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association.
- Grandstrom, J. & Silvey, A. (1977). A call for help:
Exploring the black experience in children's books. In D. MacCann & G. Woodard, Cultural conformity in books for children (pp.) Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press.
- Greenfield, E. (1985). Writing for children- A joy and a responsibility. In D. MacCann & G. Woodward (Eds.), The black american in books for children: Readings in racism (pp.19-22). Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press.
- Harding, D. W. (1978). The author as creator of social relation. In M. Meek, A. Warlow, & G. Barton (Eds.), The cool web. New York: Atheneum.
- Harris, V. J. (1990, Fall). Benefits of children's literature. Journal of Negro Education, 59(2), 538-539.
- Hoffman, M. L. (1981). Perspectives on the difference between understanding people and understanding things: The role of affect.. In J. H. Flavell & L. Ross (Eds.), Social

- cognitive development. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Huck, C. (1987). Children's literature in the elementary school. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- John-Steiner, V. & Smith, L. (1979). What do we know about teaching and learning in urban schools? In The educational promise of cultural pluralism (Vol 8) St. Louis, MO: CEMREL, Inc.
- Johns, J. (1975, April). Reading preferences of urban students in grades four through six. Journal of Educational Research, 68, 306-309.
- Katz, P. A. (1973). Perception of racial cues in preschool children. Developmental Psychology, 8, 295-299.
- Katz, P. A. (1982). Development of children's racial awareness and intergroup attitudes. In P. A. Katz (Ed.), Current topics in early childhood education. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Katz, P. A. (1976). The acquisition of racial attitudes in children. In P. A. Katz (Ed.), Towards the elimination of racism. New York: Pergamon Press.
- Kohl, H. (1967). 36 children. New York: New American Library.
- Kozol, J. (1967). Death at an early age: The destruction of the hearts and minds of negro children in the Boston Public Schools. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin.
- Kruse, G. M. & Horning, K. T. (1991). Multicultural literature for children and young adults. A selected

- listing of books 1980-1990 by and about people of color.
Madison, WI: Cooperative Children's Book Center,
University of Wisconsin-Madison, Wisconsin Department of
Public Instruction.
- Lamme, L. & Olmstead, D. (1977). Family reading habits and
children's progress in reading. Paper presented at the
annual meeting of the International Reading Association.
- Larrick, N. (1965, September 11). The all white world of
children's books. Saturday Review, pp. 63-65, 84-85.
- Latimer, B. I. (1972). Starting out right: Choosing books
about black people for young children (bulletin No.
2314). Madison, WI: Wisconsin Department of Public
Instruction.
- Latimer, B. I. (1976, November). Telegraphing messages to
children about minorities. The Reading Teacher, 30, 151-
156.
- Leahy, R. (1981). The development of the concept of social
inequality: Descriptions and comparisons of rich and
poor people. Child Development, 52, 523-532.
- Livesley, W. J. & Bromley, D. B. (1973). Personal perception
in childhood and adolescence. New York: John Wiley.
- MacCann, D. (1985). Racism in prize winning biographical
works. In D. MacCann & G. Woodward (Eds.), The black
american in books for children: Readings in racism (pp.
169-179). Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press.

- McDermott, R. P. (1976). Kids make sense: An ethnographic account of the interactional management of success and failure in one first grade classroom. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Stanford University, CA.
- Mattai, R. (1992). Rethinking the nature of multicultural education: Has it lost it's focus or is it being misused? Journal of Negro Education, 61(2), 65-73.
- Miller, W. H. (1969). Home prereading experiences and first grade reading achievement. Reading Teacher, 22, 641-645.
- Miller-Lachman, L. (1992). Our family our friends our world: An annotated guide to significant multicultural books for children and teenagers. New Providence, NJ: R. R. Bowker.
- Marjoribanks, K. (1976). Environment, social class, and mental ability. Journal of Educational Psychology, 63, 103-109.
- Martinez, M. & Nash, M. F. (1990, October). Bookalogues: Talking about children's literature. Language Arts, 67, 599-606.
- Meyer, H. (1985). Librarians and freedom from racism and sexism. In D. MacCann & G. Woodward (Eds.), The black american in books for children: Readings in racism (pp. 266-273). Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press.

- Meyer-Reimer, K. (1992). Multiethnic literature: Holding fast to dreams (Technical Report No. 551). Urbana, IL: University of Illinois at Urbana- Champaign.
- Meyers, W. D. (1985). The black experience in children's books: One step forward, two steps back. In D. MacCann & G. Woodward (Eds.), The black american in books for children: Readings in racism (pp.222-226). Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press.
- Miel, A. & Kiesten, E., Jr. (1967). The shortchanged children of suburbia: What schools don't teach about human differences and what can be done about it. New York: Institute of Human Relations Press, American Jewish Committee.
- Miller, W. H. (1966). Home prereading experiences and first grade reading achievement. Reading Teacher, 22, 641-645.
- Muse, D. (1975, December). Black children's literature: Rebirth of a neglected genre. The Black Scholar, 7(4), 11-15.
- Naimark, H. (1983) Children's understanding of social class differences. Paper presented at the biennial meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development, Detroit, MI.
- Naimark, H. & Shaver, P. (1982). Development of the understanding of social class. Paper presented at the

- annual meeting of the American Psychological Association, Washington, DC.
- Norton, D. E. (1990). Teaching multicultural literature in the reading curriculum. The Reading Teacher, 44(1) 28-38.
- Norton, D. E. (1991). Through the eyes of a child: An introduction to children's literature (3rd Ed.). New York: Merrill/Macmillan Publishing Company.
- Paladry, J. M. (1969). What teachers believe, what children achieve. Elementary School Journal, 69, 370-374.
- Parsons, J. E., Kaczala, C. M., & Meece, J. L. (1982). Socialization of achievement attitudes and beliefs: Classroom influences. Child Development, 53, 322-339.
- Pearson, P. D. (1984). Handbook of reading research. New York: Longmans, Inc.
- Piestrup, A. (1973). Black dialect interference and accommodation of reading instruction in first grade. Monographs of the Language Behavior Research Laboratory, ??(??).
- Piper, P. (1986). Language growth in the multiethnic classroom. Language Arts, 63, 23-36.
- Porter, J. D. (1971). Black child, white child: The development of racial attitudes. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

- Prieswerk, R. (1985). Ethnocentric images in history books and their effect on racism. In D. MacCann & G. Woodward (Eds.), The black american in books for children: Readings in racism (pp.255 265). Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press.
- Psathas, G. (1973). Phenomenological sociology: Issues and applications. New York: John Wiley and Sons.
- Ramsey, P. G. (1987). Teaching and learning in a diverse world: Multicultural education for young children. New York: Teacher's College Press.
- Ransbury, M. K. (1973). An assessment of reading attitudes. Journal of Reading, 17, 25-28.
- Rasinski, T. V. & Padak, N. D. (1990, October). Multicultural learning through children's literature. Language Arts, 67, 576-580.
- Rist, R. (1980). Blitzkrieg ethnography: On the transformation of a method into a movement. Educational Researcher, 9, 8-10.
- Rist, R. (1973). The urban school: A factory for failure. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Rist, R. C. (1970). Student social classes and teacher expectation. Harvard Educational Review, 40, 411-451.
- Rollins, C. (Ed.). (1967). We build together. Champaign, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Rollock, B. (1984). The black experience in children's books. New York: The New York Public Library.

- Roser, N. & Frith, M. (1983). Children's choices: Teaching with books children like. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Rudman (1976). Children's literature: An issues approach. Boston: D. C. Heath.
- Sagi, A. & Hoffman, M. L. (1976). Empathic distress in the newborn. Developmental Psychology, 12, 175-176.
- Sarason, S. (1972). The creation of settings and the future societies. San Francisco: Jossey Bass Publishers.
- Schlesinger, A. M. (1992). The disuniting of america: Reflections on a multicultural society. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Schwartz, A. (1985). Sounder: A black or a white tale? In D. MacCann & G. Woodward (Eds.), The black american in books for children: Readings in racism (pp.147-150). Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press.
- Sheldon, W. D. & Carillo, R. (1952). Relation of parent, home and certain developmental characteristics to children's reading ability. Elementary School Journal, 52, 262-272.
- Shepard, J. P. (1962). The treatment of characters in popular children's fiction. Elementary English, 39, 672-677
- Sims, R. (1982). Shadow and substance: Afro-american experience in contemporary children's fiction. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

- Sims, W. E. (1981). Humanizing education for culturally different and exceptional children. In W. E. Sims & B. B. de Martinez (Eds.), Perspectives in multicultural education (pp. 1-16). Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- Sims, W. E. (1981). Folklore: Some educational effects. In W. E. Sims & B. B. de Martinez (Eds.), Perspectives in multicultural education (pp.75-88). Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- Sloan, G. D. (1984). The child as critic. New York: Teacher's College Press.
- Spradley, J. P. (1979). The ethnographic interview. Fort Worth: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Spradley, J. P. (1980). Participant observation. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Sterling, D. (1968, February). The soul of learning. English Journal, 57(2), 166-180.
- Stoodt, B. & Moss, B. (1992). Literature for a lifetime. Madison, WI: Brown and Benchmark.
- Sutton, M. H. (1964). Readiness for reading at the kindergarten level. Reading Teacher, 17, 235-240.
- Taylor, R. L. (1976, January). Psychosocial development among black children and youth. American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 46, 4-19.
- Ten quick ways to analyze books for racism and sexism (1974). Council for Interracial Books for Children, 5(3).

- Thompson, J. & G. Woodward (1985). Black perspective in books for children. In D. MacCann & G. Woodward (Eds.), The black american in books for children: Readings in racism. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press.
- Thurman, S. K. & Lewis, M. (1979). Children's responses to differences: Some possible implications for mainstreaming. Exceptional Children, 45, 468-470.
- Tway, E. (1989). Dimensions of multicultural literature for children. In M. K. Rudman (Ed.), Children's literature: Resource for the classroom (pp. 109-138). Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon.
- Tway, E. (Ed.) (1981). Reading ladders for human relations (6th Ed.). Washington, DC: American Council of Education.
- Vaughn-Roberson, C. & Hill, B. (1989). The brownies' book and ebony junior: Literature as a mirror of the afro-american experience. Journal of Negro Education, 58(4), 494-510.
- Walberg, H. J. & Marjoribanks, K. (1973). Differential mental abilities and home environments: A canonical analysis. Developmental Psychology, 9, 363-368.
- Weinberg, M. (1974). A historical framework for multicultural education. In D. C. Cross, G. C. Baker, L. J. Stiles (Eds.), Teaching in a multicultural society. New York: Free Press.

- Weinstein, R. (1976). Reading group membership in first grade: Teacher behaviors and pupil experience over time. Journal of Educational Psychology, 71, 421-431.
- Weinstein, R. & Middlestadt, S. E. (1979). Student perceptions of teacher interactions with male high and low achievers. Journal of Educational Psychology, 71, 103-116.
- Werner, O. & Schoepfe, G. M. (1987). Systematic field work: Foundations of ethnography and interviewing. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Wiersma, W. (1991). Research methods in education. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Wolff, H. J. (1966). The measurement of environment. In A. Anastasai (Ed.), Testing problems in perspective. Washington, DC: American Council on Education.
- Wunderlich, E. (1974, December). Black americans in children's books. The Reading Teacher, 28(3), 282-285.
- Wurzel, J. S. (1988). Multiculturalism and multicultural education. In J. S. Wurzel (Ed.), Toward multiculturalism: A reader in multicultural education (pp. 1-10) Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press.
- Yee, A. (1968). Interpersonal attitudes of teachers and advantaged and disadvantaged pupils. Journal of Human Resources, 3, 327-345.

Yin, R. (1989). Case study research design and methods
(Applied social research methods series vol. 4). Newbury
Park, CA: Sage Publications.

APPENDIX

Evaluation of Trade Books

Please circle the number that best describes your feelings towards each book. 5 = strongly like, 4 = like, 3 = neither like nor dislike, 2 = dislike, 1 = strongly dislike.

	<u>Strongly Like</u>			<u>Strongly Dislike</u>	
1. <u>Three Wishes</u> by Lucille Clifton	5	4	3	2	1
2. <u>Aunt Flossie's Hats</u> <u>(and Crab Cakes Later)</u> by Elizabeth F. Howard	5	4	3	2	1
3. <u>Night on Neighborhood Street</u> by Eloise Greenfield	5	4	3	2	1
4. <u>Tar Beach</u> by Faith Ringgold	5	4	3	2	1
5. <u>Finding the Greenstone</u> by Alice Walker	5	4	3	2	1