

THE PORTRAYAL OF CARING TEACHERS IN CHILDREN'S
LITERATURE: A CONTENT ANALYSIS

By

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
Department of Teaching and Learning

MAY 2009

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To the Faculty of Washington State University:

The members of the Committee appointed to examine the dissertation of
JANE ELLEN P. BRADY find it satisfactory and recommend it be accepted.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Throughout the PhD process, I learned and have come to truly appreciate that there is a team of dedicated, passionate individuals that have played a major role in my ability to complete my program of study and finish the writing of this dissertation. And, I want to thank those who have helped me accomplish my goal and realize my dream of a PhD.

First and foremost, I would like to thank Dr. Jane Kelley and Dr. Terrell Young, my committee chairs, for their guidance throughout the dissertation process as well as their never-ending excitement and genuine interest toward this research study and research topic. I am grateful to both of them for the countless hours they invested in my program of study and dissertation as well as their unrelenting support. All were pivotal to my success and achievement.

Thanks to Dr. Darcy Miller and Dr. Jennifer Beller, my committee members, for their willingness to join me on this journey. I sincerely appreciate the gift of their time to attend the dissertation meetings and read through the dissertation. And, I am grateful for the many words of encouragement they offered along the way.

I would like to thank my instructors and mentors in the College of Education at Washington State University, Dr. Mary Roe, Dr. Pam Bettis, Dr. Mike Hayes, Dr. Gail Furman, Dr. Pat Mainella, Dr. Linda Holloway, Dr. Jane Kelley, Dr. Terrell Young, and Dr. Paula Groves-Price for their willingness to share their knowledge with me so that I may grow as a person and as a scholar.

To all the faculty and staff in the Department of Teaching and Learning in the College of Education, I sincerely appreciate the warmth and friendliness that they shared with me each day that I was a graduate student at Washington State University.

I would like to thank Dr. Jane Van Galen, my academic advisor for my Master's program at the University of Washington. She was the first person to encourage me to pursue a doctorate degree. I am grateful to her for encouraging me to embark upon this incredible academic journey.

I would like to thank my friends, family and extended family in Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Mississippi for their tremendous support and encouragement. Despite the vast number of miles between Pullman and the east coast, I was always aware of their love and support.

I would like to thank Carolann Pinckney, my sister, for accepting my invitation to be a second reader. I truly appreciate her taking the time to read the drafts I sent via email and offer suggestions.

I would like to thank my mother Beverly Phelan for her unwavering love, patience, encouragement, and enthusiasm not only during my doctoral program but throughout my life. She is the wind beneath my wings.

I would like to thank Bill Brady, my husband. The mountains that separate Western and Eastern Washington proved challenging. Despite the challenges, he always encouraged my pursuit of this degree. I am grateful for his support and encouragement as well as the opportunity. It allowed me to find myself again.

Last but certainly not least I want to thank Matthew and Ryan Brady, my two sons. Ryan, my youngest son, was the one who was forever sneaking in my office while I was working to surprise me with a gentle hug. I am truly thankful for his love.

Matthew, my oldest son, has been my biggest cheerleader throughout this entire process. I want to thank him for his constant words

of support and encouragement especially his singing of the song “Don’t Stop Believing”. It made smile and inspired me to continue. I could not have accomplished this without my sons’ love and support. Their presence inspires me every day. They are truly life’s most precious treasures.

THE PORTRAYAL OF CARING TEACHERS IN CHILDREN'S
LITERATURE: A CONTENT ANALYSIS

Abstract

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The purpose of the study was to examine the portrayal of teachers featured in children's literature as an avenue for illuminating embedded messages relative to care in the context of teaching and learning. The study employed two analytical frameworks relational epistemology and critical literacy. The data set consisted of 38 children's books, specifically picture storybooks, transitional books, and children's novels. The books targeted for inclusion in the study were those that had: 1) an original publication date between 1998 and 2008, 2) an elementary school setting, 3) a teacher featured as a central character, and 4) a storyline that depicted a teacher teaching. There were three coding categories. The first was social identities specifically coding for teacher gender, race, ethnicity,

and culture. The second was personal dispositions related to caring. The third coding category focused on the pedagogical practices and approaches of the teachers featured in children's literature.

Overall, the results indicated that children's books published within the last ten years reflect a positive trend in the portrayal of teachers. The findings revealed several key points relative to the coding categories. Female characters continue to dominate the portrayal of elementary teachers featured in children's literature. The majority of the fictional teachers featured in the literary texts were portrayed as having a light skin tone. Finally, across the texts analyzed the portrayal of teachers reflect an absence of pedagogical approaches and practices that incorporate caring as conveyed in different cultures.

With an over representation of White European-American females and an under representation of cultures beyond the dominant mainstream culture, the conclusion drawn was that the teachers featured in children's literature does not accurately reflect the reality of the teachers teaching in elementary schools today. As such, this study brought awareness to the narrow perception of teaching and teachers. In sum, the significance of this study was the awareness brought forth as to the positive trend in the

portrayal of teachers yet a narrow perception of what it means to be a caring teacher.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
ABSTRACT	vii
DEDICATION	xvi
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
Purpose of Study	1
Importance of Study	2
Statement of the Problem and Rationale	4
A Catalyst for Understanding Caring Teachers	7
Questioning the Portrayal of Caring Teachers	10
Analytic Framework	12
Relational Epistemology	13
Critical Literacy Theory	15
Definition of Terms	16
Research Questions and Methodology	27
Scope and Delimitations of the Study	27
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	29
Understanding the Landscape of Care in the Context of Teaching and Learning	30

A Conceptual Analysis of Care -----	30
A Historical Analysis of Care -----	33
Tensions in Theories of Care -----	39
Contours of the caring Landscape -----	42
Qualitative and Quantitative Research on Care -----	43
In the Mirror of Children’s Literature -----	51
Gender & Race Ideologies in Children’s Literature -----	52
Ideologies of Teaching & Learning in Children’s Literature -----	57
Conclusion -----	64
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY -----	65
Introduction -----	65
Children’s Literature: A Detailed View of the Data Source -----	65
Analytical Frameworks -----	67
The Study -----	69
Research Design and Methodology -----	69
Procedures -----	70
Data Collection -----	70
Coding -----	73
Significance of the Study -----	75

CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION	76
Introduction	76
Part I: Caring Teachers by Coding Categories	77
Social Identities	77
Teacher Gender	77
Race/Ethnicity/Culture	78
Personal Dispositions	78
A Friendly Disposition	78
A Nurturing Disposition	79
Pedagogy	79
Connecting with Students	79
Supportive of Students	80
Setting Student Expectations	81
Part II: Caring Teachers in Children’s Literature	81
<i>Sahara Special</i> by Esme Codell	81
<i>Hooray for Reading Day!</i> By Margery Cuyler	82
<i>Brand-New Pencils, Brand-New Books</i> by Diane deGroat	83
<i>Miss Malarkey Leaves No Reader Behind</i> by Judy Finchler & Kevin O’Malley	83

<i>Miss Smith's Incredible Storybook</i> by Michael Garland	84
<i>Mr. Ouchy's First Day</i> by Barbara G. Hennessy	84
<i>The Year of Miss Agnes</i> by Kirkpatrick Hill	85
<i>The Best Teacher in Second Grade</i> by Katherine Kenah	85
<i>Sister Anne's Hands</i> by Marybeth Loribecki	86
<i>The Teacher's Funeral</i> by Richard Peck	87
<i>Thank You, Mr. Falker</i> by Patricia Polacco	87
<i>My Name is Yoon</i> by Helen Recorvits	88
<i>Totally Wonderful Miss Plumberry</i> by Michael Rosen	89
<i>Loser</i> by Jerry Spinelli	89
<i>Yoko Writes Her Name</i> by Rosemary Wells	90
<i>Harry and the Dinosaurs Go to School</i>	
by Ian Whybrow & Adrian Reynolds	91
Part III: An Integrated Analysis of Books and Findings	91
Social Identities	91
The Portrayal of Female and Male Teachers	91
Portraying Teacher Race	96
Portraying Teacher Ethnicity/Culture	99
Invisibility of Race, Ethnicity, & Culture	102

Personal Dispositions	103
Portraying a Friendly Disposition	103
Portraying a Nurturing Disposition	107
Gestures Indicate Acceptance and Approval	109
Pedagogy	110
Building Connections	110
A Supportive Pedagogy	124
Pedagogy as High Expectations	129
Connecting is Receptivity	132
Conclusion to the Portrayal of Caring Teachers	133
CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS	134
Findings	135
Invisibility of Race, Ethnicity, and Culture	135
Gestures Indicate Acceptance and Approval	138
Connecting is Receptivity	139
Leading to Success	141
Reflecting Upon Theoretical Frameworks	142
Recommendations for Further Research	144
Conclusion: The Kaleidoscope of Care	149

BIBLIOGRAPHY	-----	152
APPENDICES	-----	178
A. ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY	-----	179
B. DATA COLLECTION MATRIX	-----	223

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my two sons, Matthew and Ryan,
who inspire me every day.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Images of teachers nurturing and teaching children in primary grades are analogous with gardening. Gardeners nurture the seeds and flowers they plant with water, good soil, time, and attention. For a teacher, each child that crosses the threshold of the classroom is “a flower growing in life’s garden” (Diamond, 1985) just waiting to bloom. Like a flower, children need special attention to blossom such as the love and nurturance of a caring teacher. But, what does it mean to care in the context of teaching and learning?

This study focuses on the depiction of caring teachers in children’s literature as an avenue for explicating care as it correlates to teachers teaching and students learning. A general overview of the study, the purpose, the importance, the rationale, the study’s research questions and methodology, definitions of important terms, and the delimitations of the study comprise this first chapter.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study is to examine the portrayal of caring teachers featured in children’s literature. Examining the portrayal of caring fictional teacher characters will accomplish two goals. First, it will

bring caring in the context of teaching and learning to the surface by drawing attention to the social identities and personal characteristics, attitudes and behaviors, as well as the instructional practices infused in the characterization of teacher characters found in children's trade books. Second, it will provide a conduit for illuminating the explicit and implicit messages embedded in literary texts with regard to caring teachers. By identifying the various dimensions of caring in the context of teaching and learning as they are illustrated and described in children's literature, scholars, teacher educators and classroom teachers alike can consider how literary texts support or disrupt care as a construct of teaching and learning.

Importance of the Study

In recent years, educational policy has drawn attention to the need for a quality and effective teacher to be placed in every classroom. If a quality teacher is an educational priority, then the time has come when educational stakeholders and mainstream culture can no longer continue to demean, dishearten, and fail to cherish the human element that is central to teaching and learning (Palmer, 1998). A bridge needs to be constructed to foster the crossing of the chasm that exists between

teachers as influential members of society and the low status society projects on the profession of teaching and the teachers teaching.

Commonly held perceptions and misperceptions about teaching and teachers come from a variety of sources (Nederhouser, 2000). One source is popular culture. Over the years, popular culture such as cinematic films and children's literature has played a prominent role in fostering negative images and perceptions of teaching and teachers. Whereas popular films like *Dead Poets Society* (Wier, 1989), *Lean On Me* (Avildsen, 1989), *Dangerous Minds* (Smith, 1995), *Emperors Club* (Hoffman, 2002), *Music of the Heart* (Craven, 1999) and many others have drawn considerable attention from scholars (e.g., Dalto, 1995; Guerrero, 1993; Nederhouser, 2000; Thomsen, 1993) relative to the images of teachers, there is an absence of inquiry, investigation, and examination of the portrayal of teachers, specifically caring teachers, featured in children's literature. Given the power of literature to influence societal perceptions across the ages, an examination of the portrayal of teachers is of paramount importance.

This study therefore examines children's literature as an avenue for illuminating the explicit and implicit messages embedded in the portrayal of teachers, specifically caring teachers. As mentioned, some research

has been conducted on images of teachers and schools in children's literature but nothing that follows the same scope of inquiry as this current research study. Other studies have centered their analysis and discussion on the negative images of teachers. Previous investigations such as Sarah Jo Sandefur and Leeann Moore (2004) focused on specific descriptors used to portray teachers in children's literature. In order to obtain a comprehensive view of the portrayal of teacher characters in children's books, it is important to analyze a collection of books with specific attention to the social identities, personal dispositions, and pedagogical practices and approaches incorporated into the characterization of teachers in books for young readers. The significance of this study was to bring awareness to the perceptions of teachers, overt and covert, as represented in children's literature.

Statement of the Problem and Rationale

A considerable amount of scholarship focuses on the topic of care in the context of teaching and learning. From the scholarly literature, two key points emerge. First, researchers and theorists such as Mike Marlowe (2006), Nel Noddings (1992), Joseph Sanacore (2004), and Barbara Thayer-Bacon (1997) support a need to create K-12 classrooms on the premise of care. Second, developing caring pedagogical relationships with

students in the K-12 classroom are a worthy goal (e.g., Murdock & Miller, 2003; Goldstein & Lake, 2000; Noblit, 1993; Noddings, 1992). In fact, some scholars (e.g., Hargreaves, 2000; Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998; Wentzel, 1997; McDermott, 1977) believe focusing time and attention on developing a caring pedagogy should be an educational priority.

Research provides evidence in support of a connection between pedagogical caring and fostering academic achievement and intellectual growth of students (e.g., Charney, 1991; Dalton & Watson, 1997; Goldstein, 2002; McDermott, 1977). As such, the conclusion drawn is that caring is of profound importance to teaching and student learning. Despite the research support, however, caring as pedagogy is continuously pushed to the margins of educational reform as well as classroom practice (Lantieri, 2001; Noddings, 1986; Oakes & Lipton, 2003). Educational policy, the administration, and to a certain extent research concentrates on the cognitive and gives little to no attention to the positive and powerful impact of pedagogical caring on student learning (Hargreaves, 2000).

If educational stakeholders are serious about standards-based education, raising test scores, and improving student learning, Andy Hargreaves (2000) asserts that it is essential for the educational community to devote time and attention to investigating pedagogical

caring as well. In order to emphasize the power of caring in the context of teaching and learning it is important to first understand what a caring pedagogy means and looks like in the context of education.

A synthesis of the existing literature on caring as pedagogy indicates a primary focus on care in the context of teaching and learning as a type of personality trait. While there is truth that there is a dimension of care that correlates to personality pedagogical caring goes beyond a disposition. Since a fairly large portion of research and inquiry associates care in this way, the end result is that knowledge of care in the context of teaching and learning remains at a surface level. Maintaining a surface level understanding negates caring as an educational priority and often overlooks the power of pedagogical caring, specifically the positive impact on student learning. With that said, this study moves behind a surface level examination of care in an effort to move care in the context of teaching and learning from a tacit knowledge that a person has but of which is not consciously aware (Harris & Hodge, 1995), to explicit knowledge at a conscious level of awareness. Examining the depiction of caring teachers featured in children's literature provides an avenue by which to explicate care. By investigating the explicit and implicit characteristics and normative practices embedded in the portrayal of

caring teachers, this study seeks to gain insight into the power of caring as pedagogy that rests at the intersection of teaching and learning as it appears in children's literature.

A Catalyst for Understanding Caring Teachers

Children's literature that features teachers in schools or elementary classrooms has been available to young readers for years. Since the early 1890's, teacher and school stories have surfaced as a common topic in children's literature. Over the years, the focus of teacher and school stories shifts from a central focus on the events in the classroom to an equal or prominent focus on personal interactions such as teacher-student relationships or those among students (Ellis, 1963). A frequent theme in children's literature is care. As a theme, care is characterized as a character having someone who cares about them (Norton, 2007). A number of children's books published within the last ten years unite the teacher story topic with a caring theme.

One example of children's literature blending a teacher story with the theme of care is a historical fiction book written by Richard Peck (2004). Set in 1904, *The Teacher's Funeral* (Peck, 2004) storyline is constructed around the polarized images of two classroom teachers. One teacher, Miss Myrtle Arbuckle, employs a traditional method of teaching

and rules the students with a “hickory stick.” A second teacher, Miss Culver [Tansy], is a novice teacher who is portrayed using a blend of traditional and non-traditional instructional practices and approaches that ultimately lead the students in the story to learn and succeed academically.

A secondary storyline is the teacher-student relationship between Tansy and Little Britches. On the first day, Little Britches, who is five years old, enters the one room schoolhouse but wants no part of school or learning as is illustrated in the excerpt below.

“Who are you?” Tansy asked with an arm around her.

“I ain’t sayin,’” said Little Britches. “I ain’t stayin’. I’m going on home now.” She wiggled free of Tansy.

“Well, you can go home at noon”, Tansy told her. “Til then just wait up there at my desk. You can...help me be teacher.”

Tansy stuck her in the crook of her arm and climbed the rostrum to settle her in the teacher’s chair behind the desk” (Peck, 2004, p. 81).

Little Britches not only stays until noon she stays until school is over for the day. From this day forward Tansy the novice schoolteacher works to develop a connection with Little Britches in multiply ways.

The relationship between the teacher and her young student builds interest and engagement on the part of Little Britches. A residual effect implicit in the depiction of the teacher-student relationship is success and academic achievement for the character of Little Britches. Near the end of the story the school district superintendent and assistant superintendent evaluate each student's educational progress or learning. One student after the other comes forward to demonstrate what they learned during the school year. Focusing on Little Britches, the superintendent begins by asking:

“And, what is your name?”

“Beulah Bradley”, Little Britches said.

“And do you know your letters yet?” T. Bernard

Whipple hung over her, big as a house.

“G is for the gopher, digging in its burrow,” Little Britches remarked. “H is for the patient horse, plowing in its burrow.”

“Ah,” said the superintendent. “Can you put the letters together to make words?”

Little Britches took up her complimentary writing pad and began making big letters.

“You are a regular scholar, Beulah” (Peck, 2004, p. 179).

Little Britches meets all grade level expectations and develops a passion and joy for learning along the way.

While fictional the story of Tansy and Little Britches is one of many stories in children’s literature that illuminate caring as pedagogy. Care, as it appears in this fictional story, points to a deeper reality. On the one hand, care emerges as a naturally occurring result of a teacher developing connections with students by getting to know who they are as individuals and as learners. On the other hand, the story of Tansy and her portrayal as a caring teacher ends with students experiencing academic success and advancement. The story of Tansy and Little Britches offers one example of children’s literature portraying a teacher demonstrating care as pedagogy. A focus of this study is to illuminate the many other teacher stories published within the last several years.

Questioning the Portrayal of Caring Teachers

Topics and themes in children’s literature are closely connected to children’s needs and experiences. Teacher and school stories are not only common, but are also a popular theme in books for young readers (Mitchell, 2003). The popularity, to some degree, relates to the centrality of

the topic to the everyday lives and experiences of children. Most children between the age of five and twelve spend seven hours a day for a minimum of 180 days a year in elementary classrooms with a teacher. Children's texts provide a window (Bishop, 1982) through which young readers can view the world around them. Teacher and school stories can help young readers understand the educational environment as well as their lived experiences in school.

As scholars acknowledge (e.g., Apol, 1998; Sandefur & Moore, 2004), children's stories are not benign. Often times, embedded within the words and pictures are social, cultural, and political messages and ideologies. Similar to literature for adults, the stories written reflect the author's views as well as society's views on and about different topics. Critical literacy theory encourages readers and scholars alike to take a questioning stance and interrogate the words and pictures in literary texts (e.g., Lewison, Flint, & Van Sluys, 2002; McDaniel, 2004). Embracing a questioning stance relative to teacher stories leads this researcher to wonder, what information and understanding do children's books provide relative to what it means to be a caring teacher?

Like Tansy, I have learned through my experiences as an elementary school teacher, a college instructor and a parent of two

boys that caring is an essential element of what it means to teach, and a critical component of student learning and academic achievement. By minimizing the importance and benefit of caring as pedagogy, it is my belief that current educational reform efforts inadvertently hinder students from achieving their full learning potential. With that said, the time has come for caring to be considered a central piece of educational praxis. The potential of a caring teacher to lead students to academic success and achievement serves as a point of departure for this qualitative study.

Analytic Framework

The study of children's literature employs a variety of analytic frames through which to analyze texts. Each analytical lens brings forth a unique way of examining children's books. My research and pedagogical practice is shaped by a social constructivist view of education as developed by Lev Vygotsky (1978). A social constructivist perspective, as described by Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln (2003), seeks to comprehend the meaningfulness of human actions and interactions in a particular context. This perspective questions social interactions relative to the emotional, cultural, political, and historical dimensions as experienced by humans and portrayed in literary texts. In this study, I draw upon relational epistemology, a branch of social constructivism, as an analytic

tool and apply a critical literacy lens to illuminate the portrayal of caring teachers.

Relational Epistemology

Relational epistemology, as espoused by Barbara Thayer-Bacon (1993), falls under the umbrella of constructivism. This theory focuses on how learners come to knowledge and knowing. Following the basic tenets of epistemological traditions, embedded in traditional relational epistemology is an overarching focus on the nature, scope, and sources of knowledge. Relational epistemology departs from the traditional view in its focus on the kind of relationships people form with others and the role such relationships play in knowledge development and learning. More specifically, relational epistemology perceives knowledge as something that is socially constructed as people interact with one another (Thayer-Bacon, 1997). As people interact, they dialogue through verbal and written forms of communication. People involved in genuine interactions develop their existing knowledge by expanding what it is that they know relative to the context of communicating, listening, and interacting with others. Knowledge is, thus, acquired and expanded through not only the exchange of words but also through facial expressions, body language,

attitudes, and emotions. As understanding and perspectives expand, new knowledge and meaning is constructed.

From the perspective of relational epistemology, caring relationships are considered foundational to the construction of knowledge. As such, this epistemological framework aims to draw attention to the importance of caring relationships like those that develop between teachers and students as well as students and other students. The dance metaphor developed by Jerry Gill (1993) offers visual clarity to this theory of knowledge and knowing.

In positive educational classrooms based on a premise of care, students have an opportunity to develop as individuals. One dimension of the caring classroom highlighted as fostering student autonomy and voice is caring pedagogical relationships. A central focus of relational epistemology is a focus on caring teacher-student relationships as vital to the development of student knowledge (Thayer-Bacon, 1997) and academic success. Using relational epistemology as a theoretical framework for this study, thus, creates a window through which to view the dimensions of teaching and learning for the ways they are portrayed as influencing students' construction of knowledge.

Critical Literacy Theory

The second theoretical lens working in tandem with relational epistemology is critical literacy. The common dictionary definition of literacy is “the ability to read and write” (Jewel, 2002, p. 484). To a large extent this definition represents the perception of literacy commonly held by mainstream society (Lipson & Wixson, 2003). From critical literacy theorists, literacy is so much more. In fact, critical literacy challenges the narrow understanding of literacy beyond the decoding and encoding of words in order to construct meaning. Critical literacy, according to Patrick Shannon (1995), is a vehicle for developing knowledge of one’s world, history and culture in order to foster equal and just participation in the decisions that impact, influence, and control everyday life. The greatest influence of critical literacy, according to many scholars (e.g., Au, 2006; Freire, 2004; Giroux & Simon, 1989; Harris, 1999), is that it provides a conduit for illuminating the embedded ideologies and stereotypes as portrayed in different types of texts; practices or behaviors, language and/or images that serve to create and sustain stereotypical identities

(Tobin, 2000). Whether implicit or explicit, overt or covert, critical literacy provides a framework through which to investigate, examine, and ultimately disrupt the status quo.

Often difficult to construct a clear and concise definition, it is easy to see that central to critical literacy is developing an analytical eye and a questioning stance relative to what is being read. Critical literacy theorists (e.g., Giroux, 1993; Davies, 1993) believe that language and literature teach the reader two things: (1) about who they are and 2) information with respect to knowledge about the world in which they live. It is, thus, vital that readers not blindly accept what is written but rather learn and dare to question and wonder as they read “the word and the world” (Freire & Macedo, 1987). Developing a questioning stance is the element of critical literacy that makes it a perfect lens for analyzing the portrayal of caring fictional teachers featured in children’s literature.

Definition of Terms

1. Analytical Frames:

Constructivism:

A. A philosophical perspective developed by Immanuel Kant that “focuses on how knowledge is built rather than on its

product” (Harris & Hodges, 1995, p. 32).

B. There are different strands and meanings to constructivism depending on the discourse (Schwandt, 2001). For the purposes of this study, the strand of constructivism employed is social constructivism.

Social Constructivism:

A. A theory of learning developed by Lev Vygotsky.

B. Embedded in social constructivism, according to the work of Vygotsky, cognition development is firmly planted in the context of social relationships, explicitly stated “... the process of learning is socially mediated” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 57).

Critical Literacy Theory: “...pushes the definition of literacy beyond traditional decoding or encoding of words in order to reproduce the meaning of text or society until it becomes a means for understanding one’s own history and culture, to recognize connections between one’s life and the social structure, to believe that change in one’s life, and the lives of others and society are possible as well as desirable, and to act on the new knowledge in order to foster equal and just

participation in all the decisions that affect and control our lives”
(Shannon, 1995, p. 83).

Relational Epistemology:

A. A branch of constructivist epistemology.

B. It is a theory that examines how learners come to knowledge and knowing with specific attention to the relationships people form with others and the role such relationships play in knowledge development and learning (Thayer-Bacon, 1997).

2. **Characterization:** “The people portrayed in children’s books should be as convincingly real and lifelike as our next-door neighbors. The credibility of characters depends on the author’s ability to show their true natures, their strengths, and their weaknesses” (Kiefer, Hepler, & Hickman, 2007, p. 17)

3. **Children’s Literature:**

A. “...defines itself in terms of its audience” (Hunt, 1996, p. 11).

B. “Writings specifically intended for children...” (Harris & Hodges, 1995, p. 30).

C. “The only limitations that seem binding on literature for children are those that appropriately reflect the emotions and experiences of children today. Children’s books are books that

have the child's eye at the center" (Kiefer, Hepler, & Hickman, 2007, p. 5).

D. Characteristics of children's literature are as follows: (1) story settings are places typically known to children, (2) characters are people or animals that are most likely familiar to children, and (3) the topics and themes used in children's literature stories are those that speak directly to children, their concerns, their experiences, their wishes, and their imagination (Mitchell, 2003).

4. **Content Analysis:** A research methodology that works inductively by summarizing and classifying elements textual material in search of coherent meaning structures (Scheufele, 2008).
5. **Dispositions:** "The values, commitments and professional ethics that influence behaviors toward students...and affect student learning, motivation, and development... Dispositions are guided by beliefs and attitudes related to values such as caring, fairness, honesty, responsibility, and social justice." (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2001, p. 57).

6. **Elementary School:** “In the United States and Canada, the school that most children of 5 or 6 to 11 or 12 years attend” (Harris & Hodges, 1995, p. 70). A criterion for inclusion in this study is that the setting of the story is an elementary school classroom.
7. **Format:** “The total look of a book is its format, involving type size, leading margins, placement of text and pictures, and arranged of front and back matter... The look of a book should be responsive to its purpose and its content” (Kiefer, Hepler, & Hickman, 2007, p. 603).

Children’s Novels:

- A. Literature for the middle and upper elementary grades; this is roughly between the ages of eight and twelve (Norton, 2007).
- B. Some of the central characteristics of children’s novels are as follows: (1) story is written in chapters, (2) plots are more complicated, (3) more complex literary devices are employed like flashback and symbolism (Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson, 2005), (4) a broad range of topics are used to structure the stories such as adventure stories, mystery and suspense stories, school stories, science fiction stories, sports stories, or

humorous stories, and finally, (5) the book length is approximately 100 to 200 pages.

Picture Storybook:

A. “A book in which the illustrations are as important as the text, both contributing to the telling of the story” (Harris & Hodges, 1995, p. 188).

B. “In a well-written picture storybook, the text and narrative complement each other, so children cannot deduce the whole story merely by viewing the pictures. The illustrations are integral to the story line, enhancing the actions, settings, and characterization” (Norton, 2007, p. 178).

C. The key characteristics of children’s picture storybooks are as follows: (1) high quality and engaging illustrations which draw the audience to listen as well as interact with the text (Mitchell, 2003), (2) “...the meaning of the story, both the illustrations and the text must bear the burden of narration. The pictures help tell the story, showing the action and expressions of the characters, the changing settings, and the development of plot” (Kiefer, Hepler, & Hickman, 2007, p. 200), and (4) the books are typically 32 pages in length (Horning, 1997).

Transitional Books:

A. Transitional book is used interchangeably with Easy-To-Read Books.

B. Transitional books are “designed to be read by children with beginning read by children with beginning reading skills. Like picture storybooks, these books contain many pictures designed to suggest the story line. Unlike picture storybooks, however, the vocabulary is controlled so that young readers can manage independently” (Norton, 2007, p. 177).

C. “...the number of words, the sounds of the words, and the length of the stories...” in this format of book is controlled (Kiefer, Hepler, & Hickman, 2007, p. 181).

8. Genre:

A. “...a kind or type of literature that has a common set of characteristics (Lukens, 2003).

B. “Category used to classify literary works, usually by form, technique or content (Harris & Hodges, 1995, p. 94).

Fiction:

A. The genre heading used to identify and describe written works created from the imagination.

B. There are different subgenres included in fiction. Three of the subgenres in this study are contemporary realistic fiction, historical fiction, and modern fantasy.

Contemporary Realistic Fiction: "...refers to stories that could indeed happen to people or animals; that is, it is within the realm of possibility that such events could occur or could have occurred" (Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson, 2005, p. 131).

Historical fiction: "Historical fiction is set in a time remote enough from the present to be considered history" (Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson, 2005, p. 147); in essence, this subgenre of fiction recreates a particular historical period by accurately depicting vehicles, clothing, food preparation, etc specific to the time and setting (Lukens, 2003).

Modern Fantasy:

A. "Modern fantasy refers to the body of literature in which the events, the settings, or the characters are outside the realm of possibility. Although the events could not happen in real life, modern fantasies often contain truths that help the reader to understand today's world" (Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson, 2005, p. 116).

B. "...is metaphorical commentary on society today" (Kiefer, Hepler, & Hickman, 2007, p. 355).

C. Types of modern fantasy include animal fantasy. "Animal fantasies are stories in which animals behave as human beings in that they experience emotions, talk, and have the ability to reason" (Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson, 2005, p. 120). The giving of human qualities to animals is called **anthropomorphism** (Lukens, 2003). Modern fantasy stories with animal characters set in life-like elementary classrooms are included in this study.

9. Learning: "The process, or result, of change in behavior through practice, instruction, or experience" (Harris & Hodges, 1995, p. 135).

10. Pedagogy:

A. The art and science of teaching (Dewey, 1938).

B. "...the study of educational practices; and the guided exercise of the art, science, and skill of teaching" (Patterson, Michelli, & Pacheco, 1999, p. 219).

C. "A contemporary perspective that regards teaching as a process, not a technique. In turn, teaching is held to be more about transformative relationships of production and exchange

than about distributive mechanism for the dissemination and consumption of knowledge” (Hamilton & McWilliam, 2001, p. 18).

11. **Social Identities:** The categorization of ones self in relation to membership in a social group (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Several social categories exist such as religion, race, class or social stratification, culture, gender, and ethnicity. Among this list, the latter three are in focus in this study.

Culture:

A. “...consists of the shared beliefs, symbols, and interpretations within a human group. The essence of a culture is not its artifacts, tools, or other tangible cultural elements but how the members of the group interpret, use, and perceive them” (Banks & Banks, 2004, p. 8).

B. “...the ever-changing values, traditions, social and political relationships, and worldview created, shared, and transformed by a group of people bound together by a combination of factors that can include common history, geographic location, language, social class, and religion” (Nieto, 1999, p. 48).

C. In the context of the classroom, “...those values and

practices that shape the content, process, and structure of initial and subsequent intellectual, emotional, and social development among members of a particular group” (Grant & Ladson-Billings, 1997, p. 74).

Gender: “A category consisting of behaviors that result from the social, cultural, and psychological factors associated with masculinity and femininity within society” (Banks & Banks, 2004, p. 450).

Ethnicity: “Group characteristic often based on national origin, ancestry, language, or other cultural characteristics” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, 146).

Race: “Notion of a distinct biological type of human being, usually based on skin color or other physical characteristics” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p.153).

12. **Teacher:** “An adult person engaged in the professional activity of providing education to students” (Nedederhouser, 2000). For this study, the focus is on elementary teachers or a person engaged in educating students in grades kindergarten through fifth or sixth grade.

Research Questions and Methodology

Analyzed in this study are the different ways fictional teacher characters demonstrate care. Employed in this study are two analytic frameworks: critical literacy and relational epistemology. Through these analytic lenses, I specifically examine: 1) what are the personal characteristics of caring teachers featured in children's literature?, 2) what pedagogical practices and approaches are characteristic to the portrayal of caring teachers in children's literature?, and 3) what are the explicit and implicit messages embedded in the portrayal of caring teacher characters in children's literature?

The methodology applied to address these questions is a content analysis of children's literature. The approach to the content analysis is qualitative. The texts selected for inclusion in the study are analyzed according to three coding categories: 1) social identities, 2) personal dispositions, and 3) pedagogy. The books are analyzed for recurring trends and themes.

Scope and Delimitations of the Study

This qualitative study includes children's literature stories that have an original publication date between 1998 and 2008. The rationale behind this time frame is that the books analyzed will start approximately the year

the study conducted by Sarah Sandefur and Leeann Moore (2004). The other criteria for inclusion were as follows: 1) the genre identified is realistic fiction, historical fiction, or modern fantasy, 3) the primary setting of the story is an elementary classroom, 4) an elementary teacher is the protagonist or a central character in the story, and 5) the teacher is depicted teaching.

Excluded from this study are 1) young adult literature stories, 2) expository texts, 3) teacher characters that are peripheral or not central to the story, 4) protagonists or central characters that are a principal or librarian, and 5) stories with school settings other than the elementary classroom such as middle school or high school and school or public libraries.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Caring is a widely used word in the English language. Depending upon the context in which the word is used, the term *care* elicits numerous images. For example, *care had aged him*, denotes care as worry, anxiety, or concern. *She devotes great care to her work*, alludes to giving serious attention or caution to something. The above sentences represent care as it is defined in Random House Dictionary (Dalgish, 1988). All of these sentences and the explanations that accompany them serve to provide an operational definition of care, but none get to the heart of care as it relates to teaching and learning.

The word *care* in the context of teaching and learning frequently emerges in educational discourse. For example, a local school district Title I teacher-student-parent letter provides a written statement of assurance that the “teacher will provide a safe and caring learning environment for all students” (L. Inaba, M. Vaughn, K. Emtman, & F. Fulfs, personal communication, May 11, 2007). Yet, no explanation of what caring means or feels like in the context of the classroom is offered. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (1997) explicitly identifies

care as a developmentally appropriate practice in teaching young children. In this policy, care is identified as a component of pedagogical practice, however, a clear operational definition is not provided. While educational documents, like the ones presented above, use the word care, none provide an explanation or clear understanding of what care means in the context of teaching and learning.

Referencing the documents above serves two purposes. On the one hand, the letter and educational policy lend support to the argument that care is a term widely used in educational discourse (Goldstein, 2002) and a central tenet of teaching and learning (Goldstein & Lake, 2000). On the other hand, these documents highlight the issue of care as a poorly defined term in educational policy and pedagogical practice. The latter provides the point of departure that drives the review of the literature.

Understanding the Landscape of Care in the Context of Teaching and Learning

A Conceptual Analysis of Care

When defining care as it relates to pedagogy, the meaning associated with educational caring typically falls under the heading of “gentle smiles and warm hugs” (Rogers, 1994, p. 33). As inferred in the phrase gentle smiles and warm hugs, the word care in the context of

education is most commonly associated with the classroom teacher. For example, “caring teachers are nice, friendly, smiling, and loving. Caring teachers are endlessly patient, always have time for their students, and go the extra mile” (Goldstein, 2002, p. 9). In each of these statements, caring is situated in the affective domain; the affective domain refers to the realm of teaching and learning that directly connects to emotions, attitudes, beliefs, and values such as respecting, honoring, supporting, and caring. More specifically, the affective view of caring is defined as a feeling or set of feelings that lead a teacher to behave in a certain way.

Caring, as an affective domain, has long been perceived as an essential element of teaching and learning. More often than not, caring as pedagogy is associated with a personality trait, a temperament, and/or a disposition. Furthermore, warmth, nurturance, and emotional support are viewed as critical traits to creating of a positive and caring classroom environment that fosters student learning. While such characteristics are important and certainly appreciated by students, caring as pedagogy goes well beyond such affective traits. In fact, scholars in the field of education (e.g., Deiro, 2003; Goldstein & Lake, 2000; Noblit, 1993) argue that being sweet, warm, gentle, or nicey-nice are not prerequisites for pedagogical caring. Such a narrow perspective of caring becomes problematic

because it obscures the complexity and intellectual challenge of the work of classroom teachers (Goldstein, 2002). To limit the meaning of pedagogical caring to the affective domain minimizes the pedagogical power of caring as it relates to teaching and learning.

Pedagogical caring “is not something you are but, rather, something you engage in, something you do” (Goldstein, 2002). Caring as pedagogy is relational. It is about developing a connection with the students in classrooms all along the k-12 continuum. In fact, throughout the year a quality and caring classroom teacher continually works to build positive and supportive relationships with students. For many teachers, especially those in the elementary grades, establishing such relationships with students is a primary goal (Vogt, 2002). Pedagogical caring, thus, is about teachers interacting with students in such a way that they (the students) are understood, received, respected, and recognized for who they are, how they feel, and what they have to contribute (Noddings, 1992). Thus, caring as pedagogy is about seeing each student that enters the classroom and giving them positive and supportive attention, attention that ultimately fosters and scaffolds student learning and academic success.

A Historical Analysis of Care

One of the first scholars to bring the topic of care to the scholarly conversation was Aristotle. Some argue (e.g., Gregory, 2000; McCroskey, 1992; Treven & McCroskey, 1999) that goodwill, one of the three elements of ethos, is among the first philosophical references to caring. Aristotle's theory of the three elements of ethos is not specific to education but rather everyday life and living. When narrowing the view of care to the field of education, some of the earliest educational theorists to explore the concept of caring as pedagogy are John Dewey (1938) and Lev Vygotsky (1978).

Considered one of the most influential American educational theorists of the twentieth century, John Dewey (1938) published his thoughts and ideas about the need for educational reform in the book, *Experience and Education*. Dewey identifies teaching and learning as a continuous process of experience. In fact, experiences are highlighted as a fundamental first step to learning. Experiences, according to Dewey's philosophy of education, are interactions that take place in one of two ways. One type of interaction takes place between two individuals, like a teacher and a student, as they talk about a topic or issue. A second type of interaction takes place between an individual and an object, like a

reader and a text. In relation to teaching, learning, and caring, social interaction surfaces as the most relevant to the conversation on care.

The educational implications and applications of Dewey's social interaction theory are significant. With respect to caring as pedagogy, a quality and effective educator is responsible for developing an understanding of the individuals in their charge as well as knowledge of subject matter (Dewey, 1938). The two working in tandem allows a teacher to develop activities and experiences that lend themselves to creating a community of learners. This type of space or structured learning environment is one in which all individuals have an opportunity to contribute and to learn. The only true way for a teacher to develop such activities is by seeing, knowing, and understanding the individual needs and capabilities of the individual students in the class. Thus, the fundamental tenets of Dewey's educational reform are three: (1) knowing students, (2) being "intelligently aware of the capabilities, needs, and past experiences" (Dewey, 1938, p. 7) of the students, and (3) responding to the students as individuals. These three tenets are not only fundamental to educational reform and quality education they are vitally relevant to this examination of caring as pedagogy.

Almost thirty years after first being published, Lev Vygotsky's work was translated into English and published in the United States. Lev Vygotsky (1978) offered a compelling sociocultural theory of cognitive development. Fundamental to contemporary educational processes and practices, the theory draws upon the notion of the co-construction of knowledge. Implicit in the idea of co-constructing knowledge is the belief in the powerful influence of genuine human interactions that are based on the premise of care. As teachers become intelligently aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the individual students in their class, they build learning opportunities and experiences according to what each child can do on their own and what they can accomplish with the assistance and guidance of an adult. The support from the adult-child interaction ultimately results in learning. In other words, the zone of proximal development, the phrase coined by Vygotsky, is a locus of connection and relationship between the teacher, the student, and the knowledge to be learned. In sum, the social construction of knowledge as espoused by Vygotsky is the element that supports the intellectual growth and development of young learners.

Nel Noddings (1984) advances Vygotsky's psychological theory of knowledge as socially constructed by taking a philosophical look at the interpersonal relationships that develop in the context of schools and

education. The nature and character of Noddings conception of care is rooted in an ethic of care. In essence, “the ethic of care provides an explication of the nature and the role of teaching-learning relationships, thereby picking up where Vygotsky left off” (Goldstein, 1999, p. 655). The question then becomes what is an ethic of care?

In the early eighties, Carol Gilligan (1982) wrote a seminal piece, *In a Different Voice*. This book raises awareness and expands society’s conception of care by illuminating the differences in moral reasoning between men and women. In this examination of morality, Gilligan asserts men and women’s approach to moral reasoning are fundamentally different. A man’s sense of morality is grounded in a respect for people’s rights. This is termed an ethic of justice. A women’s sense of morality is grounded in a responsibility of caring and connecting with others. This is an ethic of care.

Numerous voices in the field of education (Goldstein, 1999; Noblit, 1993; Vogt, 2002) identify Gilligan and Noddings as having both had a significant impact on the investigation and reframing of care. The work of Noddings, however, is credited as the most influential in directing the scholarly conversation with respect to caring in the context of teaching and learning.

In her numerous publications, Noddings (1984; 1986; 1992) accomplishes several things relative to care. First, she provides a common language base from which to discuss caring in the context of education. Second, she calls for educational stakeholders (i.e., policy makers, district administrators, teacher educators, teachers) to organize the curriculum on the premise of care, a premise that serves to scaffold academic achievement for all students.

To explain more fully Noddings conception of care in the context of teaching and learning, the old adage comes to mind that to understand another person you need to first walk a mile in their moccasins. Walking in the shoes of another person or better yet, “stepping out of one’s own personal frame of reference and into another’s” (Noddings, 1984, p. 24) is accomplished to a large extent through personal interactions or “caring encounters”. According to Noddings (1992), a caring encounter involves two people. In the context of education, the two people are the classroom teacher and a student. Initially one person is the “caring-one”. The other person is the one “cared-for”. In a caring encounter, the caring-one meets the one being cared for with an openness that allows them to really hear, see, and feel what the student is trying to express. Inferentially, caring pedagogical relationships thus are about teachers developing a

connection through genuine interactions or encounters with students where the students are understood, received, respected, and recognized for who they are and how they feel.

An example of a caring encounter is “when a teacher asks a question in class and a student responds” (Noddings, 1992, p. 174). For a caring teacher, the answer is considered less important than the exchange between the student and the teacher (Eaker-Rich & Van Galen, 1996, p. 49). When a teacher calls on a child for a response, the two connect at that moment in time with their eyes, words, and attention (Noblit, 1993). It is the feeling of connectedness and the act of receptivity that is central to Noddings conception of care in the context of pedagogy (Goldstein, 1999).

While the examples and the explanation of a conception of care that is provided above focuses on the teacher as the “caring-one” and the student as the one “cared-for”, the reality of caring pedagogical relationships is similar to a two-way radio. Care is not just distributed, shown, expressed, or shared by the teacher. In genuine caring pedagogical relationships and interactions the students not only receive care they return it as well. This two-way exchange is the heart of connectedness. This two-way exchange is the act of receptivity. Theoretically, it is the development of caring pedagogical relationships

between a teacher and student(s) that encourages and supports student learning and academic achievement (Thayer-Bacon, 1993).

As mentioned earlier, Noddings' work is considered the catalyst that thrust caring into the scholarly conversation and educational discourse. Since the publication of *The Challenge to Care in Schools: An Alternative Approach to Education* (Noddings, 1992) the work of numerous scholars has been to focus on expanding and enriching the Noddings theories of care (e.g., Danforth & Smith, 2005; Marlowe, 2006; Tarlow, 1996; Thayer-Bacon, 1997; Sanacore, 2004). Among the educational scholars and philosophers, there is consensus that pedagogical caring draws upon two main constructs. First, pedagogical caring involves the establishment of meaningful teacher-student relationships. Second, pedagogical caring involves the ability of the teacher to create and maintain connections as well as sustain a commitment to respond to students with sensitivity, respect, and flexibility.

Tensions in Theories of Care

Through the review of literature on care, it is clear that pedagogical caring is integral to teaching and learning. However, to fully understand the promise as well as the pitfalls of theories of care in the context of teaching and learning, it is essential to broaden the scope of the literature

to include voices of dissent. On one hand, Audrey Thompson (2003) supports the belief “that all schooling must involve our passions, attitudes, connections, concerns, and experienced responsibilities if it [school] is to take up experience in a meaningful way” (p. 16). Additionally, Thompson is in agreement with Noddings (1992) and others in the field of education (e.g., Goldstein, 1999; Goldstein & Lake, 2000) in the effort to move praxis away from the viewpoint of educational caring as strictly a matter of supporting the gender specific needs of students.

On the other hand, Thompson (2003) calls into question the equity of an ethic of care as it is articulated by Gilligan and is espoused by Noddings (1992). The point of contention revolves around the narrow perspective presented in theories of care. White theorists (e.g., Gilligan, 1982; Noddings, 1992, 1986, 1984; Goldstein, 2002), Thompson (2003) asserts generate the majority of research and scholarship on care. As such, caring turns upon the White mainstream middle-class assumptions of care as it is connected to gender, specifically femininity. This vantage point, thus, is limited to the distinctive cultural and socio-economic assumptions held by the dominant mainstream society.

One example that lends support to Thompson’s view of care is *The Mummy Discourse* (Burgess & Carter, 1992). This discourse unearths the

broad perception of women as elementary school teachers. Female teachers teach all grades from kindergarten through twelfth grade here in the twenty-first century. However, women continue to dominate the primary grades. In a study conducted with pre-service teachers in Britain, Burgess and Carter's (1992) findings corroborate women's dominating presence in the primary grades. The findings and results of this disquisition serve to establish a definitive link between teaching young children and images of motherhood. In fact, the study explicitly links teaching in the primary grades to the socially accepted and approved White feminist virtues of caring and nurturance (Goldstein & Lake, 2000). This restricted ideological perspective forms the foundation for concern and a need for additional inquiry and examination of theories of care with specific attention to caring as it is portrayed and perceived relative to social identities such as gender and culture.

By stepping back and looking across the conceptual and historical landscape of care, it is evident that a considerable amount of theoretical and philosophical attention has been devoted to caring in the context of teaching and learning. A thread that emerges as a result of the analysis provided above is that caring is profoundly important to the intersection of teaching and learning. In fact, if we are serious about standard based

education and improving test scores, it is imperative that educational praxis, the practical application of teaching and instructional approaches, become more focused and thus more serious about caring as pedagogy (Hargreaves, 2000). With that said, understanding care in the context of education, specifically teaching and learning, in conjunction with the power of caring pedagogical relationships is an educational priority (Hargreaves, 2000). And therefore, if a quality teacher in every classroom and higher academic achievement are the goals of education and the current trend in educational reform, then the time has arrived when the educational community and mainstream culture need to shift the focus to inform and encourage teachers to draw upon the pedagogical power of care.

Contours of the Caring Landscape

When viewing any topographical landscape, multiple contours emerge, for example, peaks and valleys, grasslands and alpine meadows, forests and deserts. And, each contour brings unique qualities, attributes, and significance to the overall landscape. The topographical landscape of care is no exception. Scholarly research, both quantitative and qualitative, is the conduit through which to view and understand the multiple contours of care.

Quantitative and Qualitative Research on Care

Throughout the history of education, academics, researchers, policy makers, and educational administrators have placed great importance on the aspects of teaching and learning that can be quantified and aggregated. As such, it is important to review the quantitative research on care. To present the broadest view of care in the context of teaching and learning, however, it is pivotal to dedicate equal time and attention to discussing qualitative research studies on care in the context of teaching and learning. Therefore, presented in this section are a collection of qualitative and quantitative studies conducted on the topic of care in the context of teaching learning.

Jason Treven and James McCroskey (1996), for example, examine the construct of caring in the context of education. This study involves over two hundred undergraduate students enrolled in a communication class at a university in the Eastern region of the United States. To investigate perceptions of care held by the undergraduate students, the researchers employ a 22-item bipolar scale. Following are examples of the bipolar scale: (1) cares about me/doesn't care about me; (2) insensitive/sensitive; (3) apathetic/empathetic; (4)

unresponsive/responsive; (5) doesn't understand how I think/understands how I think (Treven & McCroskey, 1996).

Three levels of inquiry form the hypothesis for the study conducted by Treven & McCroskey. The first level determines if students who perceive their instructor as caring evaluate them positively. The second level determines if students who perceive their instructor as caring evaluate the course more positively. And, the third level determines if students who perceive their instructor as caring also identify their amount of learning as higher. The correlations provide strong support for all three levels of inquiry. In fact, "the findings revealed that student perceptions of caring on the part of their teachers were found to be substantially associated with the student's evaluation of their teachers, their affective learning, and their perceptions of cognitive learning" (Treven & McCroskey, 1996, p. 2). In other words, the results of this quantitative study illuminate perceived caring as a link to increased affective and cognitive learning in the classroom.

While the findings lend support for caring in the context of teaching and learning, the contributions of the Treven and McCroskey (1996) study relative to caring as pedagogy are limited. The limitations exist for two central reasons. First, the study does not provide an operational definition

of care in the context of education. Second, the study neglects to identify the characteristics and/or behaviors of the instructor that communicates an ethos of caring from the perspective of the students. Additional research is recommended by the researchers themselves to “determine what behaviors may increase perceived caring in the classroom” (Treven & McCroskey, 1996, p. 10).

Kathryn Wentzel (1997) also conducted a study on the topic of perceived caring. This investigation differs from Treven and McCroskey’s (1996) study described above in two main ways: participants and focus. Instead of undergraduate students, Wentzel investigates perceived caring from the perspective of three hundred seventy-five students from a mid-Atlantic suburban middle school. A subset of the student participants (n=248) agree to participate in the full 3-year longitudinal study. Similar to Treven and McCroskey, Wentzel explores the influence of perceived caring on individual student motivation to learn. She expands the work of her colleagues, however, by also seeking to identify the characteristics of classroom teachers that convey caring to students.

In the study conducted by Wentzel (1997), two different data collection tools are used. Participants complete the *Teacher Social and Academic Support Subscale* questionnaire (Johnson, Johnson, Buckman,

& Richards, 1985) as a measure of perceived caring. This data collection tool evaluates academic motivation and the effect of pedagogical caring based on participants responses to a 5-point scale (e.g., 0 = Never, 5 = Always). The results of the correlation and regression analysis indicate a significant and positive association between perceived caring from teachers by students and the middle school students' academic motivation and effort.

To illuminate characteristics of caring teachers, participants individually create a list of three things a teacher does to show they care about students and three things a teacher does that sends the message that they do not care about students. The initial coding categories for the "Who Cares?" questionnaire are modeling, democratic interactions, behavioral expectations, nurturance, and rule setting (Wentzel, 1997). Relative to specific teacher characteristics, the analysis reveals the largest percentage of students perceive teachers that care as setting individual expectations for students, specifically students as learners. Examples of caring teachers included in the written responses of students are "asks if I need help" and "takes time to make sure I understand" (Wentzel, 1997, p. 416). Based on the content of the written responses, a teacher perceived

as caring emerges as an educator that recognizes students as having academic strengths and weaknesses.

As with most any research study, the study conducted by Wentzel (1997) has strengths as well as weaknesses. The area of weakness in study is ethnicity. The study is conducted in a suburban middle school that is located in a Mid-Atlantic state in the United States. According to the study description, the demographic population of the students participating is 92% White and 8% other ethnicities (e.g., Black/African-American, Hispanic, Asian American). In other words, the voices that are represented in this study and its findings belong to the dominant White middle class. While this is certainly an important limitation to note as well as a need for additional research to provide a more diverse picture, the study still makes a significant contribution to the investigation of the power of caring as pedagogy.

Overall, Wentzel's (1997) study provides empirical evidence in support of the power of pedagogical caring to positively influence student academic motivation and achievement. Of greatest significance is the awareness this research study offers relative to the positive impact perceived caring has on student motivation.

Along similar lines, Tamera Murdock and Angela Miller (2003) investigated the connections between the academic motivation of eighth-grade students and their perceptions of teachers that care. The description of participants indicates that “students in the sample were 50% Caucasian and 44% African-American” (Murdock & Miller, 2003, p. 388). The researchers assert that students’ need a combination of academic caring and personal caring. According to the students participating in this study, teachers express academic caring by setting high but reasonable expectations for the students in their classes. In addition to high expectations, academic caring is further identified as the help a classroom teacher provides that enables students to achieve the high academic expectations and goals set.

At first glance, academic caring suggests alignment with the cognitive realm; the learning that relates to knowledge acquisition such as facts, skills, and other elements of skilled performance. Upon deeper analysis of the descriptions the students provide, dimensions of the social domain, the realm of teaching and learning that relates to the social interactions between teacher and students, emerge. Unlike academic caring, the central focus of personal caring is the dimension of teaching and learning that relates to emotions, attitudes, interests, beliefs, and

values such as respecting, honoring, and supporting others. Caring teachers, under the designation of personal caring, are characterized as willing to listen, interested in students' issues, problems and needs, as well as being humorous (Murdock & Miller, 2003). The implications of Murdock and Miller's study relative to pedagogy are that high expectations, teacher-student relationships, and an ethos of care working in tandem have a powerful and positive impact on not only the lives of students but their academic success and achievement as well.

Barbara Meehan, Jan Hughes, and Timothy Cavell (2003) contribute to the scholarly conversation on pedagogical relationships with a two-year study focusing on the influence of positive teacher-student relationships. The study evaluates teacher support as it emerges through positive teacher-student relationships. The central focus of this large-scale study is second- and third-grade students identified as having highly aggressive behavior tendencies. From five of the fifteen schools nominated, one hundred forty second- and third-grade students participate in the study. The students participating in the study are students with ethnically diverse backgrounds. Based on screening information, the "parent-identified ethnic composition of the sample was 37% Caucasian, 41% African American, and 22% Hispanic" (Meehan, Hughes, and Cavell,

2003, 1148). The ethnicity of the teachers participating in the studies is provided. Of the 39 teachers, 5 self-identified as Hispanic, 3 self-identified as Hispanic, and 31 self-identified as Caucasian. Beyond the notation of teacher ethnicity in the methodology section, the researchers did not examine teacher ethnicity and culture. The data collection tool is the *Network of Relationship Inventory* (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985). This measurement tool is based on a 5-point Likert type scale. In each of the eleven scales three items are included that ask the students about specific provisions of support that are offered through a teacher-student relationship (Meehan, Hughes, & Cavell, 2003).

The findings provide a robust association between a positive supportive teacher-student relationship and an increase in academic confidence and development for the students participating in the study. Specifically, classroom teachers' efforts and attention to developing positive and supportive teacher-student relationships with the at-risk students in their class significantly impact the students' development of a greater sense of relatedness with teachers. This impact enhances feelings of autonomy, personal freedom, academic confidence, and competence (Meehan, Hughes, & Cavell, 2003).

Important to note, one piece missing from Meehan, Hughes, and Cavell's inquiry and discussion is culturally relevant caring. In other words, teachers need to develop an awareness and sensitivity to the social norms and cultural values of mainstream students and students of diverse backgrounds in order to convey care to all students. The researchers in this study, however, neglect to address the issue of culturally responsive teaching or culturally relevant caring as an element of the pedagogical relationships analyzed.

In sum, the quantitative and qualitative studies presented above indicate caring is a critical element of teaching and learning. Support is provided for additional research in an effort to add understanding and depth to the topic of care in the context of teaching and learning. Across the studies, however, there is a lack of information and analysis relative to the social identities, specifically the gender, race, ethnicity, and culture, of the teachers participating in the studies. An absence of such information continues to foster a narrow view or perception of care in the context of teaching and learning.

In the Mirror of Children's Literature

Research studies in the field of children's literature encompass a diverse range of topics. Some scholars focus on understanding the

transactional nature of children's responses to literature (e.g., Rosenblatt, 1995; Stephens, 1992). Other scholars are concerned with reading engagement and motivation (e.g., Guthrie & Cox, 2001) or what children like to read (e.g., Ivey & Broaddus, 2001; Worthy, Moorman, & Turner, 1999). Still others examine children's literature for the overt and covert social, cultural, historical, and political ideologies and stereotypes, for example, gender (Taylor, 2003; Weitzman, Eifler, Hodada, & Ross, 1972), race (Taxel, 1986), disabilities (Harrill, 1993; Shakespeare, 1997), poverty (Kelley, Rosenberger, & Bothello, 2005) and second language acquisition (Hadaway & Young, 2007, 2009) that are embedded in the written and/or visual texts of children's literature.

Gender and Race Ideologies in Children's Literature

Among the array of topics listed above, the most relevant to this current study is research on gender and race themes in children's literature. Over the years, these two social identities have been examined from a multiple perspectives and through a variety of analytical lens. Of paramount concern is the issue that "the presence of characters from a particular group is no guarantee that representation will be realistic or favorable" (Taxel, 1986, p. 246). Over the years, considerable scholarship has surfaced on issues of representation relative to social identities.

Among the scholars are Frank Taylor (2003), Diane Turner-Bowker (1996), and Joel Taxel (1986).

Within the last few years, Frank Taylor (2003) conducted a study to expose overt gender ideologies present in popular children's literature. The participants in the study are the students in an undergraduate level course at a northeastern university. As part of their coursework, the students perform a content analysis of gendered messages in a random sample of children's books. Using a specially designed coding system, the participants read a collection of children's books and recorded findings.

The analytical frame employed by Taylor (2003) is gender schema theory. This theory "suggests that youngsters develop a sense of femaleness and maleness based on gender stereotypes and organizes their behavior around them" (Taylor, 2003, 301). Several themes arose from the analysis of data. First, student researchers found significant evidence to support the presence of hidden gender stereotypes in children's literature. This finding raises awareness that gender ideology and stereotypes is a contemporary issue not just a problem of a bygone era. Of equal or greater importance is the finding that hidden messages in children's literature possess the power to influence children's perspectives about gender (Taylor, 2003).

On the one hand, the power of children's literature to influence children's perspectives relative to gender is an important finding in the study conducted by Taylor (2003). On the other hand, the finding also rises up as a weakness. The weakness comes from the fact that the power of literary texts analyzed to influence gender perceptions emerges as speculative. This being the case, the research should not be discounted but rather used as a catalyst for additional research.

Prior to Taylor's study, Diane Turner-Bowker (1996) work examines the subtle gender stereotypes present in the written text of children's literature. This in-depth quantitative analysis focuses specifically on the adjectives used to describe female and male characters in children's literature. The differential use of adjectives is examined under the analytical lens of the feminist theory of moral reasoning espoused by Carol Gilligan (1982). The texts analyzed are Caldecott Medal Winners and Caldecott Honor Books between 1984 and 1994. Within that ten year period, 41 books received the prestigious honor. Of the 41 books, 30 are analyzed in the study.

Each adjective used to describe the male and female characters featured in the collection of books is recorded and then classified into the categories constructed like good-bad, strong-weak, and active-passive.

One additional factor is measured. The fourth factor is gender association. Gender association, in the context of the Turner-Bowker (1996) study, refers to the gender of the author and the influence on character portrayal. The comparative analysis of adjective use, adjective meaning, and authors' use of adjectives for female and male characters is what separates this study of gender stereotyping in children's literature from other studies (e.g., Taylor, 2003; Weitzman, Eifler, Hokada, & Ross, 1972).

Turner-Bowker (1996) identifies significant differences in the adjectives used to describe males and females in the 30 children's books selected for analysis. Males are described with adjectives that are more powerful than those used to describe females. The adjectives for males are more often depict action in contrast to the more passive adjectives used to describe females. In sum, the findings of this research study provide support for the two hypotheses being tested. First, male and female characters are not represented equally in children's literature. Second, a correlation emerges between gender stereotypes and adjectives used by the authors of the children's literature analyzed in this study. Together, the findings give credence to the notion that gender stereotypes are created and perpetuated through language.

On the topic of race, Joel Taxel (1986) completed a comparative analysis of three children's well-known chapter books. The three books analyzed are *Words By Heart* (Sebestyen, 1979), *The Slave Dancer* (Fox, 1973), and *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* (Taylor, 1976). All three books focus on the Black experience. Each of the historical novels for young readers is a winner of a prestigious literary award. The analytical framework is grounded in sociology, specifically the sociology of school knowledge. The crux of this theory suggests that stories in children's literature have the power to affect not only children's self-images but also influence their developing systems of values, world views, and beliefs (Taxel, 1986).

The comparative analysis conducted by Taxel (1986) reflects findings of this literary analysis show there is significant difference in character development between the three pieces of the children's literature. In fact, one story is identified as having "implausible" or doubtful characterization. Such characterization negatively impacts the authenticity and accuracy of the story. In addition, two of the three stories are told from the perspective of Black children and one is told from the perspective of a White boy. The perspective of the story emerges as impacting the authenticity and accuracy of the historical novel.

Taxel's (1986) analysis of the three award winning books is certainly interesting, enlightening, and truly worthy of attention. The central point, however, that rises up from this inquiry supports the idea of taking a question stance. Taxel takes the position that more researchers need to examine the prevailing stereotypes and representation of social, cultural, historical, and political ideologies embedded in children's literature. By neglecting to question, the ideological climate of "legitimizing the world views and ideological perspectives of those occupying positions of preeminence in society" (Taxel, 1986, p. 254) will continue.

Ideologies of Teaching and Learning in Children's Literature

For almost every aspect of society, there exists a set of ideas, beliefs, and values. The collection of ideas provides a structured way of looking at everyday matters. Education is an aspect of society surrounded by a multitude of ideologies and perspectives. One dimension of education is teachers and teaching. Interest in the portrayal of teachers and teaching is an emerging field of inquiry and examination.

Sarah Jo Sandefur and Leeann Moore's (2004), for example, conducted a qualitative study that examines the portrayal of teacher's in picture storybooks. At the center of Sandefur and Moore's (2004) study is the examination of the portrayal of teacher's in picture storybooks. The

primary focus of this study is two-fold. First, the study centers on probing the images of teachers in picture storybooks for the meanings as well as the metaphors included in the written text. Second, the overarching focus of the study is to identify the points at which the fictional story intersects with actual teachers and schools.

In an effort to answer the research questions, Sandfur and Moore (2004) employ theoretical frameworks from anthropology and literary criticism. Such analytic frames serve as a vehicle for analyzing the data on a variety of different layers. The first layer serves to illuminate societal perceptions and assumptions of classroom teachers. The second layer focuses on creating a venue for pre-service teachers to analyze and reflect upon the popular media images of teachers, like those in children's literature, and juxtapose with personal experiences, expectations, and motivations. The third layer is intended to raise the awareness of pre-service and in-service teachers for the ways children, parents, and community members perceive educators. Embedded in the third layer is the overarching goal of the study, to increase the awareness of the representation of teachers in children's picture storybooks. This is and remains important to educational reform in that it provides classroom educators, or teachers, the opportunity to address the various images,

societal perceptions, ideologies, and stereotypes of teachers that exist and persist. By being aware, the door opens for present and future teachers to create their own professional identity and begin to transform societal perceptions by deconstructing the ideological messages such as those in children's literature with respect to what it means to be a quality and effective teacher.

The data set for the study is a large sample of children's picture storybooks. Sandefur and Moore (2004) analyze 62 picture storybooks, published between 1965 and 2000. From the data set, 96 images of teachers are recorded. The researchers write detailed notes on each of the images for the way(s) the classroom teachers are represented in terms of physical appearance, language, grade level and/or curriculum subject, instructional approaches, and the effectiveness of the teacher on student learning (Sandefur & Moore, 2004).

Revealed in the analysis presented by Sandefur and Moore (2004) is a preponderance of negative images of teachers. Of the teacher images analyzed 58% are negative, 42% are positive, and 15% are neutral. The researchers reveal two unexpected findings. First, the teachers in this statistically large sampling of children's literature are never shown as transitioning from a less effective teacher to a more effective teacher

(Sandefur & Moore, 2004). Second, the teachers in children's literature relative to the sampling used in this study are more often than not polarized. The polarized view of teachers, in this case, is clearly represented in the written text, specifically through the author's choice of adjectives that are used to describe the teacher character. Some of the adjectives recorded, for example, are "healers or wounders, sensitive or callus, imaginative or repressive" (Sandefur & Moore, 2004, p. 48). Since stories are known to implicitly reflect reality, the overwhelmingly negative portrayal of teachers found in Sandefur and Moore's (2004) study is quite telling of the perceptions held by society with respect to teachers. In sum, the findings of this study highlight a paradox of education. On one hand, teachers are considered highly influential members of society. On the other hand, society often times portrays teaching and teachers in a demeaning and disrespectful manner.

Another study conducted is Betty Greenway's (1983) examination of the images of school in children's literature. At the onset, Greenway speculates that a fairly large percentage of literature for children echoes many of the same criticisms of theoretical texts such as *A Nation At Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), *Why Johnny Can't Read* (Flesch, 1986), and *Savage Inequalities: Children in America's*

Schools (Kozol, 1991) thus portraying “school as a place to be avoided because it is repressive, deadening, and humiliating” (Greenway, 1993, p. 105). In other words, Greenway’s hypothesis reflects the disrespectful and demeaning perception society holds relative to the teaching profession and those in it.

After analyzing a purposeful sample of 13 children’s books, some positive images of school emerged. Like Sandefur and Moore (2004), however, negative images dominate the stories. Based on this finding, Greenway (1993) draws the conclusion that the literature analyzed portrays school as highly influential and in many ways suggests that organizational structure " (Greenway, 1993, p. 111) fosters negative perceptions of schools. In the end, additional support is found relative to the contradictory perceptions society holds with respect to education.

The catalyst for Greenway’s (1993) investigation is an earlier study conducted by Ann Meitzen Hildebrand (1986) titled *The Dreary Time: The Ethos of School in Award-Winning Fiction for Children, 1960-1980*. In this study, a total of 131 books are analyzed. As inferred in the title of the study, the texts analyzed are award-winning fiction stories. A result of the awards in that these titles are ones frequently recommended to children. The school images examined in this study reveal “the ethos of school as

an influential institution of society distinct from the people who interact with it is essentially negative” (Hildebrand, 1986, p. 82). Overall, the work of these scholars indicates a negative trend in the portrayal of teachers featured in children’s literature.

Important to note, the criteria for inclusion and the initial coding categories applied in the studies above (i.e., Greenway, 1993; Hildebrand, 1986; Sandefur & Moore, 2004) influenced the development of this current research study. What separates this study from these conducted is three main points. Greenway (1993) and Hildebrand (1986) focus on the images of school, this research study centers on images of teachers. Sandefur and Moore (2004) focus on gender stereotypes as represented in the adjectives used to portray teachers, this study analyzes the embedded messages relative to the social identities, personality dispositions, and pedagogical practices and approaches incorporated as elements of fictional teacher characters.

A search for additional studies focusing on the portrayal of teachers produces a very small number. Of the scholarship located that examines and investigates the portrayal of teachers focuses primarily on cinematic teachers such as Deborah Nederhouser’s (2000) dissertation. Employing a mixed method approach to analysis, this study investigates the portrayal

of K-12 teachers featured in popular American films. Nederhouser draws several conclusions from the analysis of data. First, teachers are portrayed through formulaic and stereotyped characters. Second, the images and perception of teachers is for most part mixed in that negative as well as positive portrayals are present. Third, the portrayals of teachers in American film project two perspectives. One perspective reflected in the cinematic portrayal of teachers is the ideals and fantasies held by society. The other perspective reflected is the everyday realities experienced by students and teachers (Nederhouser, 2000). While film is a different form of popular culture, the findings from this study certainly foster support for examining children's literature.

Relative to this section on children's literature, the research reviewed indicates that images of teachers and school in children's books are topics investigated and examined from several different angles and perspectives. To date, the number of studies conducted, however, is relatively small. In looking across the small sample of studies, no studies appear to investigate the portrayal of caring teachers featured in children's literature. In fact, there appears to be an absence of inquire and examination of the embedded messages, implicit and explicit, relative to

images of caring teachers. It is such an absence of this line of inquiry and examination that drives the present study.

Conclusion

Looking across the scholarly literature on the topic of care in the context of teaching and learning, one thing stands above the rest; caring play a role in cognitive growth, development, and student academic achievement. While still tacit to a large degree, caring as pedagogy emerges as rich and varied. The landscape of care in the context of teaching and learning, in other words, is far more complex than the image of nice, friendly teachers giving hugs, hand-shakes, and high-fives. Summarily, the review of literature lends support to the notion that caring as pedagogy needs to be elevated to a higher level of importance in educational reform efforts, especially when considering the quest to place quality and effective teachers in every classroom.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Through methodical curiosity, the reading of the world can lead to moving beyond conjecture per se to a vision for the world (Freire, 2004, p. 18)

Introduction

A detailed description of the research design is the focus of this chapter. To begin, a reflective look is provided relative to the data source. This is followed by a report on the research design and methodology of the study. In the report, specific attention is given to the procedures such as data collection and coding, the analytical frameworks employed, and the significance of the study.

Children's Literature: A Detailed View of the Data Source

According to Henry Giroux (1993), television, magazines, cartoons, music, videos, and books form the basis of popular culture; a collection of ideas well-liked and adopted by society to the point of permeating the living of everyday life. As such, popular culture is perceived as a significant and influential force in society manifested across an array of subjects and through the auspices of the entertainment world that include sports, music, movies, literature and more. Television and radio, for

example, have the power to influence consumerism (Young, 1990). Many magazines such as *Vogue* and *Seventeen* have the potential to significantly impact the body image of millions of females from adolescences to adulthood (Posavac, Posavac, & Weigel, 2001).

Children's literature also falls under the umbrella of popular culture. Like other forms of popular culture, children's books have the power to influence. Why is this so? Frank Serafini (2003) asserts that "children's literature is seen as a way of knowing and is used to help children make connections to the world around them, become acquainted with the language of stories, learn about the characteristics of the natural and social world, and discover insights into their own personalities and identities" (p. 6). In other words, children's literature possesses the power to shape readers' perceptions and expectations of such things as people, places, and cultures. According to Sarah Jo Sandefur and Leeann Moore (2004), the symbolic representations in the written text as well as the illustrations in children's picture books become subsumed in the collective consciousness of a reader and society.

"Children's books offer windows into society" (Botelho & Rudman, 2009). With that said, the children's literature analyzed in this study has the potential to mold society's perceptions and expectations about the

culture of schooling and education as well as the identity of classroom teachers. Ultimately, it is the explicit and implicit messages that shape the expectations, perceptions, behaviors, and attitudes of both students and teachers as they read literary texts. It is potential to influence that provides a need for examining the portrayal of caring teachers featured in children's literature.

Analytical Frameworks

Keeping the research design as well as the study's purpose in mind, I contemplated what theoretical frameworks might help illuminate the explicit and implicit characteristics of caring elementary teachers featured in children's books. There are several theoretical frames through which to examine the topic of care as it is portrayed in literary texts. The two selected for this study are relational epistemology and critical literacy theory.

Relational epistemology is a branch of constructivist epistemology (Thayer-Bacon, 1993). This theory examines how learners come to knowledge and knowing. At the center of relational epistemology are the basic tenets of epistemological traditions which are the nature, scope, and sources of knowledge. Relational epistemology deviates from the traditional view in its focus on the kind of relationships people form with

others and how interpersonal relationships lead to knowledge development and learning. Similar to Vygotsky's social constructivist theory, relational epistemology perceives knowledge as something that is socially constructed as people interact with one another (Thayer-Bacon, 1997).

From this analytical view, pedagogical relationships are where knowledge is conceived. As such, employing relational epistemology as a lens through which to view the portrayal of caring teachers featured in children's literature attention is drawn to the development of caring relationships like those that develop between teachers and students. Using relational epistemology as one analytic framework in this study a window through which to view the dimensions of teaching and learning for the ways they are portrayed as influencing students' construction of knowledge was created.

Working in conjunction with relational epistemology is critical literacy. A single definition of critical literacy is difficult to obtain. One definition as articulated by Gary Anderson and Patricia Irvine (1993) states critical literacy as "learning to read and write as part of the process of becoming conscious of one's experience as historically constructed within specific power relations" (p. 82). Embedded in this definition as well as others that exist is the point that critical literacy is an analytical lens that

challenges a person to question the status quo in an effort to effect change or at the very least build awareness. For this researcher, critical literacy provides a conduit for examining and unpacking the social, cultural, and often times political connections in teaching and learning. Woven throughout the study and the discussion is reference to political threads. The focus of this study, however, centers on the sociocultural nexus of teaching and learning as it emerges in the context of children's literature that features caring teachers.

The Study

Research Design and Methodology

The research design and methodology employed in this study was a content analysis. Ole Holsti (1969) provides a broad definition of content analysis as “any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages” (p.14). Content analysis provided the best fit for two key reasons. First, a primary goal of this type of research is to systematically compare and contrast the content of written text and visual illustrations. Second, it provides a structure for making inferences about texts in an effort to illuminate the specific concepts and ideas presented and portrayed in texts selected for examination.

Relative to this study, content analysis as a research methodology provided the light necessary to illuminate the explicit and implicit messages embedded in the portrayal of caring teachers featured in children's literature. As such, the choice to use content analysis increased the potential of this study to provide an enriched and expanded understanding of what it means to be a caring and effective teacher.

Procedures

Data Collection

The data collected for this study was children's books. Each of the books in the collection met the following criteria. The original publication data was between 1998 and 2008. This time frame was influenced by the study conducted by Sandefur and Moore (2004). The genre identified was realistic fiction, historical fiction, or modern fantasy. The story setting was an elementary school. An elementary teacher was the protagonist or central character in the story. And, the teacher was depicted teaching. For the purposes of this study, elementary teachers were defined as classroom teachers that teach a grade level between kindergarten and fifth.

The data set was comprised of 75 children's books (Appendix A). A total of 37 books were excluded from the corpus. The reason for exclusion

was due to one of three reasons: (1) the original publication data was outside the scope of inquiry; (2) a teacher was not featured as a central character; and (3) the setting was not an elementary school or elementary grade. The data set was comprised of 38 books. Of the data set, 29 of the books were children's picture storybooks. According to the book flaps, these are books targeted toward young readers between the ages of three and eight. The illustrations and text in this type of book are tightly intertwined. In other words, neither the illustrations nor the words alone are enough to tell the story (Mitchell, 2003). Of the remaining books, 2 were transitional or easy reader texts and 7 were children's literature novels.

The initial method for locating books was browsing the shelves of bookstores like Barnes and Noble in Woodinville, Washington, The University Bookstore in Mill Creek, Washington, and Village Books in Bellingham, Washington. I utilized the internet by conducting searches of online bookstores like Amazon and Barnes and Noble to assist in finding the newly released titles of children's literature that met the criteria for inclusion. In addition, I conversed with friends, colleagues, and classroom teachers about the study asking for book recommendations. I accessed book reviews and annotated bibliographies featured in past and present

issues of various scholarly publications like *Kappa Delta Pi Record*, *Horn Book* and *National Reading Association Journal*. Finally, an internet search was performed for online discussions on the topic. One website found (A Year of Reading, 2006) engaged bloggers in creating a list of “cool” teachers featured in fictional children’s stories. This listing, first and foremost, provided an additional avenue for finding children’s literature featuring caring teachers. Furthermore, the list provided a check and balance; comparing titles from the website with those collected helped to ensure that a comprehensive list had been compiled.

As each book was collected, data was recorded in three ways. Completing an annotated bibliography entry was the first form of data documentation. The bibliography entries included: (1) A complete APA citation and (2) A synopsis of the story ranging between 100 and 150 words (See Appendix A). Directly following the annotated bibliography, each book was entered into a database using the software program Endnote. The benefit of using the Endnote program was the space it provided to record detailed research notes.

Another form of documentation, which served as the primary data collection tool, was a matrix (Appendix B). The matrix provided a clear and concise format to visually organize and view the data collected.

Throughout the data collection process the list was continuously revised in an effort to most accurately represent the characteristics of caring teachers featured in children's literature.

Coding

As stated in the section above, the books collected were read several times. The first reading served two main purposes. One purpose was to familiarize myself with the story. The second purpose was to develop an understanding of the story in order to write an annotated bibliography entry. Subsequent readings focused on recording and coding detailed notes and specific passages with respect to the images and portrayal of the fictional teachers featured in the written text and visual illustrations.

The content of the initial coding categories was influenced by scholars (i.e., Goldstein, 2002; Rogers, 1994; Noddings, 1992; Sandefur & Moore, 2004; Thompson, 2003) referenced in the literature review. These categories served as *a priori* coding categories (Weber, 1990) for analyzing the portrayal of individual teacher characters. The categories were: social identities, personal dispositions, and pedagogy.

This study coded for the following social identities: teacher gender, teacher race, ethnicity, and culture. The gender identity of the teacher

characters was determined by the author's use of titles such as Mr., Mrs., Ms., and Miss.

During the initial stages of the studies development, the thought relative to coding teacher race was to use the terms established by the National Census Bureau (i.e., White, Black). The difficulty encountered was that the authors of the stories did not explicitly identify race in those terms. With that being the case, a different coding was developed. With that said, the coding of teacher race was based on the skin tone/color of the teacher characters either described in the written text or illustrated in the pictures. The culture and ethnicity of the teacher characters was determined solely based on the author's explicated identification of the teacher character's national origin (i.e., American, Hispanic, English, Asian) as provided in the written text.

Personal dispositions were coded based on specific behaviors described in the written text or shown in the visual illustrations. Specific behaviors coded under personal dispositions revolved around the depiction of a positive outlook toward children. The categories were friendly disposition and nurturing dispositions.

Pedagogically, caring teachers portrayed in children's literature were coded in one or more of the following categories: (1) connecting with

students, 2) providing positive verbal support of students, and (3) setting behavioral and/or academic expectations for students. The focus of this coding category was to uncover patterns and trends in the portrayal of caring teachers relative to pedagogy.

Significance of the Study

The significance of the study lies with the examination of the representation of caring teachers featured in literary texts. For some time now stories of school and teachers have been a popular topic for authors of children's books. Fictional stories and modern fantasy stories such as *Yoko Writes Her Name* (Wells, 2008), *Brand-New Pencils*, *Brand-New Books* (deGroat, 2005), *Don't Be Silly, Mrs. Millie* (Cox, 2005), and *Hooray for Reading Day* (Cuyler, 2008) for many children are their first encounter with teachers; a first encounter that has the potential to lead to the development of assumptions, beliefs, and expectations with regard to schools and teachers. With that said, the investigation of teachers and teaching as it is portrayed in children's literature is an avenue for building awareness and making transparent the explicit and implicit messages with respect to teaching, learning, and caring. By conducting this study, I embark upon a journey to contribute to the important and timely conversation on caring in the context of teaching and learning.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Without books, history is silent, literature dumb, science crippled, thought and speculation at a standstill. Without books, the development of civilization would have been impossible. They are the engines of change, windows on the world and lighthouses erected in the sea of time. They are companions, teachers, magicians, bankers of the treasures of the mind. Books are humanity in print (Tuchman as excerpt by Richard Lederer, 1999, p. 148).

Introduction

Presented in this chapter is the analysis and discussion of the portrayal of caring teachers in children's literature. The chapter is divided into three parts. Part one provides an overview of the findings from the study by coding categories. Part two presents summaries of sixteen children's literature stories featuring caring teachers. Part three presents an integrated deep analysis of the fifteen children's books as they coalesce with the study findings.

Part I: Caring Teachers by Coding Categories

Of the images analyzed 38 teachers were featured as central characters. The fictional teacher characters were analyzed and coded according to social identities, personal dispositions, and pedagogy. The matrix (Appendix B) provides a visual summary of the coding categories relative to the portrayal of caring teachers in the collection of books analyzed. This portion of chapter four provides an explanation of the coding categories and follows with a presentation of findings from each category.

Social Identities

Teacher Gender

The identification of teacher gender was determined by the author's use of titles. Teacher characters with a title of Miss, Mrs., or Ms. were coded as female. Teacher characters with a title of Mr. were coded as male. Of the 38 teachers featured in the children's literature analyzed, 30 (79%) were coded female and 8 (21%) were coded male. Based on statistics (Household Data Annual Averages, 2009), the percentage of female teachers featured in children's literature closely parallels the reality of the elementary workforce which listed 81% the teachers as female.

Race/Ethnicity/Culture

Race. Teacher race was coded based on the characters skin tone in the visual illustrations and/or description of skin tone/color incorporated in the written text. Of the 38 teacher portrayals analyzed in this study, 24 teachers (63%) were depicted with a light skin tone and 2 (5%) with a dark skin tone. No description of skin tone was provided for 12 (32%) of the 38 teacher characters. The lack of description was due to one of two reasons: 1) the characters in the story were anthropomorphized and 2) the written descriptions in the children's novel provided no description and no colored illustrations were included.

Ethnicity/Culture. Teacher culture was determined by author's explicit identification of a character's national origin. Of the 38 teacher portrayals analyzed the cultural identity of 1 teacher (3%) was explicitly stated. The cultural identity of the remaining 37 (97%) teacher characters was not clearly identified.

Personal Dispositions

A Friendly Disposition

A friendly disposition projects the image of a teacher as having a positive outlook toward students. Teachers coded in this category conveyed a friendly disposition through gestures such as extending a

personal greeting, giving a hug or sharing a smile with the students featured in the stories. Of the 38 (100%) teacher characters analyzed 38 coded as having a friendly disposition. The data analyzed in this study presented a positive image of teachers. The significant number of teachers portrayed as friendly is contradictory to the findings of Sandefur and Moore (2004).

A Nurturing Disposition

A nurturing disposition projects the image of a teacher concerned and interested in the overall well-being of their students. Teachers coded in this category conveyed a nurturing disposition by expressing empathy, understanding, and compassion toward the individual students featured in the children's literature stories. Of the fictional teachers analyzed 28 (74%) of the 38 were coded as portraying traits of a nurturing disposition. No identifiable traits characteristic of a nurturing disposition emerged in the portrayal of 10 (26%) of the 38 teacher characters.

Pedagogy

Connecting With Students

Pedagogy as a way of connecting with students projects the image of a teacher interested in getting to know their students. Teachers coded in this category were portrayed as connecting with students in one or more

of the following ways: (1) asking for student input, (2) inquiring about students' feelings, (3) sharing personal interests and experiences with students, and (4) getting to know students individually. Of the fictional teacher characters analyzed, 38 (100%) of the 38 teachers coded as connecting with students. Reflecting on the work of Sandfur and Moore's (2004), the analysis from this study indicates a positive trend in the portrayal of teachers. Part III provides specific pedagogical practices and approaches for connecting with students.

Supportive of Students

Pedagogy, that supports students, projects the image of a teacher who sees and believes that their students' have potential to grow and learn. Teachers coded in this category expressed support by acknowledging students' effort and academic achievement by sharing verbal praise. Of the fictional teacher characters featured in the children's literature analyzed 29 (76%) coded as incorporating a supportive pedagogy. For 9 (24%) of the 38 teacher portrayals analyzed, no clear indication of a supportive pedagogy was provided. In other words, the portrayal of the teacher characters was positive. There were no explicit examples, however, in the written text of the teachers offering verbal praise.

Setting Student Expectations

Pedagogy that reflects high expectations for student behavior or academic achievement projects the image of a teacher who possesses a desire to teach so that students learn and grow. Teachers coded in this category were portrayed as establishing student expectations in one or more of the following ways: (1) setting positive behavioral goals, (2) setting student learning goals, and (3) holding students accountable. Relative of expectations, 17 (45%) of the fictional teacher characters were coded as establishing clear behavioral or academic expectations. For 21 (55%) of the 38 teachers featured in the children's literature analyzed, no explicit indication of establishing expectations for students was portrayed.

Part II: Caring Teachers in Children's Literature

This part of chapter four highlights 16 books from the collection of children's books analyzed in this study. A brief summary of each of the 16 books is provided. The book summaries appear in alphabetical order according to author's last name.

Sahara Special

by Esme Codell (2003)

Sahara Special is a realistic children's novel about a fifth grade girl placed in special education. Unwilling to accept such a placement,

Sahara's mother insists that her daughter be exited from the program and repeat fifth grade. The school administration concedes. For her second year of fifth grade, she is placed with the school's new fifth grade teacher, Miss Pointy. Miss Pointy holds each of her students to high but realistic expectations. Through writing journals, Miss Pointy gets to know each of the students in her classroom. The story concludes with Sahara reading an entry from her writing journal exposing who she really is as a person and as a student.

Hooray for Reading Day!

by Margery Cuyler (2008)

This realistic picture storybook is about a first grade student learning to read. Jessica worries about many things. At the top of her list of worries is reading. In school each day Mr. Martin, the classroom teacher, provides opportunities for the students to practice reading aloud. Whenever Jessica reads out loud, she struggles to sound out each letter in an effort to identify the word. One day, Mr. Martin announces to the class a reader's theater performance with each student reading aloud. Every night following Mr. Martin's big announcement Jessica practices reading out loud. The story concludes with Jessica's successful performance.

Brand-new Pencils, Brand-new Books

By Diane deGroat (2005)

In this fantasy picture storybook, a young boy named Gilbert gets ready for the first grade. On the morning of the first day, Mrs. Byrd, the first grade teacher, greets each student by name upon arriving at school. The students gather at the circle rug to hear about some of the things they can expect. During the course of the day, the students locate their individual desks, create a list of classroom rules, and enjoy climbing on the fort at recess. The story concludes when the bell rings to signal the end of the school day.

Miss Malarkey Leaves No Reader Behind

by Judy Finchler and Kevin O'Malley (2006)

This is a realistic picture storybook about a young male reader who has no interest or desire to read. On the first day of the new school year Miss Malarkey, the elementary school teacher, becomes keenly aware of her students' negative attitudes toward reading. After months of trying, tremendous perseverance, and taking time to get to know students individually, Miss Malarkey accomplishes her goal of finding a book for every student. The story concludes after the young male protagonist who hates to read finishes reading what he considers as the best book ever.

Miss Smith's Incredible Storybook

By Michael Garland (2003)

In this fantasy picture storybook, Miss Smith is Zack's new classroom teacher. She wears a black leather jacket and an orange pin on her left lapel that reads "The Clash." As part of her classroom practice, she reads aloud to the students. When Miss Smith reads aloud from the book, the characters come to life in the classroom. One day Miss Smith is late arriving at school. The principal, substituting for Miss Smith, starts to read from the magical storybook. Total mayhem follows leaving the principal and children at a loss for how to get the unwilling characters back in the book. The story concludes after Miss Smith arrives at school and successfully reads the characters back.

Mr. Ouchy's First Day

by B.G. Hennessy (2006)

This realistic picture storybook tells the story of the first day of school. Mr. Ouchy, the classroom teacher, is excited to meet his class of students but anxious to find out what the day holds in store. After the bell rings and the introduction is over, it is time to focus on teaching and learning. Mr. Ouchy receives a plethora of questions from the students about this, that, and the other thing. By the end of the day the questions

students asked have lead to learning about time, learning each other's name, and learning about working together. The story concludes with Mr. Ouchy looking ahead with a smile to the next day of school.

The Year of Miss Agnes

by Kirkpatrick Hill (2000)

The Year of Miss Agnes is a historical fiction novel for children set in a small Athabascan village in the bush of Alaska. Over the years, the one-room school in the village has had many teachers. With each new teacher, the students expect an educator who is uncomfortable and challenged by the rural location and cultural traditions. The discomfort leaves the teachers cross and bitter and only willing to teach at the village school for a short term. This is the cycle until the day the bush plane arrives with Miss Agnes. Miss Agnes is different. She embraces the Athabascan village, its people, and its cultural traditions. In fact, she finds multiple ways to build the classroom environment, school curriculum and her instruction upon the everyday life and culture of her students.

The Best Teacher in Second Grade

by Katharine Kenah (2006)

In this realistic fiction storybook, Luna is a young girl who loves learning and thinking about the night sky. One school day, Mr. Hopper,

Luna's second grade teacher, announces an upcoming school event that requires the students to plan a special show. Over several days, the students work collaboratively on developing costumes, scenery, and tickets for the class performance. The afternoon of the big show, Mr. Hopper's students find out that another class is performing a show with the same theme. Learning of this, Mr. Hopper draws the students' attention to the person in the room that has the answer to the class dilemma; that person is Luna. The story concludes as the audience claps and cheers to celebrate a successful performance.

Sister Anne's Hands

by Marybeth Lorbiecki (1998)

Based on the author's lived experience, this realistic picture storybook is about a second grade girl named Anna. The night before the start of a new school year, word begins to circulate that a new teacher has arrived in town and is assigned to teach second grade. As she drifts off to sleep, Anna wonders what makes this teacher different from the others. Just outside the classroom door, Anna meets Sister Anne for the first time. Because Sister Anne's skin color is different from Anna's, the second grader's initial reaction is one of fear. The story concludes with Anna

saying good-bye to Sister Anne as she reflects on the positive difference this teacher had on her as a person.

The Teacher's Funeral

by Richard Peck (2004)

Set in 1904, this historical fiction novel for children is the story of Russell Culver a student at Hominy Ridge School. Summer has come to an end. The night before the new school year starts Miss Arbuckle, the school's teacher, passes away. At first this comes as good news to Russell, a young boy who dreams constantly about escaping the drudgery and boredom of school. Then, the good news turns to bad. A new teacher steps forward. The new teacher is Miss Tansy Culver, Russell's older sister. After a bit of time, Tansy has the students on an even keel and focused on learning. The story concludes with Russell passing his eighth-grade examination giving full credit to the Hominy Ridge School teacher, his sister Tansy.

Thank You, Mr. Falker

by Patricia Polacco (1998)

Patricia Polacco creates a realistic picture storybook about a young girl that struggles to read. Trisha is passionate about two things, drawing and learning to read. Unlike drawing, reading does not come easy for

Trisha. As the other students in the class develop their reading skills Trisha struggles to read even the simplest of words. Throughout first, second, third, and fourth grade, Trisha is able to disguise her difficulty with reading. In fifth grade, however, Trisha's secret is discovered. From the moment he learns of her struggle to read, Mr. Falker, Trisha's fifth grade teacher, vows to help her learn to read. The story concludes with Mr. Falker placing a book in front of Trisha and she begins to read, first one word, then another, and another until reading the whole paragraph on her own.

My Name Is Yoon

by Helen Recorvits (2003)

In this realistic picture storybook, Yoon is a young girl who just moved from Korea with her family. For the first few days of school, Yoon struggles to acclimate to attending school in a new country. For the first few days of school, Yoon is given a sheet of paper to practice writing her name using the English alphabet. Everyday for the first few days she writes other words instead of writing her name. The story concludes on the day Yoon chooses to write her name in English on the writing sheet she is given.

Totally Wonderful Miss Plumberry

by Michael Rosen (2006)

This realistic picture storybook is about the day Molly brings an item to school to share with the class. The item she chooses for show and tell is the crystal given to her by her grandma. Upon entering the classroom, her classmates are interested in what she brought. Suddenly, something bigger and louder comes into the room. Disappointed and hurt, Molly is left all by herself holding her precious crystal. Aware of her students' feelings Miss Plumberry goes over and focuses her attention on Molly. The story concludes with all the students crowded around Molly eager to hear about and hold the crystal.

Loser

by Jerry Spinelli (2002)

Jerry Spinelli writes a realistic children's novel chronicling the educational journey of a young learner named Zinkoff. The first day of school of each of the five years of elementary school, Zinoff makes himself known to the classroom teacher. Every year it is a negative knowing. Every year, that is, except for fourth grade. In fourth grade, Zinoff is placed in Mr. Yalowitz's class. Like the other teachers in the grades before and after, Mr. Yalowitz discovers Zinoff. Unlike the other teachers,

this classroom teacher embraces and celebrates Zinoff's enthusiastic and unique personality. The story concludes several months after graduation from elementary school with Zinkoff playing just outside the doors of Monroe Middle School.

Yoko Writes Her Name

by Rosemary Wells (2008)

In this fantasy picture storybook, Yoko is anthropomorphized as a little green-eyed kitten excited to start kindergarten. On the first day of school, she writes her name beautifully in Japanese. Later on, Mrs. Jenkins, the kindergarten teacher, asks Yoko to share a favorite book with the class. Because Yoko reads the book from back to front, differently from what is expected, the students begin to tease her. After school one day, Angelo, a small mouse with glasses, finds her sad and alone hiding under a table. The two become friends as Yoko teaches Angelo Japanese and Angelo teaches Yoko to write her name in English. The story concludes on graduation day with Mrs. Jenkins students writing their names on their diplomas in both Japanese and English.

Harry and the Dinosaurs Go to School

by Ian Whybrow & Adrian Reynolds (2006)

This realistic picture storybook is about the first day of school for a young boy named Harry who loves to play with his dinosaur figurines. After breakfast, Harry and his mom bike to school. When they arrive at school, Mrs. Rance the classroom teacher is there to greet him. He hangs up his coat and leaves his bucket of dinosaur figures outside with his coat. Leaving his things outside makes Harry very sad. The story concludes with Harry's bucket of dinosaur figurines finding their way into the classroom and Harry has a happy ending to his first day of school.

Part III: An Integrated Analysis of Books and Findings

This part of chapter four presents an integrated analysis of the coding categories. Each category identified in Part I is presented in conjunction with quintessential examples from texts highlighted in Part II. The integrated analysis allows for an in-depth examination of emerging patterns and trends.

Social Identities

The Portrayal of Female and Male Teachers

Two points emerged relative to teacher gender. First, the analysis revealed a significant difference in the number of female and male

teachers portrayed in the collection of children's books analyzed. The matrix (Appendix B) shows that for every four female teachers portrayed there is one male teacher. A four to one ratio reflects a dominance of female teachers featured in children's literature stories. Such a disproportionate portrayal of female and male teachers supports a perception that teaching the elementary grades is best suited for females not males. Based on educational statistics (National Center for Education Statistics, 2007), the number of male teachers featured in children's literature projected a higher ratio than actually seen practicing in public schools.

The second point regarding teacher gender emerged from the use of comparison as a literacy device. Two authors, Patricia Polacco and Jerry Spinelli, used comparison as an effective way of highlighting the portrayal of a caring teacher. In these two stories, the central teacher featured in the story was a male. One or more female teachers, however, were also featured. The portrayal of the female teachers in these stories was peripheral. Interestingly, when female and male teachers were featured in the same story, the male teachers emerged as the caring teacher.

In Polacco's (1998) book *Thank You, Mr. Falker*, for example, the teacher featured as a central character was male. Mr. Falker was Trisha's fifth grade teacher. In one classroom prior to fifth grade, Trisha was pictured sitting at her desk looking toward a female teacher. Under the instruction of this female teacher, "reading is just plain torture" for Trisha. "And numbers were the hardest thing of all to read. She never added anything right." While the written text clearly identified Trisha as struggling to read and add numbers, this classroom teacher was illustrated as sitting behind her own desk with hands folded and resting on top of an open grade book. "Line the numbers up before you add them" is the only assistance the teacher offers Trisha. Trisha tried what the teacher suggested but "the numbers looked like a stack of blocks, wobbly and ready to fall." When lining up the numbers did not help Trisha learn to add, she simply believed that she was dumb.

In contrast, a year or two later Trisha was placed in a fifth grade classroom with a male teacher. From the moment Trisha entered the classroom things appeared different. Right from the start, "it didn't seem to matter to Mr. Falker which kids were the cutest. Or the smartest. Or the best at anything." To Trisha, Mr. Falker seemed to notice everyone and everything. In fact, "one day Mr. Falker asked her to stay after school and

help wash the blackboards.” All of a sudden Mr. Falker invited her to play a game. “I’ll shout out letters. You write them on the board with the wet sponge as quickly as you can.” Once the board was covered, Mr. Falker and Trisha took a look at the blackboard. Together they saw a watery mess. Individually, Trisha saw that none of the letters or numbers appeared as they should. From looking at the watery mess on the blackboard, Mr. Falker understood that Trisha did not “see letters or numbers the way other people do.”

In talking with Trisha, Mr. Falker stated “you’ve gotten through school all this time, and fooled many, many good teachers!” On the one hand, this statement appeared to acknowledge her other teachers as quality educators. On the other hand, reflecting on the portrayal of Trisha’s earlier teacher in conjunction with this statement an implicit message emerges. The implicit message was that the first teacher, a female, viewed Trisha’s learning issue as a simple adjustment in the students’ method of solving the math problem. In contrast, the portrayal of Mr. Falker, a male, prominently features him identifying Trisha’s academic struggles and then taking on the responsibility of locating pedagogical practices to help her overcome them. In the end, the contrast between the two teacher images resulted in Mr. Falker emerging as the caring teacher.

Another book that provided a clear illustration is Spinelli's (2002) novel *Loser*. This story chronicled a young boy's journey through elementary school grade-by-grade and teacher-by-teacher. Mr. Yalowitz was Zinkoff's fourth grade teacher. At the beginning of the chapter that introduced Mr. Yalowitz, the author explicitly compares this male teacher to the female teachers Zinkoff has had in the grades prior to fourth grade. On the first day of fourth grade, for example, Zinkoff meets Mr. Yalowitz. "Unlike his teachers in grades two and three this one seemed delighted with him" (p. 96). Days later, Zinkoff was working on a writing assignment. "Like Zinkoff's previous teachers, Mr. Yalowitz notes his atrocious handwriting" (p. 97). In contrast to his other teachers, Mr. Yalowitz added while laughing, "Thank God for keyboards!" (p. 97).

While not explicit other contrasts emerged between the portrayal of Mr. Yalowitz and Zinkoff's other teachers. Similar to the female teachers, for example, Mr. Yalowitz assigned the students to a desk. For the past three years, his teachers assigned seats by the first letter, last name of the students. Each of those three years Zinkoff is seated in "the boondocks" (p. 51) or the last seat on the last row of desks. On the first day of fourth grade, the first order of business was assigning each student to a desk. "Mr. Yalowitz stands up front holding a stack of roll cards" (p. 94). First, he

shuffled the cards. Next, he rearranged their place in the stack. Before selecting the first card, Mr. Yalowitz put the stack of cards down. "A smile crosses the teacher's face" (p. 95) as he read the name Donald Zinkoff out loud. "Always the last see in the class. Always the last seat in line for this or that" (p. 95). Mr. Yalowitz signaled to Zinkoff inviting to him to take a seat at the front of the class.

At first glance, a clear difference in the number of female and males featured as central teacher characters immediately surfaced. As expected, the number of female teachers was higher than the male teachers. This is a representation that mirrors the reality of the teachers teaching in the elementary grades. Interestingly, a deeper analysis revealed that when female and male teachers were juxtaposed in a story the male teachers surfaced as the caring one. Two questions emerged from this analysis: 1) Is this a trend in the portrayal of teachers in children's literature or something isolated to a handful of texts? and 2) What is the impetus behind the portrayal?

Portraying Teacher Race

Revealed in the analysis of teacher race is the fact that authors rarely use clear terms to identify race in the written texts. That being the case, teacher race was determined by the color of skin as described in the

written text or most commonly as it appeared in the illustrations. Words commonly associated with the identification of race, such as those used by the United States Census Bureau (2008), were found in only 2 of the 38 books analyzed. One example was located in Esme Codell's (2003) children's novel *Sahara Special*.

On the first day of fifth grade, Sahara entered the classroom. Since no teacher was present, she took a seat in the back row. Within a few minutes, the classroom filled up with other fifth grade students. Still, there was no classroom teacher. Anxious to meet the new teacher, Sahara closed her eyes to enjoy the idea of a teacher not knowing her. Moments later Miss Pointy short for Miss Poitier, Sahara's new teacher, walked into the classroom.

Sahara opened her eyes to see Miss Pointy, what she looked like and what kind of clothes she wore. Upon opening her eyes, Sahara blinked then blinked again. Miss Pointy's hair was copper like a penny. It was held back away from her face with sparkling dragonfly barrettes. "She was pale, but I can't decide for sure if she was white or Asian or Puerto Rican or maybe light-skinned black" (p. 37). While the author Esme Codell incorporated terms like white and black, the terms emerged as part of a question Sahara was asking to herself as she struggles to identify Miss

Pointy's race. Important to the analysis is the fact that the race and ethnicity of Miss Pointy was a question left unanswered by the author.

One other story surfaced that addressed teacher race. In Loribecki's (1998) *Sister Anne's Hands* the author identified race in two ways. The identification of race first emerged in the author's detailed description of skin color. Sister Anne wore a black dress and habit like all the nuns at the school Anna attended. Her skin, however, was darker than any person Anna had ever known. Just outside the classroom, Anna met Sister Anne for the first time. Following personal introductions, Sister Anne noticed the freckles on Anna's face. "Mighty fine freckles you have. Anyone kissed by angels as much as you must have wings sprouting for sure." As Sister Anne reached out to touch Anna's cheek, the young girl pulled away. At that moment Anna focused on the skin color of Sister Anne's hands. "It was puppy brown with white lacy moons for nails. And palm side up, it was pink with dark lines."

Teacher race emerged a second time in the story of Sister Anne. In this instance, the author incorporated specific words to identify the teacher's race. To start the school day, Sister Anne invited the children to tell their very best jokes. The next activity was storytime. Sister Anne sat on a stool in the center of the classroom as she read aloud to the

students. For each character in the story, Sister Anne “did all the voices, low or high, or grunting”. After lunch, as the students were working at their desks, a paper airplane sailed by Sister Anne. As she unfolded the paper plane, a hand-written poem appeared on the wings. “Roses are red, Violets are blue. Don’t let Sister Anne get any black on you.” Within the words of the poem, Sister Anne’s race was clearly identified.

The analysis revealed a definite absence in the clear identification of teacher race. Before commenting further on the portrayal of teacher race, it is beneficial to first present the analysis of teacher ethnicity and culture.

Portraying Teacher Ethnicity/Culture

Similar to the analysis of race, explicit identification of ethnicity and culture rarely emerged in the portrayal of caring teachers featured in the collection of children’s literature analyzed in this study. The excerpt presented in the section above from *Sahara Special* (Codell, 2003) provided one example of teacher ethnicity and culture. Within Sahara’s wondering of Miss Pointy’s race, the author incorporated terms widely used by society to reflect ethnicity and culture like “Asian or Puerto Rican.” Since the author provided no clear answer to Sahara’s question, the ethnicity and culture for Miss Pointy was not identifiable. Thus, the only

textual example of teacher ethnicity and culture to surface was Kirkpatrick Hill's (2000) story *The Year of Miss Agnes*.

Sitting in Old Man Andreson's store, Fredricka heard that Sam, the local bush pilot, had just flown in with a new teacher for the village school. Eager to find out more, Fredrika, a young village girl called Fred, wiggled down off the store counter and ran over to the teacher's cabin. Fred and her friend Bertha peeked in the window. "She didn't even hardly look up, but she saw us" (p. 7). Miss Agnes invited the two curious girls in to help clean out the cabin. After a bit of time, Fred noticed that Miss Agnes did not talk like the people in the village. "You talk funny," Fred said. Miss Agnes acknowledged, "That's because I'm English" (p. 9). To Fred, it did not make sense for her teacher to identify herself as English. "English was what we talked" (p. 9). Aware of Fred's confusion, Miss Agnes walked over to the shelf and took down a big book. In the book was a map. Miss Agnes located Alaska on the map for Fred and Bertha. Then, she put her finger on the other side of the map. "This is England, where I come from. The people from England are English" (p. 9). By identifying her country of national origin, Miss Agnes identified her ethnicity.

As stated earlier, the portrayal of Miss Agnes provided the only clear identification of teacher ethnicity and culture. A deeper analysis of

the children's literature stories analyzed revealed teacher ethnicity and culture was often implied. The implicit image of teacher ethnicity and culture emerged through the character development of students. Two texts, *Yoko Writes Her Name* (Wells, 2008) and *My Name Is Yoon* (Recorvits, 2003), provided examples to illustrate this point.

Yoko Writes Her Name (Wells, 2008), for example, was the story of a kitten entering kindergarten. On the first day, Mrs. Jenkins asked the students to write their names. Once all the students completed the task, Mrs. Jenkins showed the boys and girls in the class "how beautifully Yoko writes in Japanese." Later on that year, Yoko's mother gave Mrs. Jenkins a copy of the Japanese alphabet. At that moment, Mrs. Jenkins adopted Japanese as the class's second language. "On graduation day, all of the students wrote their name on their diploma in two languages." The two languages were English and Japanese.

My Name is Yoon (Recorvits, 2003) provided a similar example. This story was about of a young girl who had just moved to a new school. Yoon came from a country far away. She came from Korea. Shortly after she and her family settled into their new home, Yoon sat down with her father. "Soon you will go to your new school. You must learn to print your name in English." As he writes the four letters on the paper, Yoon wrinkled

her nose. To her, the English writing of Yoon was just lines and circles standing alone on a page. Written in Korean, she shared that her name “looks happy.”

In both of these examples, the student’s ethnicity and culture was clearly identified in the written text. The teacher’s identity was not identified. Embedded in the identification of one ethnicity but not another is the implicit message that the student’s ethnic and cultural identity is different from the teachers. In the case of the stories analyzed, the teacher’s ethnicity and culture emerged as European American.

Invisibility of Race, Ethnicity, & Culture

Overall, the central point revealed in the analysis was that building connections with students was paramount. Across the texts analyzed, social identities were implied through the written text, visual illustrations, or sometimes both. Without clear descriptions woven within the written text, identifying the race, ethnicity, and culture of fictional teacher characters was left up to the reader. The invisibility of teacher race, ethnicity and culture raises the issue of the significance behind leaving the social identities as ambiguous.

Personal Dispositions

Portraying a Friendly Disposition

Of the 38 teacher characters analyzed, all 38 were portrayed with a friendly disposition. Relative to the portrayal of a friendly disposition, three gestures rose up as significant. The three gestures were personal greetings, hugs, and smiles.

Greetings. One gesture that emerged was the offering of a verbal greeting to the students. The majority of the teacher characters analyzed in this study were portrayed greeting the students as a class. Michael Garland's (2003) fantasy *Miss Smith's Incredible Storybook* provided an excellent example. On the first day of school, a young boy named Zack waited in his seat for his teacher to arrive. Suddenly, the door to the classroom swung open and in walked the teacher. "Good morning, class. My name is Miss Smith, and I am your new teacher." Another example rose up in Richard Peck's (2004) historical novel *The Teacher's Funeral*. On the first day of school, Tansy was "strictly business in a starchy shirtwaist and shoes. Her hair was up..." (p. 78). Standing in front of her students, Tansy said, "Good morning, pupils" (p. 78).

A few of the teachers were featured greeting students on an individual basis. Ian Whybrow and Adrian Reynolds (2006) realistic story

Harry and the Dinosaurs Go to School provided a clear example. As the students arrived at school, Mrs. Rance was waiting at the classroom door. “Hello, Harry. Welcome to your new school.” After acknowledging his arrival, Mrs. Rance showed Harry where to hang his coat and leave his lunch box. Whether as a whole class or on an individual basis, personal greetings emerged as an opportunity for the teacher to make a direct connection with students.

Extending a simple greeting such as “hello” or “good morning”, whether to the class or to individuals as they enter the classroom, emerged as a gesture that helped students to feel that their presence was welcomed and valued. Additionally, a simple greeting, particularly an individual greeting, rose up as an informal first step for a teacher in establishing personal connections with students. Calling the students by name also sent a signal that the student was seen by the teacher.

Hugs and Smiles. Two other gestures that emerged relative to the portrayal of a friendly disposition were hugs and smiles. Across the portrayal of caring teachers featured in the children’s literature stories analyzed in this study, at one point or another all were described or illustrated as sharing a hug or a smile or both with students. A deeper analysis of three stories, *Miss Malarkey Leaves No Reader Behind*

(Finchler & O'Malley, 2006), *My Name is Yoon* (Recorvits, 2003), and *Thank You, Mr. Falker* (Polacco, 1998), revealed an interesting point.

Miss Malarkey believed “reading is about the finest thing a person can do”. Unfortunately, several of her students disagreed. In fact, one male student hates reading. It appeared that he possessed the skills to read. He just chose to do other things with his time like playing video games with his friends. Before the end of the year, Miss Malarkey promised to find each student a book that they would love. Throughout the year, Miss Malarkey kept giving students books including the boy who hated reading. One day the early part of June, Miss Malarkey asked the boy to stay after school. Once the classroom was empty, a smile appeared on Miss Malarkey’s face and she announced, “This year I found out a lot about you.” With a book hidden behind her back, she yells, “Have I got a book for you!” That afternoon the boy went home and started to read. “It was the greatest book ever made.” The boy “read right through dinner...” and well into the night. When the boy arrived at school the following day, the boy learned from Miss Malarkey that his reading of the book put the school one over the reading goal. After sharing the news with the boy, Miss Malarkey gave him “a hug.”

Similarly, Mr. Falker asked Trisha to stay after school to help clean the classroom chalkboard. Mr. Falker then invited Trisha to play a game with letters and numbers. As he called out the letters, Trisha would write them on the board with a wet sponge. Realizing that the letters and numbers were incorrect, Trisha threw down the sponge and tried to run from the classroom. “But Mr. Falker caught her arm and sank to his knees in front of her.” He explained to Trisha that she did not see letters and numbers the same as other people. This was a secret she had kept for years. After wrapping one arm around Trisha, he smiled at her and said, “That took cunning, and smartness, and such, such bravery.”

Yoon, the young girl from Korea, struggled to acclimate to attending school in a new country. For the first few days of school, she sat quietly at her desk. Following the teacher’s lesson, Yoon was given a sheet of paper to practice writing her name in English. “I did not want to write YOON. I wrote CAT instead.” Everyday for the first few days the young girl wrote other English words like bird and cupcake instead of her English name. As the teacher gave signs of “liking” Yoon, the young girl chose to write her name in English. The next school day, Yoon was excited to print her name. “And this time I wrote Yoon on every line. When my teacher looked at my paper, she gave me a big hug.”

In each of the three stories presented above, the classroom teacher was portrayed giving a student a hug and a warm smile. These two gestures appeared to convey the teacher's happiness in their students' efforts to succeed and achieve.

Portraying a Nurturing Disposition

To some degree, the portrayal of a nurturing disposition overlapped the portrayal of a friendly disposition. Often times the central characteristics of a nurturing disposition emerged as embedded in friendly gestures like a personal greeting, a gentle hug or a warm smile. Central to the portrayal of a nurturing disposition, however, were expressions of empathy, understanding, and compassion. When a caring teacher was featured with a nurturing disposition, the teacher was portrayed as fostering a positive attitude in one or more students.

Mr. Yalowitz, the fourth grade teacher in *Loser* (Spinelli, 2002), provided an example of a nurturing disposition as providing understanding. At the beginning of class, Mr. Yalowitz used roll cards to assign students to a seat. When he read the name on the first card, a smile crossed his face. "You want to know something, Zinkoff? You're the first Z I've ever had in my class. It's not easy being a Z, is it..." Zinkoff took a silent moment to think about the question. Then, Mr. Yalowitz stated,

“Well, it’s not easy, take my word for it. I was a Y. Always the last seat in the class” (p. 95).

The teacher featured in Michael Rosen’s (2006) book *Totally Wonderful Miss Plumberry* (Rosen, 2006) provided a clear example of a nurturing disposition as expressing empathy and understanding. Upon arriving at school, the students were curious to find out what Molly brought for show and tell. Seconds after revealing the crystal, another student named Russell ran past waving a very large pink and green dinosaur. The students’ attention turned to Russell. After things settle down a bit, “...Miss Plumberry looked up. She saw Molly all by herself. She saw Molly looking sad.” Understanding and appreciating Molly’s feelings of disappointment, Miss Plumberry went over and focused her attention on the crystal Molly brought to share with the class. With her hands on her knees, Miss Plumberry asked Molly to tell her about the blue crystal. After taking the crystal in her hands, Miss Plumberry took a closer look. “Molly, your crystal is totally wonderful. It’s one of the loveliest and most perfect things I’ve ever seen.”

Mr. Falker the teacher featured in Polacco’s (1998) autobiographical story, however, provided the quintessential example of a teacher portrayed with a nurturing disposition. At the moment Mr. Falker

discovered Trisha's reading disability, he slowly fell to his knees in front of her. "You think you're dumb, don't you? How awful for you to be so lonely and afraid." Hearing his words and feeling the empathy as he spoke, Trisha began to cry. Moments later Mr. Falker stood up and finished cleaning the blackboard. As he did, he reassured Trisha that he was going to help her so that she would learn to read.

Specific to the three examples presented above, nurturing emerged at a surface level through the teacher's dialogue. A deeper analysis raised awareness that positive dialogue working in tandem with a teacher looking up and seeing the students in the class as personal characteristics that convey a nurturing disposition.

Gestures Indicate Acceptance and Approval

Overall, reflected in the analysis was the point that personal dispositions play a prominent role in the portrayal of caring teacher's featured in the collection of children's literature stories. An in-depth examination of selected books from the data set highlighted a major point specific to gestures. At first glance, each of the gestures identified in this coding category appeared as an action to acknowledge a person's presence. From a deeper analysis of the caring teachers analyzed in the section above, personal greetings, hugs, and smiles emerged as actions

that conveys two key components. The components are approval and acceptance.

Pedagogy

Building Connections

Revealed in the analysis is a focus on building connections with students. As mentioned in Part I of this chapter, 38 of the teachers featured in the collection of children's literature stories analyzed coded as connecting with students. As such, pedagogy as connecting emerged as significant to the portrayal of caring teachers. A deep analysis of several books revealed three pedagogical approaches as instrumental to the portrayal of caring teachers.

Student Input. Asking for student input was one pedagogical approach highlighted in the portrayal of caring teachers. *Mr. Ouchy's First Day* (Hennessy, 2006) provided one example. Mr. Ouchy was a first year teacher. As the title suggests, the story chronicled the first day of teaching. To start the day, Mr. Ouchy introduced himself to his class of students. Once the introductions were over Mr. Ouchy attempted to transition into the first lesson of the day. Before he got started, the students asked a plethora of questions about this, that, and the other thing. One student raised his hand to ask "how many minutes until recess?" Mr. Ouchy

shared that recess was in twenty-five minutes. The same student raised his hand again in response. "Table 2 wants to know if that's 25 short minutes or 25 long minutes." Not certain about the meaning behind the students question Mr. Ouchy follows up with a question of his own. "What do you mean, Larry?" As the children explained to Mr. Ouchy the difference between a short minute and a long minute, Mr. Ouch listened to their comments and their stories. After the last student provided input Mr. Ouchy says, "I see. Let me try to explain." A dialogical exchange continues between Mr.Ouchy and the students.

A prominent piece in the portrayal of Mr. Ouchy was his willingness to receive and accept student input. The dialectic exchange excerpted above illuminates Mr. Ouchy's receiving students input as part of a two-way verbal exchange between him and a student. Embedded in the portrayal is also an ability to capitalize on teachable moments as they rise up during the course of the school day. Teachable moments are times when students are likely to be open to learning. Often times, teachable moments emerge as a result of students asking questions. Listening to students and building lessons around the interests of students as Mr. Ouchy did emerged as hallmark pedagogical practices that convey caring.

The Best Teacher in Second Grade (Kenah, 2006) provided another textual example of pedagogy that draws upon student input. The students in Mr. Hopper's second grade were preparing to host a Family Night. As part of the event, the students are to put on a performance. As Mr. Hopper stood before the class, he invited the students to help decide on a theme for the show. "We need to plan a show. Does anyone have an idea?" (p. 10). One after another, the students offered individual suggestions. After everyone was given a chance to share an idea, Mr. Hopper responded, "Those are all fine ideas." Based on the students' reactions to the list, Mr. Hopper announced the theme for the show would be a circus.

The characterization of Mr. Ouchy and Mr. Hopper highlighted student input as important to the portrayal of caring teachers. By providing opportunities for students to assist in the development of different aspects of the classroom the students received a message that what they think mattered and that their voice was valued. In addition, inviting students to share their thoughts, interests, and ideas gave them ownership of the learning environment.

Showing Humanity. Sharing personal interests and experiences with students was a second pedagogical approach illuminated in the

portrayal of caring teachers. The portrayals of Miss Agnes, Miss Malarkey, Miss Smith, and Miss Pointy provided excellent examples of showing humanity as a way of connecting with students.

Miss Agnes, the teacher portrayed in *The Year of Miss Agnes* (Hill, 2000), shared her passion for music with the students by integrating the battery operated record player and records as part of her teaching practice. Miss Malarkey, the teacher portrayed in *Miss Malarkey Leaves No Reader Behind* (Finchler & O'Malley, 2006), shared with the students her passion for reading. On the first day of school, the students knew that it was Miss Malarkey's belief that "reading is about the best thing a person can do." A passion for reading emerged as central to the portrayal of Miss Malarkey as a caring teacher.

Like Miss Malarkey, Miss Smith, the rocker-clad teacher featured in *Miss Smith's Incredible Storybook* (Garland, 2003), was passionate about reading. Miss Smith, however, was depicted as passionate about reading aloud. From the moment she walked in the classroom, Zack realized Miss Smith was different from all his other teachers. "When she sat at her desk and started to read from the book that she had brought with her, Zack couldn't believe his eyes." As Miss Smith read aloud to the students, "the storybook characters came to life." The first story Miss Smith read was

about a swashbuckling pirate. Even though Zack was sitting in his desk in the classroom, “he could feel the breeze in his hair and the waves pounding on the side of the ship.” At the end of the story, the characters and adventures returned to the pages of the book. Miss Smith sharing her passion for reading aloud eventually led Zack to develop a personal interest in reading.

The clearest example of a teacher connecting with students by sharing personal interests was found in *Sahara Special* (Codell, 2003). After writing the class schedule on the board that first day, Miss Pointy gave each student a thick composition book. “This is your journal. You will write in it everyday” (pp. 43 – 44). As she walked about the classroom passing out the journals, students began asking questions. The conversation led Miss Pointy to tell a story about her little brother eating dirt. Upon hearing the story the students just smiled. “A teacher who had a brother who ate dirt! A teacher who would lend you two dollars!” were all signs, according to the students, that showed Miss Pointy was “human” (p. 45).

Later in the school year, Miss Pointy was telling the students another story. This story was about a teacher. Miss Pointy told the story as if it was a dialogue between her and her students. As the students were

pressing leaves into a book, Miss Pointy began to tell the story. “She was very old.” One student asks, “How old?” Miss Pointy continued to build the story as she responded to the students question, “Old enough for gray hair. Old enough for a small hump in her back. Old enough for a squint in her eye” (p. 124). Just before the story came to an end, Rashonda made a statement to the class that the teacher in the story had to love a little boy in her class. “Teachers are paid to love children.” Surprised by this comment and others that followed, Miss Pointy tried to explain to the students that a teacher is not paid to love the children that they teach. “Loving children is what teachers do...” A teacher loving the children in the classroom, according to Miss Pointy, was like extra credit. It was “done of your own free will. Work and love given out of free will are always more joyous, better-quality stuff” (p. 131).

Looking across the texts presented above, each of the teacher characters was portrayed as implementing pedagogy that served to build connections with students. The teacher-student connections appeared to be the catalyst that propelled students forward and enabling students to experience success. This is certainly significant to the examination of care as pedagogy.

Another connection also appeared developing a slightly different link between pedagogy and caring teachers. Each of the caring teachers featured above incorporated as part of their pedagogical practice the reading aloud of books to students. What radiated through the portrayal of teacher read alouds as a pedagogical practice of the teachers featured in the children's literature analyzed these was a personal passion for reading. Taking a deeper look at this point, it appeared that in sharing their passion for reading the teachers were sharing a part of themselves. In the case of two teachers highlighted above, Miss Agnes and Miss Pointy, the choice to share their love of reading with their students ultimately led their students to develop a personal interest and desire to read as well. In sum, the sharing of a good story or a good book emerged as a pedagogical practice that built connections.

Knowing Students. A third pedagogical approach instrumental to the pedagogy that builds connections was teachers getting to know their students. The caring teachers were portrayed gathering information about their students' academic strengths and weaknesses and/or personal likes and dislikes in a myriad of different ways. It was certainly important to reveal an author who incorporated knowing students as an element of portraying caring teachers. A critical analysis of three fictional teachers

characters, Miss Malarkey, Mr. Falker, and Miss Agnes, illuminated an additional element.

In Karen Fichler and Kevin O'Malley's (2006) book *Miss Malarkey Leaves No Reader Behind*, getting to know students was central to the portrayal of Miss Malarkey. Throughout the school year, Miss Malarkey presented a variety of books to the students in her class. After months of trying, tremendous amounts of perseverance, and taking the time to get to know students individually, Miss Malarkey found just the right book for every student including the young male student who hates to read. One afternoon late in the year, Miss Malarkey asked one of her students to meet with her after school. Hiding a book behind her back, she shared with him...

"This year I found out a lot about you. I found out you don't like girl stories, dead baseball players, and math tricks. I found out you're not mean, you don't lie, and you love video games. You like cool sneakers, your lucky number is fifteen, and your favorite uncle is in the army. This year I found out even more about you. You, my boy, like aliens, race cars, funny jokes, chewing gum, hot sauce, and doing cannonballs at the pool."

Over the course of the year, Miss Malarkey got to know this student. As a result of learning his personal likes and dislikes, she ended up selecting “the greatest book ever” for the young male student that was depicted as hating to reading. In the end, Miss Malarkey led all of her students to develop a personal interest and love of reading.

In Patricia Polacco’s (1998) book *Thank You, Mr. Falker*, knowing students was key to the portrayal of a caring teacher. In the portrayal of Mr. Falker, however, the specific focus of getting to know students was to identify their academic strengths and weaknesses. From an impromptu game, Mr. Falker discovered that when Trisha tries to write numbers and letters they get all mixed up. Learning of her struggles to read, Mr. Falker let her know that he would help and with two of them working together she would learn to read. Following Mr. Falker’s discovery, Trisha stayed after school almost every day. Afterschool, she would spend time working with Mr. Falker and Miss Plessy, a reading specialist. She spent a lot of time doing things she didn’t understand. One afternoon, for example, she made “circles in sand, and then big sponge circles on the blackboard, going from left to right, left to right.” Another afternoon, Mr. Falker flicked letters on a screen as Trisha shouted the name of each letter. Then, three or four months later, Mr. Falker placed a book in front of Trisha. The book was

unfamiliar. “She’d never seen it before.” Mr. Falker selected a paragraph in the middle of the page and placed his finger on it. “Almost as if it were magic, or as if light poured in her brain, the words and sentences started to take shape on the page as they never had before.” Trisha began to read slowly. At first, she read one sentence pausing between each word. Finally, she reached the end of the paragraph. As Mr. Falker promised, Trisha learned to read.

By knowing her strengths and weaknesses as a learner, Mr. Falker was able to develop an individual instruction plan for Trisha. Learning about the students in the classroom provided Mr. Falker the opportunity to develop activities to scaffold learning. Getting to know students by building connections was a pedagogical approach featured as central to student learning and achievement.

In Kirkpatrick Hill’s (2000) book *The Year of Miss Agnes*, learning about the students attending the village school was paramount to the portrayal of Miss Agnes as a caring teacher. Similar to Miss Malarkey, Miss Agnes connected with her students by noticing the topics that interested them and by listening to them as talked about their daily lives. As a tool for teaching geography, Miss Agnes used the big map that she mounted on the classroom wall. When the students showed an interest in

the area around their village, Miss Agnes took out “a folded-up map, a map of just Alaska” (p. 41). The students crowded around the map. Fred explained how together they located “the Koyukuk River, our river, and the Yukon, down below us, and all the villages even Dolbi, our old village that no one lived in anymore” (pp. 41-42). Two of the students, Little Pete and Roger, were excited to show the class as well as Miss Agnes the location of their family trap line. The students were interested in pinpointing where they live on the map.

Like Mr. Falker, Miss Agnes used pedagogy to identify the academic strengths and weaknesses of the students. On the first day of school, Miss Agnes announced to the children that she needed to find out about their writing skills. To start, Miss Agnes gives the student’s new pencils and paper with lines. Then, she asked them to write their name and their birth date. As Miss Agnes walked about the room, she watched and observed the students as they write. When she arrived at Bertha’s desk, she leaned down to take a closer look at each letter. In response to what she saw, Miss Agnes shared with Bertha, “It would be hard to improve upon that. I’ll teach you to write cursive now. You are ready” (p. 36). Based on what she noticed, Miss Agnes made alphabet cards for each student’s desk. She printed the alphabet, upper and lower case, for

everyone except Bertha. On her alphabet card, Miss Agnes wrote the letters in cursive. In many ways, Miss Agnes was depicted tailoring her instruction to meet the individual academic needs of the students in the class.

A deeper analysis of Miss Agnes raised an interesting issue relative to pedagogy that builds connections. All the teachers previous to Miss Agnes used books from the Dick and Jane series. Fred noticed that the characters have a mother and a father, “and that’s what they called them, Mother and Father” (p. 90). These were words that Fred and her classmates had never heard before. Not only that, Dick and Jane stories took place in a town with houses surrounded by lots trees and cement roads. The only thing the children in the Dick and Jane books seemed to do was play, a stark contrast to the children of the village.

Aware of the cultural differences between the reading books and the every day lives of her students, Miss Agnes boxed up the books and put them away. In lieu of the Dick and Jane books, Miss Agnes made little books for the students to read. Fred described Miss Agnes making a different book for each of the school children.

“Just little pieces of paper stapled together, but the thing about those books was they were about us. My book said

this: 'There once was a little girl named Fred. Her real name is Frederika, and she lived on the Koyukuk River with her mother, Anna, and her sister, Bokko. And there was more about me...what we did for work, like washing dishes and bringing in the wood. It was so good, I read it over and over, and that's how I learned...' (p. 91).

The portrayal of Miss Agnes introduced the notion of building connections by developing pedagogy that honors, respects, and celebrates the cultural lives of students. Developing such a pedagogical approach is a signature trait of culturally responsive teaching.

Building on the idea of culturally responsive teaching one other scene from *The Year of Miss Agnes* warranted attention. The teachers prior to Miss Agnes criticized the students for speaking poor English. Miss Agnes projected a markedly different response. She said, "there were lots of right ways to talk" (p. 96). She went on to share with the students that the way they talk in the village was correct when talking with someone from the village. When students spoke their Athabaskan language, Miss Agnes viewed that as correct as well. In looking ahead, Miss Agnes shared with her students that "there's another way to talk" (p. 96) and that is the way people talk in the city. Following this discussion, Miss Agnes

made it a goal to help the students learn how to successfully move back and forth between their world and the outside world.

This scene provided another example of culturally responsive teaching. The focus in this scene was Miss Agnes helping the students develop their knowledge and understanding of primary and secondary discourses. Learning move freely between their natural discourse, the language and cultural of their village, and the unfamiliar discourse of the outside world. It was through listening to and learning about her students that Miss Agnes was aware of their need to learn the ways of the world beyond the village.

Knowing students equates to pedagogy that incorporates the time to watch, listen and learn about students. When a teacher such as those presented above, take the time to know students as individuals and as learners, the implicit message to them is they are seen. From the portrayal of caring teachers in the collection of books analyzed, seeing and knowing students emerged as a pedagogical approach and practice that motivated them to actively engage in learning. In sum, care is not constructed in the just knowing students. Care is manifested in through the pedagogical practices and approaches teachers integrate that promote the knowing of students.

A Supportive Pedagogy

As revealed in the analysis, 29 of the 38 teacher characters were portrayed integrating a supportive pedagogy. Expressing belief in students' abilities as well as acknowledging their efforts and achievements through verbal praise emerged as a central element of a supportive pedagogy.

The portrayal of Mr. Hopper in *The Best Teacher in Second Grade* (Kenah, 2007) showed a supportive pedagogy through his use of verbal praise in acknowledgement of student participation. As the students shared their thoughts and ideas about the theme and the characters for the upcoming class play, Mr. Hopper responded to students by saying, "Good answers." Mr. Hopper was also portrayed sharing words of praise to acknowledge student achievement and success. When the play was over, Mr. Hopper told his class of students, "Good work! I am proud of you all." He then turned to Luna and smiled, "Thank you for your fine idea" (p. 48).

The portrayal of Mr. Martin in *Hooray for Reading Day* (Cuyler, 2008) offered another example of a supportive pedagogy. In this story, Jessica was a first grade student who struggled with reading. When reading out loud, she often made mistakes. During a reading group,

Jessica waited anxiously for her turn to arrive. When it came for her to read, Jessica looked down at the page and the words began to swim around. To stop the words from moving she closed her eyes. Once open, she began to read, “The p-p-pot was h-h-hot.” Mr. Martin responded by saying, “Much better.” Words and phrases such as these and others in the story expressed by Mr. Martin appeared as instrumental to the development of Jessica’s motivation and confidence as a reader.

In these two examples, verbal praise and positive affirmations emerged as an avenue through which to offer support to students. In addition, positive and supportive dialogue appeared to encourage and foster students in the story to experience growth and development academically and/or socially.

The portrayal of Mr. Falker in *Thank You, Mr. Falker* (Polacco, 1998) provided a more complex example of a supportive pedagogy. Without hesitation, Mr. Falker offered verbal praise to acknowledge Trisha’s capabilities as an artist. Whenever Trisha was drawing a picture in the classroom, Mr. Falker stood behind Trisha and softly said, “This is brilliant...absolutely brilliant. Do you know how talented you are?”

A deeper analysis of Mr. Falker’s character illuminated another dimension to developing a supportive pedagogy. The portrayal of Mr.

Falker also highlighted him as a teacher with no tolerance for mean and hurtful behavior like bullying or teasing. For two whole years, a boy named Eric teased Trisha every chance he got. The bullying escalated to the point that Trisha began to hide inside the stairwell during recess and free time. This worked until the day Eric followed her down the hall. When he located her hiding place, he pulled her out into the hall and yelled, “Dumbbell, dumbbell...” Mr. Falker must have heard the commotion because Trisha suddenly heard his footsteps running down the hallway toward her. Without a word to Eric, Mr. Falker marched the boy down the hall to the school office. When he returned, he reassured Trisha that she did not have to “worry about that boy again.” Mr. Falker was depicted as taking an immediate and direct approach to stopping the mean and hurtful treatment of Trisha.

Looking across the collection of books analyzed, two other stories, *Hooray for Reading Day* (Cuyler, 2008) and *Sister Anne’s Hands* (Loribecki, 1998), provided examples similar to the one found in the story of Mr. Falker. Like Mr. Falker, Mr. Martin, the teacher in *Hooray for Reading Day!* (Cuyler, 2008), was portrayed as an educator who took a direct approach to handling teasing.

Jessica was a student in Mr. Martin's first grade class. Each day Mr. Martin grouped the students together in small reading groups. Once in their groups, the students took turns reading aloud. When Jessica read, she had trouble sounding out the words. She read, "...c-c-c-cat for cat and d-d-d-dish for dish." The other kids in the group laughed at her sometimes. Embarrassed by such attention, Jessica's face turned "as red as a radish." Standing over the group with his arms folded, Mr. Martin told the children to "stop making fun." A few days later, Jessica's reading group was given a new book. Jessica asked to read last. After all the other students had read, it was Jessica's turn. Jessica read, "The p-p-pot was snot." Every child in the reading group laughed at Jessica's mistake. "Shhh," Mr. Martin stated. Then, he turned to Jessica to ask her to try again. "I know you can do it," Mr. Martin told her.

Sister Anne, the teacher featured in *Sister Anne's Hands* (Loribecki, 1998), was also portrayed as addressing student bullying but from a slightly different plane. The first day of second grade was full of engaging activities. Anna recalled, "...to start class, Sister Anne had us tell some of our very best jokes..." Then, Sister Anne read a story aloud for story time using different voices for each character. The next subject was math. After adding and subtracting using "the buttons on our clothes, pencils in our

desks, and teeth in our heads”, Anna realized she has never had this much fun at school. After lunch, the classroom atmosphere took a dramatic turn. When Sister Anne was sitting at her desk, a paper airplane suddenly sailed past her. A note was written on the wings. After Sister Anne unfolds the paper plane, she read it aloud to the class. A few giggles rippled across the room. “Sister’s face froze like a tongue on an icy post”. Looking at the students sitting before her, she asked softly, “This is funny?” The rest of the day the room was so quiet a person “could have heard a butterfly sigh.”

The next morning, the students were shocked by pictures mounted on a wall in the classroom. “Sister Anne had plastered the room with pictures of black people, poor or dying...” There are other pictures showing signs over water fountains saying, “Whites Only.” Once the students were seated, Sister Anne held two of the pictures in her hands and shared, “These are the colors of hatred.” Moments later, Sister Anne appeared to warm up a little. Then, she told the students, “One thing you’re going to learn is that some folks have their hearts wide open, and others are tight as a fist. For me, I’d rather open my door enough to let everyone in than risk slamming it shut...” From her words, the students

realized that she was willing to move forward, giving them a second chance.

In some ways, the portrayal of Sister Anne projected a less direct approach to addressing classroom issues than the portrayal of Mr. Falker and Mr. Martin. The example highlighted from the story of *Sister Anne's Hands* (Loribecki, 1998), however, showed a teacher implementing pedagogy to support students understanding the harsh reality of bigotry. On one level, Sister Anne used pedagogy to address issues of hate. On a second level, Sister Anne drew upon pedagogical practices such as the use of photographs as an avenue for establishing understanding in the presence of racial tension and hatred.

Whether a direct or indirect approach was taken, pedagogy that served to prevent or end mean and hurtful behavior like bullying or academic teasing resulted in a safe classroom environment. Where students feel safe and supported they are also free to learn as was depicted as the outcome for Trisha in *Thank You, Mr. Falker* (Polacco, 1998).

Pedagogy as High Expectations

Relative to pedagogy, 17 of the 38 teacher characters set clear expectations for student growth and academic development. From the

portrayals of caring teachers, there were two distinct types of expectations.

One type of expectations centered on behavior. Some teachers were portrayed establishing clear behavioral expectations for students. Mrs. Byrd, the first grade teacher in *Brand-new Pencils, Brand-new Books* (deGroat, 2005), for example, made the creation of classroom rules a part of the first day of school. Upon her signal, the students looked to find a desk with their name taped to the front. Then, Mrs. Byrd handed out the first grade spelling books, reading books, as well as special paper for their writing assignments. When snack time arrived one student shouts, "...chocolate cookies!" Mrs. Byrd turned to the student to say, "We don't shout in class, Lewis. That's a rule in first grade." After turning to face the chalkboard, Mrs. Byrd wrote *Rules: 1. Use your quite voice*. Next, she asked the students for input. Mrs. Byrd listed all the rules the students suggested on the chalkboard. Together, they co-construct a list of classroom rules focused on behavior.

A second type of expectation focused on academics. Some teachers were portrayed setting academic goals. One example was drawn from the book *Miss Malarkey Leaves No Reader Behind* (Finchler & O'Malley, 2006). In the very beginning of the story, Miss Malarkey

promised to find a book each of the student's would love before the end of the year. By the end of the book which coincided with the end of the school, Miss Malarkey was victorious. She motivated every student in her class to read by finding just the right book.

Behavioral expectations appeared relatively straight forward. This, however, was not the case with academic goals. At first glance, the emerging thought was that the academic goals and expectations set were for students. A second glance revealed something different. Based on the portrayal several of the fictional teacher characters, the onus of achieving academic goals and expectations appeared to fall on the teacher not the student. More specifically, in the case of Miss Malarkey, it was up to the teacher to find a book that would interest each of her students. Furthermore, the story inferred that it was Miss Malarkey's responsibility to motivate students to read. The story did not reflect any clear level of effort on the part of the student. Since literary texts are described as reflecting society, is there a connection between current educational policy such as the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) and the portrayal of teacher characters? Overall, the portrayal of teachers as setting high expectations for students was positive and paralleled the idea that teachers express caring by setting clear expectations.

Connecting is Receptivity

In sum, two key points emerged from the analysis of the data relative to the pedagogy. First, a variety of pedagogical practices and approaches were integrated into the portrayal of teachers. While the practices and approaches varied to some degree, there was also coherence. As the teachers featured in children's literature stories connected with students, they learned about the students. No matter the instructional practice, the portrayal of caring teachers projected the image of getting to know students as individuals and as learners. By learning and knowing student strengths and weaknesses or likes and dislikes, the teachers were portrayed using their knowledge of students to scaffold instructional practices and approaches.

Second, the critical analysis of pedagogy as building connections with students revealed a component central to care. The tenet is receptivity. Receptivity is the willingness and openness of a person to receive the thoughts, ideas, and feelings of another person. In the portrayal of caring teachers in the collection of books analyzed, receptivity is related to several images. One common image of receptivity from the children's books was that of a teacher inviting students to share ideas. A second image of receptivity was a teacher listening to students as they

offer suggestions then providing some type indication the ideas were received. A teacher receiving and accepting a student for who they are and what they bring to the classroom emerged as a pedagogical practice that manifests as care.

Conclusion to the Portrayal of Caring Teachers

The portrayal of caring teachers is complex and multidimensional. The stories analyzed reflect that a significant piece to the portrayal of caring teachers is pedagogy. On the one hand, pedagogical practices and approaches are designed to scaffold students' cognitive growth and development. On the other hand, the portrayal of caring teachers analyzed highlights pedagogical practices and approaches as avenues for teachers to connect with and learn about students.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

If you want your child to get the best education possible, it is actually more important to get him assigned to a great teacher than a great school (Bill and Melinda Gates, 2009).

“Everyone wants to feel like someone cares” (Kroeger, Moi, & Peake, 2008, track 3) is a song lyric that reflects commonly held thoughts and feelings of society at large, as well as an implicit message relative to the topic of inquiry for this study. Since children’s literature offers “mirrors, windows, and doors” (Botelho & Rudman, 2009) through which to view and reflect upon the world in which they live, it is important to unpack the images embedded in the texts read by young readers. Specifically, it is imperative to examine the explicit and implicit messages relative to teachers in children’s literature.

The results of this study reflected, on the one hand, a positive trend in the portrayal of teachers in children’s literature. On the other hand, a deep analysis of teacher characters featured in children’s books revealed several key issues. First, presented in the literary texts was a narrow perception of teachers. That is, who was represented relative to teacher gender, race, ethnicity, and culture was largely limited to White, European

Americans. In addition, how teachers act relative to personal dispositions was to a large extent limited to perceptions of “gentle hugs and warm smiles” (Rogers, 1994). With respect to pedagogy, there was a type of universal perception projected. In other words, the instruction dimensions incorporated as elements of the characterization of teachers did not embrace the notion of pedagogical practices and approaches that honored a culturally diverse range of students.

In conclusion, this researcher urges authors and book publishers to create and produce children’s literature, specifically picture storybooks, transitional books, and children’s novels, that depict a broad range of teachers. By doing so, consumers of children’s literature, such as children, will be presented with a more accurate portrayal of the pool of teachers teaching here in the twenty-first century. Likewise, teacher educators and classroom teachers as well are encouraged to utilize children’s books that represent non-mainstream cultures and ethnicities as a way of connecting with the broad range of students in classrooms all across the country.

Findings

Invisibility of Race, Ethnicity, and Culture

Social identities were illuminated in this study as an invisible element in the portrayal of caring teachers. Across the texts analyzed the

social identities of teacher characters were implied mainly through the visual illustrations. With skin tone and color as the primary indicator, it was difficult to ascertain with any level of certainty and accuracy the race, ethnicity, and culture of the fictional teacher characters.

Two lines of thought rose to the surface relative to the invisibility of race, ethnicity, and culture. One line was that the absence of explicit written descriptors in children's literature relative to social identities provides the reader the opportunity to imagine the teacher character as someone like themselves. By assigning the social identities, the reader was able to give the character a race, ethnicity, and culture similar to themselves. Thus, the reader was provided a greater opportunity to connect with the character and with the story.

A second line of thought illuminated a potentially hidden message. The majority of the fictional teacher characters featured in the children's literature were portrayed as having a light skin tone (See Appendix B). Such dominance casts a monolithic perception of teacher race, ethnicity, and culture. This emergence was problematic in that a character depicted with a light skin color is assumed to be White European-American. The dominant portrayal of European Americans as caring teachers implicitly

suggested that education is influenced by the normative practices and expectations held by the White mainstream culture.

Annual Household Statistics reported for 2008 reflect over eighty-one percent of elementary and middle school teachers were White. Based on this statistic, the preponderance of White European teachers featured in the children's literature analyzed aligns with actual classroom teachers. When reflecting on the portrayal of caring teachers, what surfaces as problematic is that the student demographics of schools are constantly changing. The domestic diversity and high numbers of people immigrating to the United States has created "a vibrant mixture of cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and experiential plurality" (Gay, 2004, p. 315) within the country. That vibrant mix inevitably carries over to classrooms all across the country.

Considering this point with respect to care, a single perspective is concerning for it increases the possibility of explicating a partial picture of the nuances of care in the context of teaching and learning. A partial picture is problematic for two primary reasons. First, by maintaining a limited view, theories of care in the context of teaching and learning continue to turn upon the dominant culture's perception of care (Thompson, 2003). Second, in the twenty-first century, classrooms all

across the country are comprised of a racially, culturally, and ethnically diverse population of students. Kathryn Au (2006) argues that maintaining a limited view will continue to lead teaching and learning to “be responsive to the cultural backgrounds of mainstream students but not to the cultural backgrounds of students of diverse backgrounds” (p. 119). No matter the reason, maintaining a status quo view of teaching pushes a large portion of the student population to the margins of education and will ultimately cause them to disconnect from learning.

Gestures Indicate Acceptance

Personal greetings, hugs and smiles emerged a prominent trait in the portrayal of caring teachers. On a surface level, the emergence of gestures as central to the portrayal of fictional teacher characters provided support for the perception that “caring teachers are nice, friendly, smiling, and loving” (Goldstein, 2002, p. 9). While there is certainly an element of truth to such a perception, a deep analysis highlighted simple gestures such as personal greetings, hugs, and smiles as containing the potential power to positively impact student engagement and learning.

Extending a personal greeting to a classroom of students or to individual students upon their arrival at school appeared to lead students to experience several things. First, a personal greeting let the student

know that they were seen by their teacher. Second, extending a simple greeting such as “hello” or “good morning” sent a message to the students that their presence was valued. Third, a positive greeting, particularly on an individual basis, emerged as an informal first step for the teacher to establish a personal connection with students.

A gesture of a hug or a smile also has the potential to foster a connection with students. The analysis of caring teachers indicated a hug and a smile convey a message of acceptance and approval. When a friendly disposition led a teacher to smile often or give a student a hug, the message the teacher sent to the student was one of acceptance and approval. As several of the stories analyzed in this study showed, students that experience feelings of acceptance and approval ultimately led students to learn.

Connecting is Receptivity

Dewey (1938) asserted that knowing students, being aware of their capabilities as well as their needs and responding to students on an individual basis are fundamental tenets to educational reform. Connecting in the context of education emerged as a link between the teacher and the curriculum, the teacher and the student, the students with the other students in the class, and finally the students and the curriculum. Central

to the portrayal of caring teachers in the collection of children's literature stories analyzed was pedagogy that worked to build connections between the teacher and students.

Relative to pedagogy as connecting, two key components were highlighted in the analysis. One component revolved around the idea of pedagogical relationships. In the context of this study, pedagogical relationships in centered on constructing a positive link between a teacher and a student. A core tenet of a positive pedagogical relationship was a teacher developing connections with students through genuine interactions. Through day to day interactions, caring teachers foster opportunities that allows them to hear, see, and understanding the students in the classroom (Noddings, 1992). When a teacher integrated a pedagogical approach that allowed them to build personal and positive connections with students, the stories analyzed indicated that students felt recognized, respected, and understood.

A second component that emerged relative to connecting with students builds on to the discussion of pedagogical relationships. Creating and maintaining lines of connectedness are a necessity for teachers to teach and students to learn. The portrayal of caring teachers in children's literature illuminated receptivity as a main component to creating and

maintaining connections with students. For a teacher to receive students, they must first be interested and open to the thoughts and ideas of the students in class. Relative to the conversation on care, receptivity, according to Nel Noddings (1992), is the cornerstone a caring pedagogy.

Leading to Success

From the analysis of children's literature in this study, academic success and advancement were highlighted as one piece to the portrayal of caring fictional teachers. Across the texts analyzed, academic growth and success was commonly featured at the culmination to each story. The implicit message in such endings was that student success was the result of interacting with a caring teacher.

The etymological root of the word education provides the first shard of insight relative to the emergence of the third theme, progression. The etymological origin of education is *educare*. The Latin term *educare* means to "lead out" (Barnhart, 1995, p. 232), a meaning that suggests advancement or movement in a forward direction. A comprehensive goal of education, its reform, its policies, its ideals, and its practices, is to improve or advance the academic growth and cognitive development of every student. The portrayal of caring teachers featured in children's literature projected a similar image. In sum, caring as pedagogy was the

practice that accomplished the “leading out” and pushing forward the students featured in the stories analyzed.

Reflecting Upon Analytical Frameworks

A point of contention in theories of care is the lack of multiculturalism; an omission or absence that emerged in the portrayal of teachers as a result of viewing the children’s literature texts selected for analysis through a critical literacy lens. The reason for the lack of attention to the cultural dimensions of care, specifically in the context of education, is the belief that the dominate culture tends to reinforce conditions that support positions of power and control (Au, 2006; Freire, 2004; Fordman, 1991). One avenue for maintaining such power is by controlling the structure of institutions like school, and popular culture such as children’s literature. In accordance with this line of thought “school generally serves as a process of reproducing the existing order, to the benefit of students who are members of the dominant group” (Au, 2006, p. 7). With respect to this study what it means to care in other cultures was not represented in the portrayal of caring teachers featured in children’s literature nor integrated into the pedagogical practices integrated as part of the storyline.

Care as relational is not the same in all cultures. For example, the concept of care in the African-American culture is based on the anthropological concept of fictive-kinship. This is a socially constructed concept. In other words, fictive-kinship signifies a familial-like relationship between persons not related by blood or marriage, who also have some reciprocal social or economic connection (Fordman, 1991). What sets fictive-kinship apart from the dominant European mainstream culture is the emphasis on an individual ethos. The strong sense of community emanating from sociocultural relationships are considered a hallmark characteristic of fictive-kinship. This cultural ideal stands in contrast to the expectations of the dominant culture. In fact, a quintessential characteristic of the dominant ideology, in particular the context of education, is distinguishing the individual from the group.

By expressing care as manifested in the dominant culture, teachers are to some extent devaluing a portion of their students. And, as a result, students of diverse backgrounds are walking away from school with the perception that teachers do not see nor understand who they are and what they need (Au, 2006). In other words, nonmainstream students are feeling the absence of care. Subsequently, they are disconnecting from learning; a phenomenon that only stands to broaden the achievement gap.

Two theoretical frameworks formed the foundation of examination in this study, relational epistemology and critical literacy theory. Conducting this study illuminated the presence of care in the portrayal of fictional teachers featured in children's literature. Employing these two theoretical frames shed light on the lack of a multicultural representation of caring in the context of teaching and learning. In the multicultural and diverse environment that is the norm not the exception of the classroom in the twenty-first century, a monolithic portrayal of caring is unacceptable. The significance of this study suggested that teachers and teacher educators should consider care as it is expressed in other cultures as an important element of pedagogy. As a form of popular culture, children's literature has the potential to influence societal perceptions and understandings. As such, authors and illustrators should be challenged to consider developing new storylines and fictional teacher characters, ones that help to re-shape perceptions of care in the context of teaching and learning.

Recommendations for Further Research

Illuminated in this content analysis was the point that caring is an important piece to the portrayal of teachers in children's literature published within the last ten years. I encourage scholars, teacher

educators, and classroom teachers to continue the investigation and examination of the portrayal of caring teachers in children's literature.

First, I recommend a study that examines how young learners interpret teacher stories. Such an examination would focus on students' views and reactions toward the portrayal of teachers featured in children's books. A study such as this would provide an opportunity to identify and reflect upon the influence the images of teachers and teacher stories have on students' perceptions, expectations, and assumptions of teachers and schools.

Second, I recommend a study that engages college students, who are preparing to become elementary classroom teachers, in dialogue and critical reflection on the notion of caring teachers. For such a study, I suggest a small sampling of texts such as those analyzed in this study be read by pre-service teachers. Following the reading of texts, I would encourage an online threaded conversation or focus group dialogue about the portrayal of teachers as a vehicle for making explicit pre-service teachers beliefs and assumptions about caring in the context of teaching and learning. A study such as this might provide valuable insight into the commonly held perceptions of care relative to education.

Third, I recommend a study that engages pre-service teachers and/or elementary students in a critical analysis of children's literature specific to the portrayal of teachers. Such study would offer an opportunity to deconstruct the politics of care by unpacking the image of nice, friendly, smiling teacher that is often times perceived as the cornerstone to portrayal of a caring teacher. Integrated into the deconstruction of care, I would suggest raising the issue of power, as identified and described by Maria Botelho and Masha Rudman (2009), as an element of teacher-student relationships developed on the premise of care.

Fourth, I recommend a study that examines the portrayal of teachers in children's literature before and after the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act (United States Department of Education, 2001). The idea for such a study surfaces in light of Sandefur and Moore's (2004) study titled *The "Nuts and Bolts" of Teacher Images in Children's Picture Storybooks: A Content Analysis* and this study. Since the publication date for books included in this study started right about the year Sandefur and Moore's ended, wonderment rose up relative to changes in the portrayal of teachers featured in children's literature. For example, does a shift from negative to positive portrayals emerge? If so, what year did the change begin? And, how does the change correspond to the implementation of

the No Child Left Behind? If a shift in portrayal from negative to positive does exist, how does the portrayal support or disrupt the goals of educational policy? While there may not be sufficient evidence to support a correlation, such a study would illuminate an emerging trend in children's literature.

Fifth, I recommend a study that investigates the portrayal of teachers in modern fantasy stories. A critical multicultural analysis could be implemented to examine the implicit and explicit messages embedded in the depiction of teachers as animal characters. For example, what types of animals are used to portray teacher characters in children's literature? What is the purpose behind using animals not humans to depict teacher characters? What, if any, embedded messages exist in the types of animals used to portray teachers in children's literature?

Sixth, I suggest studies be conducted that investigate the sociocultural nexus of literacy learning. Two studies come to mind. First, I recommend an exploratory study that centers on the social and cultural connection in literacy learning. Texts suggested for possible consideration as a backdrop for reflection and examination of a linkage between literature, cultural literacy, and caring pedagogy might *The Year of Miss Agnes* (Hill, 2000) and *My Name is Yoon* (Recortvis, 2003) As an

extension, I recommend a study with pre-service or in-service teachers (e.g., undergraduate students, graduate students, reading endorsement candidates) juxtaposing the two children's literature texts mentioned above with the reading of scholarly texts like Kathryn Au's (2006) text *Multicultural Issues and Literacy Achievement* and one of Paulo Freire's texts such as *Literacy, Reading the Word and the World* (Freire & Macedo, 1987) or *Pedagogy of Indignation* (Freire, 2004) as a catalyst for dialogue and written reflection on the issue of caring and culturally responsive pedagogy. Such a study could encourage students to confront and possibly reconsider their personal stance on issues of race, culture, and ethnicity relative to the notion of caring teachers.

Seventh, I recommend an examination of caring across cultures. The student populations of classrooms all across the United States are becoming more and more diverse. The study of children conducted by Shirley Brice Heath (1983) raises the issue of cultural caring infused in pedagogy. Additional research might build on Heath's work and explore the impact of cultural caring on student engagement, motivation, and achievement.

Finally, an additional area of research to explore is brain research. Lately, a number of scholars including Laurence Tancredi (2005) and

David Snowdon (2002) have conducted empirical research on the brain. The results of the studies indicate positive growth of the brain, specifically the frontal lobe, when a person is engaged in a caring type of environment. While the Tancredi and Snowdon's work does not focus on education, their research supports the importance of caring environments and offers empirical data that supports the positive impact of caring.

Conclusion: The Kaleidoscope of Care

To borrow a term from literacy theory, teaching should be balanced. By this I mean that quality and effective teaching includes extensive subject and/or curricular knowledge by the teacher balanced with giving time and attention to constructing a supportive classroom environment and pedagogy that scaffolds learning as well as student success and academic achievement.

From research conducted (e.g., Meehan, Hughes, & Cavell, 2003; Treven & McCroskey, 1996; Wentzel 1997), the voices of students at different points along the K-12 continuum made it clear that it is not enough to just focus on the cognitive dimensions of learning. In order for students to be motivated to learn and to be engaged in learning, classroom teachers need to present an ethos of care as a genuine component of their pedagogical practice. Without care, the acquisition of

new knowledge will not take hold to the level that it should and students may not flourish academically to the level possible. The findings of this study identified teachers who employ caring as pedagogy were portrayed as being successful in achieving a goal of quality and effective teaching.

The analysis and findings of this study showed that there are many common elements in genuine interactions or encounters that have the potential to convey care. The personal attributes along with the pedagogical approaches and practices infused in care are like the colorful fragments of glass that go into a kaleidoscope; a container that holds mirrors and pieces of colored glass that produces changing patterns when rotated (Jewel, 2002). While the elements that go into a kaleidoscope are the same, after it is sealed, then held up to the light and turned, the colorful images that materialize in the viewfinder arrange and appear differently for each person. Care in the context of teaching and learning is similar. While each of the fictional teachers were portrayed with similar characteristics, traits, and praxis, in the end each character projected and expressed care in a manner that was unique to their gender, culture, ethnicity, and pedagogy. Like the mirrors and fragments of colored glass sealed in a kaleidoscope, care in the context of teaching and learning has

common elements that when internalized by individual educators emerge in unique and different combinations.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Avi. (2001). *The secret school*. New York, NY: Scholastic.

This historical children's novel is set in 1925. Miss Fletcher is the teacher at the Elk Valley Schoolhouse. A few days into the new school year, Miss Fletcher announces that she must return home to take care of her ailing mother. Without Miss Fletcher, the school board has no choice but to close the school. Two of the students, Ida and Tom, develop a secret plan. Ida, one of the oldest student at the school, will step in and teach the other students. One spring day, the county school examiner discovers the school is open. The county examiner agrees to allow the children to continue to have school. The children, however, must each agree to take a final grade-level examination at the end of the year. Several weeks after the final exams are taken the students each receive a letter in the mail announcing that they passed.

Bowen, Anne. (2006). *What do teachers do after you leave school?*

Minneapolis, MN: Carolrhoda Books, Inc.

This is a fictional picture storybook about the things teachers do when the students are gone for the day. Teachers in this book are portrayed as a bunch of big kids just wanting to have fun. Once the last student exits the building, the teachers are free to roam the halls and have

fun. They play basketball, play on the playground, skate through the halls, have food fights, and much more. In the morning, an hour before the students return, the teachers work collaboratively to get the school reading for the new school day; leaving no trace of their fun and mischief during the night. This is a fun and imaginative story with brilliantly colored illustrations that are sure to attract the attention of young readers.

**Excluded: There is no classroom teacher featured as a central character in the story.

Bush, Laura, & Bush, Jenna. (2008). *Read all about it*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers.

This is a fantasy picture storybook focused on the power of reading aloud. Tyrone Brown is a young male student who does not despise books and reading. He just doesn't choose to read. He is interested in doing other things. Over the course of the school year his feelings change thanks to Miss Libro, his classroom teacher. Everyday Miss Libro shares her passion for a good book by reading aloud to the students in her classroom. As she says reads the story aloud, the characters appear in the classroom.

Carlson, Nancy. (2007). *I don't like to read*. New York, NY: Viking.

This is a fantasy picture storybook about a boy named Henry who does not like to read. His teacher, Mr. Martin, recognizes Henry does not like reading. One day after school Mr. Martin asks Henry why he does not like to read. Henry has no trouble articulating his struggle. To Henry, the words and letters just do not make sense. Mr. Martin understands the issue and promptly puts the wheels in motion to get Henry extra help in reading. By the end of the book, Henry is reading.

Carlson, Nancy. (2006). *First grade here I come*. New York, NY: Viking.

This fantasy picture storybook is a follow-up story to Henry's 100 Days of Kindergarten (Carlson, 2004). At the end of the first day of first grade, Henry's mom is waiting for him at the bus stop. She is curious to find out how the day went and what Henry thinks of first grade. Henry tells his mother all about his day from beginning to end. His tale begins with him comparing kindergarten to first grade. While the teachers are similar in that they are welcoming and friendly, they are different in a big way. Ms. Bradley is female and Mr. McCarthy is male. Despite the difference in

teacher gender, Henry is portrayed transitioning well from kindergarten to first grade.

Carlson, Nancy. (2004). *Henry's 100 days of kindergarten*. New York, NY: Puffin Books.

This is a fantasy picture storybook about the classroom events and activities leading up to the 100th day of school. On the first day of kindergarten, Miss Bradley places one jellybean in a jar. After doing so, she announces to the students that each school day from then on another jellybean will be added until 100 jellybeans are in the jar. Every month of the school year, from September to February, the students participate in a different classroom event or activity. When February arrives, the jar is suddenly full and the focus shifts to the 100th day. Ms. Bradley and the students celebrate all things 100.

Clearly, Beverly. (1983). *Dear Mr. Henshaw*. New York, NY: HarperTrophy.

This realistic children's novel is about a fifth grade boy named Leigh who struggles to write a report about an author. As a way to improve their writing skills, the classroom teacher gives students the assignment to write a letter to an author. By attempting to correspond with Mr. Henshaw, the author, Leigh improves his writing but also has a

significant change in his view of the world in which he lives. The story Dear Mr. Henshaw is told through a series of journal entries and letters to the author. The story design draws the reader into the story. This is an excellent story for teachers to read aloud to students especially when focusing on writing as communication. ***Excluded: There is no teacher featured as central to the story.

Clements, Andrew. (1996). *Frindle*. New York, NY: Scholastic.

This is a realistic children's novel about a very clever boy. Nick Allen takes great pride in being the class instigator and troublemaker. In fifth grade, however, his usual tricks are not affecting the classroom teacher. In fact, the first day he tries to get Mrs. Granger talking so that she does not have time to assign homework. Instead of having no homework, Nick ends up with an extra assignment. He is to write a report on the history of words. After giving his report, Nick is struck with an idea. He decides to create a new word. He puts a plan into action. Before he knows it, the new word spreads through the school and community. Even when he tries to stop the momentum, the word takes on a life of its own. This is a captivating story that is sure to put a smile on the face of every reader. It is a great read aloud book. ***Excluded: The publication date is outside the scope of inquiry.

Clements, Andrew. (2004). *The report card*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers.

This is a realistic children's novel about a fifth grade girl named Nora. Nora is in the regular education classroom in Philbrook Elementary School. Nora is really a genius portraying herself as an average student. She just wants to be seen and treated as normal. She is successful until the day she gets fed up with high stakes testing and the schools emphasis on grades. She implements a plan to promote change with a little help from her friend Stephen. Embedded in this wonderfully written story is a message about teaching and learning. ***Excluded: The educator central to the story is a school librarian.

Codell, Esme Raji. (2003). *Sahara special*. New York, NY: Hyperion Books for Children.

This is a realistic children's novel about a special education student named Sahara. For several years, Sahara received special education instruction. Days before the next school year begins, Sahara's mother requests she be exited from the special education program and assigned to a regular classroom. Reluctantly, the school agrees. Sahara is placed in Miss Pointy's fifth grade classroom. Somehow, Miss Pointy sees something special in Sahara that no other teacher has seen. Through

Miss Pointy's fun and engaging methods of teaching, Sahara finds the strength to share her true self with her peers as well as her teacher.

Cox, Judy. (2005). *Don't be silly, Mrs. Millie*. New York, NY: Marshall Cavendish.

This is a realistic picture storybook about a fun-loving classroom teacher. Mrs. Millie brings humor to every moment of the school day. For different classroom items and events, Mrs. Millie mixes up her words. She calls coats "goats" and pencils "penguins. Every time their teacher substitutes a name the students thoroughly enjoy correcting the mistakes.

Creech, Sharon. (2002). *A fine, fine school*. New York, NY: Scholastic.

This is a realistic picture storybook about a principal. Mr. Keene walks about Fine Elementary School every day. As he walks about he sees learning everywhere. Excited by the learning that abounds, he decides to extend school, first by one day, then two and finally 365 days. The problem is that the teachers and students do not want to be there. Tillie, a student at Fine Elementary, goes to Mr. Keene and explains that by spending every day in school the students are actually missing out on a lot of learning. Mr. Keene listens and respects the voice of this young student. As a result, Mr. Keene returns the school schedule to five days a

week. ***Excluded: The educator central to the story is a principal and does not meet the criteria for inclusion.

Cuyler, Margery. (2008). *Hooray for reading day!* New York, NY:

Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers.

This is a realistic picture storybook about a young learner named Jessica who is struggling to read. Jessica does not like to read aloud. She is afraid of making mistakes and being laughed at by her peers. One day her teacher, Mr. Martin, announces that the class will be hosting a Reader's Theatre. Upon hearing this announcement, Jessica's stomach begins to turn somersaults propelled by the worry she feels. The days leading up to the performance Jessica practices. In the end, Jessica experiences success reading aloud.

Dahl, Roald. (1988). *Matilda*. New York, NY: Puffin Books.

This realistic children's novel is about a little girl by the name of Matilda. Matilda desperately wants to attend school. Not yet five years old, Matilda's parents refuse to let her attend. Unbeknownst to her parents, Matilda teaches herself to read. Several months after turning five, Matilda enters school. Unfortunately, the school Matilda attends is governed by cruel headmistress Miss Trunchbull who absolutely does not like kids. On the brighter side, Matilda is assigned to Miss Honey's class. Miss Honey is

a friendly and kind teacher that ends up taking a special interest in Matilda. In the end, Miss Honey and Matilda help one another. Miss Honey helps Matilda's parents realize the incredible gifts and talents their daughter possesses. Matilda helps the perception of the school turn from negative to positive. ***Excluded: The publication date is outside the scope of inquiry.

Danneberg, Julie. (2006). *Last day blues*. Watertown, MA:

Charlesbridge Publishing, Inc.

This realistic picture storybook is the final book in a series of three. This book brings the first year of teaching for Mrs. Jane Hartwell to a close. Monday of the last week of school, Mrs. Hartwell shares with the students her feelings of sadness that year is coming to an end. Concerned, the students work together to develop a plan to stop Mrs. Hartwell from being sad. After much thought and preparation, the students present Mrs. Hartwell with a letter of thanks for a good school year.

Danneberg, Julie. (2003). *First day letters*. Watertown, MA:

Charlesbridge Publishing, Inc.

This realistic picture storybook chronicles Mrs. Jane Hartwell's first year of teaching. Mrs. Hartwell's students are portrayed writing letters to her toward the end of the school year. The letters tell about the things that

happened, or rather went sideways, during class field trips, science experiments, and classroom parties. While surrounded by chaos much of the time, the students had a fun year in Mrs. Hartwell's class.

Danneberg, Julie. (2000). *First day jitters*. Watertown, MA:

Charlesbridge Publishing, Inc.

This realistic picture storybook is the first in a series of three about Mrs. Jane Hartwell. Mrs. Hartwell is a first year teacher. The focus of this story is the first day of school. However, there is a unique twist. The jitters felt by the character in this story are not that of a student but rather a novice teacher preparing for their first day of teaching. The identity of the character nervous about school is not revealed until the very last page.

***Excluded: The teacher is not featured teaching students.

Danziger, Paula. (2004). *Second grade rules, Amber Brown*. New

York, NY: Scholastic.

This easy reader book offers a realistic story about life in the classroom for young student named Amber Brown. Amber is enjoying school until the day Ms. Light adds a new classroom rule, *Keep your desk clean*. This young learner is the kind of student that thrives on chaos and disorganization. So for Amber, the new classroom rule makes school hard. With time and encouragement from Ms. Light, Amber eventually

experiences success receiving a blue ribbon for achieving the classroom expectation of keeping a clean desk.

Davis, Katie. (2005). *Kindergarten rocks*. Orlando, FL: Harcourt, Inc.

This is a realistic picture storybook of a little boy, named Dexter, who fears going to school. The night before the first day of school, Dexter talks to his sister Jessie. Jessie is older and has already spent a year in kindergarten. She tells him a little bit about kindergarten. The next day Jessie walks Dexter to school. Once there, she escorts him to his classroom. By the end of the school day, Dexter thinks kindergarten is a great place, in fact, it rocks. ***Excluded: There is no teacher featured as a central character in the story.

deGroat, Diane. (2006). *No more pencils, no more books, no more teacher's dirty looks!* New York, NY: Scholastic.

This is a fantasy picture storybook that builds upon the story titled Brand-New Pencils, Brand-New Books (deGroat, 2005). The last day of school is focused on two things cleaning the classroom and finding out about class awards. Mrs. Byrd gives an award to every child in the classroom. Gilbert has no idea what she kind of award Mrs. Byrd would give him. After spending the morning cleaning the classroom, the classroom is set up in preparation for the presentation of awards. The

students' families arrive to share in the celebration. First, each student recites a poem. Then, Mrs. Byrd hands out individual awards to students. The last award Mrs. Byrd passes out is the "good friend" award. This is the award Gilbert receives.

deGroat, Diane. (2005). *Brand-new pencils, brand-new books*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers.

This is a fantasy picture storybook about the first day of school. Like many students, Gilbert is nervous yet excited about going to school. Prior to the first day of school, Gilbert packs up his brand-new pencils and brand-new books. As he does, he wonders what the school day will be like. Of primary concern is whether or not his new teacher will be nice. By the end of the day, Gilbert realizes that school is a fun place and that his teacher, Mrs. Byrd, is a very nice person.

DiPucchio, Kelly. (2005). *Mrs. McBloom, clean up your room!* New York, NY: Hyperion Books for Children.

This is a realistic picture storybook about a well loved classroom teacher on the brink of retiring. Mrs. McBloom has taught in the same school and the same classroom for fifty years. From the cluttered appearance of the classroom, there is no doubt she threw nothing away. In anticipation of a new teacher, Mrs. McBloom must clean up her room.

The students offer suggestions. One idea stands out above the rest. The class will invite the community to help clean the classroom. Hearing the news, the people of the community, most of whom are former students, line up to help. As each person says good-bye to Mrs. McBloom, they pick up one item from the classroom and take it home. By the end of the day, the room is clean.

Dodds, Dayle Ann. (2006). *Teacher's pet*. Cambridge, MA:

Candlewick Press.

This is a realistic picture storybook about Miss Fry. Miss Fry is an elementary school teacher. Every Monday in Miss Fry's classroom is animal show-n-tell. Over the course of the school year, every child has the opportunity to bring their pet. The pets cover a broad range exotic and domestic animals from a hen, to a cricket, to a snake. For one reason or another, each child leaves their pet in the classroom with Miss Fry. Miss Fry diligently tends to the needs of each animal. On the last day of school all of the animals are taken home except the cricket. The cricket is left with a note asking Miss Fry to please take care of the cricket. As requested, Miss Fry takes the cricket home and places it in her garden among the roses.

Engelbriet, Mary. (2004). *Queen of the class*. New York, NY:

HarperCollins Publishers.

This is a realistic picture storybook about a blond-haired blue-eyed girl who wants to play the queen in the class play. In her spare time at home, she practices the role of queen. The day arrives when the teacher, Mrs. McGilligan, announces who is assigned to the different roles. Ann is surprised and saddened because she is not selected to be queen. Instead of an acting role, she is cast as the stage manager. In the end, the success of the play is the result of Ann's cleverness and responsible nature as the stage manager. ***Excluded: There is no teacher featured as central character in the story.

Finchler, Judy, & O'Malley, Kevin. (2006). *Miss Malarkey leaves no reader behind*. New York, NY: Walker Publishing Company, Inc.

This is a realistic picture storybook about a young male student who has no interest in reading. It is inferred that he has all the skills. The issue is he hates to read. On the first day of the new school year, Miss Malarkey becomes keenly aware of her students' dislike of reading. Based on her awareness, she makes it her personal goal to find just the right book for each of her students. After months of trying, tremendous

perseverance and a personal interest in getting to know her students, Miss Malarkey achieves success. She finds just the right book for each of her students including her biggest opponent to reading, the young male student.

Fleming, Candace. (2007). *The fabled fourth graders of Aesop Elementary School*. New York, NY: Schwartz and Wade.

This is a realistic children's novel with a touch of fantasy. On the first day of the school year, Mrs. Struggle, the principal at Aesop Elementary, is in a real bid. There is no teacher for one of the classes. Then, in walks Mr. Jupiter to the principal's office. Mrs. Struggle hires him on the spot. He is assigned to teach the fourth grade class with the rambunctious reputation. Each chapter tells a stand alone story of a different student or a different classroom event. The various chapters tie together in that they chronicle Mr. Jupiter and the students' fourth grade year.

Frasier, Debra. (2000). *Miss Alaineus, a vocabulary disaster*. Orlando, FL: Harcourt, Inc.

This is a realistic picture storybook about turning a negative situation into a positive. Sage is a fifth grade student who unfortunately misses several days of school due to a cold. She contacts a friend to get

the weekly list of vocabulary words. Unfortunately, Sage misunderstands one of the words. Upon returning to school, her mistake leads to humiliation and embarrassment. With the help of her mother and a lot of personal courage, Sage turns her vocabulary disaster into a moment of triumph. ***Excluded: There is no teacher featured as a central character in the story.

Garland, Michael. (2006). *Miss Smith reads again*. New York, NY:

Dutton Children's Books.

This fantasy picture storybook is the second book in what may become a series of books about Miss Smith and her incredible storybook. In this adventure, Miss Smith reads aloud from her storybook. As she reads, the classroom is completely transformed to mirror the setting of the story. As the class walks through the jungle shadowing the explorers, Miss Smith suddenly disappears. It is up to the students to find and save her. Working together the students succeed. Once back together as a class, Miss Smith finishes the story and by doing so transforms the classroom back to normal.

Garland, Michael. (2003). *Miss Smith's incredible storybook*. New York, NY: Puffin Books.

This is a fantasy picture storybook about an amazing book. Miss Smith is a rocker-clad teacher. On the first day of school, Miss Smith reads a story aloud to the students in her class. As Miss Smith reads the words in the book, the characters come to life in the classroom. One morning, Miss Smith is running late for school. The principal comes in to manage the class until she arrives. He reads from the book and total mayhem erupts in the classroom. Order is restored only after Miss Smith arrives and reads all the characters back into the pages of the book.

Grindley, Sally. (2005). *It's my school*. New York, NY: Walker & Company.

This is a realistic picture storybook about the first day of school. Little Alice is starting kindergarten. Like most children, she is nervous about starting school. Alice's brother, Tom, goes to the same school and does not like the idea of sharing it with his sister. When out at recess, Tom hears his sister crying. He runs over and realizes another child is holding the teddy bear Alice brought with her to school. Tom helps the bear be returned to his sister. In the end, Tom is happy that his sister is attending the

same school. ***Excluded: There is no teacher featured as a central character in the story.

Haddix, Margaret Peterson. (2007). *Dexter the tough*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers.

This is a realistic children's novel about a boy named Dexter who projects a very tough exterior to the world. Within minutes of the first day of school, Dexter is made at everyone. He is angry with the principal, the secretary, the janitor as well as the kids that chose to laugh at him. His day doesn't get any better. To start class, Ms. Abbott, Dexter's fourth grade teacher, gives the students a writing assignment. Unfortunately, he does not have the required class supplies. Noticing this, Ms. Abbott gives him a paper and pencil to begin writing. From his writing, Ms. Abbott learns a lot about Dexter. Despite the truly difficult troubles at home, Dexter finds success at school thanks to the persistence of Ms. Abbott.

Hamilton, Richard. (2007). *Let's take over the kindergarten*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury Publishing.

This is a realistic picture storybook about a group of kindergarten students that take over the classroom. One day the teacher, Miss Tuck, gets caught in the classroom jungle gym. Instead of helping their teacher out of the predicament, the students go on with their day. Not until one of

the children get hurt do the students realize they need their teacher. At this moment, the students decide to work together to rescue their teacher. Once free, the classroom returns to normal. ***Excluded: The teacher is not featured as a central character in the story.

Henkes, Kevin. (1996). *Lilly's purple plastic purse*. New York, NY: Greenwillow Books.

This is a fantasy picture storybook. Lilly is a little mouse that loves everything about school. Lilly's favorite thing about school is her teacher, Mr. Slinger. One day, Lilly goes to school excited and flaunting her new purple purse. The purse becomes a distraction. Much to Lilly's dismay, Mr. Slinger puts the purse away until the end of the day. Humiliated, Lilly reacts by drawing a mean picture of Mr. Slinger and secretly placing it in his book bag. As promised, Mr. Slinger returns Lilly's purse. On the way home she finds a note from Mr. Slinger hidden inside the purse. Realizing she had been unkind, Lilly spends the evening thinking of ways to apologize to Mr. Slinger. The next day she arrives at school early to apologize with her words as well as with home made treats. Mr. Slinger is very quick to forgive. ***Excluded: The publication date is outside the scope of inquiry.

Hennessy, B.G. (2006). *Mr. Ouchy's first day*. New York, NY: G.P.

Putnam's Sons.

This is a realistic picture storybook about the first day of school. Similar to Mrs. Hartwell in *First Day Jitters* (Danneberg, 2000), the story is the first day of teaching for a first year teacher. Mr. Ouchy is excited to meet the students in his class. He is also anxious about teaching for the first time. The first day is full of learning. Mr. Ouchy and the students spend the day getting to know each others names and learning to tell time. The story ends with Mr. Ouchy excited about the next day of school.

Hest, Amy. (2004). *Mr. George Baker*. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press.

This is a realistic fiction picture storybook about reading. George Baker is one hundred years old. Harry is a young boy. Each morning the two sit on the porch steps waiting for the school bus. The two of them have something very special in common. Both George and Harry are learning to read. The story supports the importance of learning to read at any age. ***Excluded: There is no classroom teacher featured as a central character in the story.

Hill, Kirkpatrick. (2000). *The year of Miss Agnes*. New York, NY:

Margaret K. McElderry Books.

This historical children's novel takes place in the remote bush of Alaska. In the small Athabascan village, there is a small school house. Since the school opened, the school has had numerous teachers. Some stay for a few days, some for a few months, some for a year but none ever return. One day Sam, the village bush pilot, flies in a new teacher. Miss Agnes is unlike any teacher the school has experienced before. She embraces the people, the way of life, and the cultural traditions of the village. In fact, she finds multiple ways in her teaching to celebrate and honor the culture and traditions of the students in the class.

Hodge, Deborah. (2007). *Lily & the mixed-up letters*. Plattsburg, NY:

Tundra Books.

This is a realistic picture storybook about a little girl named Lily. Lily is a second grade student. She struggles to read. Whenever she sits down to read, letters dance and blue and get all mixed-up. Overwhelmed and saddened by her difficult with reading, she finds a classmate to be her reading buddy. Together, Lily develops her reading skills. ***Excluded:
There is no classroom teacher featured as a central character in the story.

**Houston, Gloria. (1992). *My great-aunt Arizona*. New York, NY:
HarperCollins Publishers.**

This is a historical fiction picture storybook. Set in the Appalachian/Blue Ridge Mountains, a little girl named Arizona loves to read. Her favorite types of stories are about far away places. In addition to reading herself, Arizona enjoys sharing her passion for reading with others by teaching them to read. After going away to school, Arizona returns to her home in the mountains to teach 4th grade. ***Excluded: The publication date is outside the scope of inquiry.

Kenah, Katherine. (2006). *The best teacher in second grade*. New York, NY: Scholastic.

This easy reader book is a realistic fiction story about second grade. Luna is a girl in Mr. Hopper's second grade class. She loves learning and thinking about the sky. As the story unfolds, the class needs to decide on a theme for parent night. Luna shares her idea of a "night sky circus". Luna's peers only hear circus and move forward on plays for the play. On the night of the performance, Mr. Hopper's students learn that another class is doing the same theme. Thanks to Luna the theme is changed to "night sky circus". In the end, the play is a great success.

King-Smith, Dick. (1995). *The school mouse*. New York, NY: Hyperion Paperbacks for Children.

This fantasy children's novel is about a little mouse named Flora. Flora is no ordinary mouse. She is the first ever school mouse. From the moment born, being a school mouse is Flora's destiny. Flora lives in a hole in the wall of a kindergarten classroom. From her time in and around the classroom, she learns to read. The other mice, including her parents, view reading as useless. They do not appreciate ability to read until the day Flora identifies a bag marked as poison. In the end, it is Flora's reading abilities that keep her family and the other mice safe.

***Excluded: The publication date is outside the scope of inquiry.

Kinney, Jeff. (2007). *Diary of a wimpy kid*. New York, NY: Amulet Books.

This realistic children's novel is about a middle school student named Greg Heffley. Greg's mother demands that he keep a journal. Despite his arguments against it, he goes along with the diary and chronicles the day to day events of his life as a middle school student. The stories recorded in the diary like Halloween and hiding at his grandmothers house from the school bullies are entertaining and engaging

for young adolescent and pre-adolescent readers. ***Excluded: The grade level does not meet the criteria for inclusion.

Knudsen, Michelle. (2006). *Library lion*. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press.

This is a fantasy picture storybook about the rules governing a library. Miss Meriweather is the head librarian in a city library. She believes the library rules should be followed without expectation. One day a lion comes to patron the library. He wanders all around the library. He sits and enjoys the story read during children's story hour. When story time is over and it is time to go, the lion lets a tremendous roar; it is a roar heard throughout the library. He is reprimanded by Miss Meriweather for not following the rule of a quiet voice. Before returning to her office, Miss Meriweather lets the lion know that a loud lion must leave and quiet lion is welcome any time. The lion becomes a daily patron and helper of the library. ***Excluded: The library setting does not meet the criteria for inclusion.

Konigsburg, E.L. (1998). *A view from Saturday*. New York, NY: Atheneum Books.

This realistic children's novel is about four very different characters. Noah, Nadia, Ethan, and Julian are all students in Mrs. Olinski's sixth

grade class. At the beginning of the school year, Mrs. Olinski puts together a team for the upcoming Academic Bowl competition. Noah, Nadia, Ethan, and Julian are the four selected. At first, the group of students appears to have nothing in common. After weeks and months of studying and preparing for the Academic Bowl, the four develop a close friendship. In doing so, they uncover that they are very closely connected. In the end, the team of students Mrs. Olinski selects for the Academic Bowl is victorious in the competition. ***Excluded: The grade level does not meet the criteria for inclusion.

Layne, Steven, & Layne, Deborah. (2005). *T is for teachers, a school alphabet*. Chelsea, MI: Sleeping Bear Press.

This is an informational picture storybook structured as an alphabet book. The focus of the book is addressing the many dimensions of school. Alongside every dimension featured from prominent people to educational jobs the authors provide detailed information and facts. This alphabet book provides a comprehensive overview of school. ***Excluded: There is no classroom teacher featured as central in the story.

Layne, Steven. (2004). *The teachers' night before Christmas*. Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing.

This fantasy picture storybook offers a clever spin on the classic poem *The Night Before Christmas* (Moore, 1937). The poem draws attention to the physically and emotionally demanding work of teaching. One central image the poem conveys is that teaching and preparing to teach take an enormous amount of time within and outside the school day. In fact, a teachers job is so time consuming that only with the help of Santa Claus can the teachers pictured in this story poem be reading for Christmas with family and friends. ***Excluded: There is no classroom teacher featured as central to the story.

Loribecki, Marybeth. (1998). *Sister Anne's hands*. New York, NY: Dial Books for Young Readers.

This is a realistic picture storybook based on the life experiences of the author. A new second grade teacher arrives at the local private school. The teacher wears a black dress and habit like all the other nuns in the school. Sister Anne, however, is different in that she is "black". Anna is a young student assigned to Sister Anne's class. Because Sister Anne is unlike any person she knows, Anna is apprehensive of her new teacher. Anna is not alone other students' react but in very negative ways. Despite

the adversity that erupts in the classroom, Anna learns that there is nothing to fear.

McGhee, Alison. (2007). *Mrs. Watson wants your teeth*. New York, NY: Scholastic.

This is a realistic picture storybook about the first day of first grade. During the school bus ride, the little girl featured in the story hears rumors about the first grade teacher. The rumors portray the teacher as a type of tooth monster. Naturally, the little girl is fearful. Stirring her fear is the reality that she has a loose tooth. Just before arriving at school, the little girl vows to stay completely silent the entire year. By the end of the day, the little girl realizes the teacher is nice. In fact, Mrs. Watson does not want to take the students teeth. On the contrary, she celebrates the students who loose a tooth during the school year by giving them sweet treats.

McGhee, Alison. (2006). *Countdown to kindergarten*. Orlando, FL: Voyager Books.

This is a fantasy picture storybook of a little girl who fears going to school. The issue at the center of her fear the girl's fear is not being able to tie her shoes. Each of the ten days leading up to the first day of school the little girl tries many different tactics to avoid tying her shoes. The first

day of school arrives. Contrary to what she conjured up in her head, kindergarten is not scary. In fact, at the start of the first kindergarten day the girl learns that one of the goals of kindergarten is learning to tie your shoes. ***Excluded: There is no classroom teacher featured as central to the story.

Moore, Mary-Alice. (2006). *The wheels on the bus*. New York, NY:

HarperCollins.

This is a realistic picture storybook based on the well-known and well-loved children's song of the same name. Along the route, the students riding the bus encounter several of the school staff. As each staff member (e.g., librarian, classroom teacher, lunch ladies) gets on the bus, they bring with them an item connected to their job (e.g., a stack of books, a pile of worksheets and paper, food and utensils). Upon arriving at school, the students and school staff exit the bus and joyfully walk toward the school building. ***Excluded: There is no classroom teacher featured as central to the story.

Morris, Carla. (2007). *The boy raised by librarians*. Atlanta, GA:

Peachtree Publishers.

This is a realistic picture storybook about a boy who spends all his time in the library. In fact, the boy spends so much time in the library it is

almost as though it is his home. Melvin, the young boy, loves knowledge and learning. Knowledge for him lives in the pages of a book. This love of books and quest for knowledge is a feeling shared and appreciated by the three librarians at Melvin's local library. Everyday after school, Melvin goes to the library to learn more about the topics he is studying at school. And everyday, the three librarians assist him in finding information. At the end of the story, Melvin emerges as an adult. Over the years, his love of books never changes. In fact, he himself returns to the library after attending college to become a librarian. ***Excluded: The library setting does not meet the criteria for inclusion.

Morrow, Tara Jaye. (2007). *Panda goes to school*. New York, NY:

Sterling Publishing.

This is a fantasy picture storybook of about the first day of school. Little Panda worries about going to school. His worry is not about school but about leaving his mother home alone. Upon arriving at school, the teacher welcomes Panda and shows him where to put his things. To start school, the teacher asks the students about their favorite things. Each response Panda provides is something connected to his mother. With each response, Panda grows to miss his mother. At lunch, Panda finds a

note placed in his lunchbox from his mother. Upon reading the note, Panda is happy and enjoys the rest of the school day.

Neubecker, Robert. (2007). *Wow! School!* New York, NY: Hyperion Books.

This is a realistic picture storybook about school, specifically elementary school. While there are very few words, the bold and colorful pictures tell the story a school day. The students featured in the story are illustrated doing a variety of activities in the classroom, art class, library, and music class. The school day routine also includes lunch and recess.

***Excluded: There is no classroom teacher featured as central to the story.

Passen, Lisa. (2002). *The incredible shrinking teacher*. New York, NY: Scholastic.

This fantasy picture storybook is a follow-up book to *Attack of the 50-foot Teacher* (Passen, 2000) about a teacher named Miss Irma Birmbaum. Miss Birmbaum is staying late at school to prepare a last day celebration for the students in her class. The menu she is preparing consists of prune pudding, kidney bean cookies, and brussel sprout juice. Some of the mixture spills on her clothes. As a result, she begins to shrink. Miss Birmbaum experiences being small remind her of what it

means and feels like to be a student. After she returns to her normal size, she decides to host a party the children would enjoy including the delivery of pizza.

Passen, Lisa. (2000). *Attack of the 50-foot teacher*. New York, NY: Henry Holt & Company.

This fantasy picture storybook is about a tough teacher. Miss Irma Birnbaum is perceived by the students in her class as the toughest and cruelest teacher in the school. She enforces strict behavioral rules for the students. And, she gives homework every night including Halloween. As the drive home Halloween night, Miss Birnbaum takes a detour. Along the way, she encounters an alien spaceship. The aliens transform her from a normal size to fifty-feet tall. In the end, her experiences as an oversized person allow her to understand what it means to be a child and to trick-or-treat on Halloween. In the end, Miss Birnbaum emerges as a teacher about having fun.

Peck, Richard. (2004). *The teacher's funeral*. New York, NY: Puffin Books.

This is historical fiction children's novel is set in 1904. Russell Culver is a student at the one room school house in Hominy Ridge. Unfortunately for Russell, summer is coming to an end. The night before

the new school year begins, Miss Myrtle Arbuckle, the school teacher, passes away. At first this comes as terrific news for Russell. Then, the good news turns bad. A new teacher steps forward. The new teacher is Russell's older sister Miss Tansy Culver. The story chronicles the school year with Tansy at the helm of Hominy Ridge School.

Plourde, Lynn. (2005). *Pajama day*. New York, NY: Puffin Books.

This is a realistic picture storybook that builds off a popular event in elementary classrooms, Pajama Day. Mrs. Shepherd, the classroom teacher, invites the students to spend the day celebrating. A plethora of events and activities are planned. Unfortunately, one student name Drew A. Blank forgets all about the special classroom event. All is not lost, Mrs. Shepherd makes sure that he is able to participate in each event.

Polacco, Patricia. (1998). *Thank you, Mr. Falker*. New York, NY:

Philomel Books.

This is a realistic picture storybook based on the lived experiences of the author. Trisha is a young girl passionate about two things. Those two things are drawing and learning to read. Reading, unfortunately, does not come easy to Trisha. In fact, she finds reading a true struggle. For years, she is able to disguise her reading difficulties. In fifth grade, however, she is discovered. Trisha's fifth grade teacher, Mr. Falker,

identifies her reading difficulty. From that moment, Mr. Falker works with Trisha to help her become a successful reader.

Prelutsky, Jack. (2006). *What a day it was at school*. New York, NY:

Scholastic.

In this fantasy picture book, the author presents a collection of poems about school. Each poem included focuses on a different aspect of school from field trips to the lunch room to learning math equations.

***Excluded: There is no classroom teacher featured as central to the story.

Recorvits, Helen. (2003). *My name is Yoon*. New York, NY: Frances

Foster Books.

This is a realistic picture storybook about a little girl named Yoon. Yoon is from Korea. She just moved to the United States with her family. At first, Yoon struggles to adjust and acclimate to life and living in a new country. Subtle acts of resistance emerge on the first day of Yoon attends her new school. Everyday for the first few days of school, Yoon writes other English words instead of printing her name as requested by the teacher. A few days in, the teacher shares a smile with Yoon as she reviews her writing. The smile sends a message to Yoon that the teacher

likes and approves of her. Shortly after receiving the teachers smile, Yoon writes her name in English.

Reynolds, Peter H. (2003). *The dot*. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press.

This is a realistic picture storybook about a young student named Vashti. The story takes place in art class. At the end of the art class, Vashti stares down at a blank piece of paper. She can not think of anything to draw nor does she know how to draw. Frustrated, Vashti turns in the blank paper to the art specialist. The specialist looks at the paper. Then, she tells her to just make a mark and then sign it. The following week Vashti returns to art class. There she finds the dot she created framed and hanging on the wall. Vashti is then inspired to create more.

***Excluded: There is no classroom teacher featured as a central character in the story.

Rosen, Michael. (2006). *Totally wonderful Miss Plumberry*. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press.

This is a realistic picture storybook about Show-n-Tell, a popular activity in elementary classrooms. It is Molly's day to bring an item to share with the class. Before leaving home, she selects the blue crystal given to her by her grandmother. When she first arrives at school, all the

students are eager to hear what Molly brought. Suddenly, another student runs through the classroom with a big pink and green dinosaur. All eyes shift to focus on Russell's dinosaur. Disappointed and hurt, Molly is left all by herself holding her precious crystal until Miss Plumberry arrives. Miss Plumberry looks up only to see Molly sad and alone. Concerned, Miss Plumberry walks over and focuses her attention on Molly. The story ends with the student gathered around Molly excited to see and hold the crystal brought for show-n-tell.

Rosenberry, Vera. (2006). *Vera's new school*. New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company.

This is a realistic picture storybook about friendship based on the personal experiences of the author. Vera's family moved to a new town. As a result of the move, Vera is forced to enroll in a new school. No knowing anyone in her class makes Vera sad and lonely. Mid-way through the first day, Vera meets a new friend. ***Excluded: There is no classroom teacher featured as a central character in the story.

Schmidt, Gary. (2007). *The Wednesday wars*. New York, NY: Clarion Books.

This is a realistic children's novel. Holling Hoodhood is a seventh grade student. He is the only Presbyterian student in his class. While his

peers attend religious education classes, Holling meets every Wednesday afternoon with his classroom teacher, Mrs. Baker. During their time together, Mrs. Baker asks Holling to read and then discuss Shakespeare plays. Since Shakespeare is far from his top choice, tension mounts between Holling and Mrs. Baker. In the end, however, Mrs. Baker offers just the right support leading Holling to stretch and grow as a person and as a student. ***Excluded: The middle school setting does not meet the criteria for inclusion.

Sierra, Judy. (2006). *The secret science project that almost ate the school*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster Books.

This is a fantasy picture storybook about a third grade science project that goes terribly wrong. A third grade girl is stumped to figure out a science experiment for class. Wanting to present an unforgettable science project, she turns to the internet and orders super slime from Professor Swami. Not heeding the warning posted on the box, she opens the box and gives the slime enough of a poke to bring it to life. From that point, the slime consumes everyone from the girl's sister to her peers to her third grade teacher Miss Fidget. The only way to destroy the slime is to feed it sugar. The girl does and eventually the slime explodes releasing all its prey. Once life returns to normal, the little girl is faced with the task

of cleaning up the mess. ***Excluded: There is no classroom teacher featured as a central character in the story.

Slate, Joseph. (1996). *Miss Bindergarten goes to kindergarten*. New York, NY: Dutton Books.

This fantasy picture storybook is about preparing for the first day of school. Twenty-six children prepare for the first day of kindergarten. While the students prepare at home Miss Bindergarten the kindergarten classroom for the students arrival. Miss Bindergarten finishes setting up the classroom just in time for the students' arrival. Once in the classroom, Miss Bindergarten welcomes the students and the school day fun begins.

***Excluded: The publication date is outside the scope of inquiry.

Sollman, Carolyn, Emmons, Barbara, & Paolini, Judith. (1994).

***Through the cracks*. Worcester, MA: Davis Publications, Inc.**

This is a realistic picture storybook builds a story from the educational montra of kids falling through the cracks. A young girl named Stella introduces the reader to her school. As the days and weeks of the year go by, the students in the school begin to shrink. They shrink because of boredom. Stella along with another student named Christopher, who have fallen through, believes that school does not have to be boring. There belief is confirmed after they crawl through the

darkness in search of a light in the distance. The light comes from the windows of classrooms. Looking through the windows, Stella and Christopher see students actively talking and sharing their ideas. None of the students in these classrooms are shrinking and falling through the cracks. Stella and Christopher enter these classrooms. Due to active engagement in learning and the classroom, Stella and Christopher come to enjoy school. ***Excluded: The publication date is outside the scope of inquiry.

Spinelli, Jerry. (2002). *Loser*. New York, NY: Scholastic.

This is a realistic children's novel that follows the elementary school years of a young boy that goes by the name Zinkoff. On the first day of school each of the five years he attends elementary school, Zinkoff makes himself known to the classroom teacher with enthusiasm and sometimes over zealous behavior. Every year the teachers see Zinkoff in a negative light. Every year, that is, except fourth grade. In fourth grade, Zinkoff is assigned to Mr. Yalowitz's class. Unlike the other teachers, this classroom teacher embraces and celebrates Zinkoff's personality. The story concludes with Zinkoff's graduation from elementary school. Standing in the back of the auditorium is Mr. Yalowitz giving Zinkoff two thumbs up as his name is announced.

Stoebe, Janet Morgan. (2007). *The bus stop*. New York, NY: Dutton

Children's Books.

This is a realistic picture storybook about the riding a bus to school. Each day the children in the neighborhood ride a yellow bus to school. When the bus arrives at the bus stop on the first day of the new school year, the youngest students anxiously stand next to the big, tall bus. Bravely they board the bus and wave good-bye to their parents. After a busy day at school, the highlight for the young students is seeing the yellow school bus arriving to take them home. ***Excluded: There is no classroom teacher featured as a central character in the story.

Twachtman-Cullan, Diane. (1998). *Trevor Trevor*. Cromwell, CT:

Starfish Press.

This is a realistic picture storybook about a boy named Trevor. Trevor is a student in Miss Grayley's second grade classroom. Trevor is autistic. He rarely says anything in class. He is often teased and bullied by the other students. Miss Grayley reprimand's the students but when they think she is not looking they continue. Miss Grayley wishes she could help the students understand what she understands about Trevor; he is really very smart. Suddenly it dawns on Miss Grayley. The Forest County Challenge is the perfect opportunity. On the day of the competition, Trevor

is slated to go last among his peers. With only five minutes left in the competition, Trevor's turn arrives. For some time, Trevor just looks at the puzzle. Then, Trevor slowly picks up one piece at a time and puts them in the correct place. In the end, Trevor is successful completely the puzzle leading Miss Grayley's class to win the competition. ***Excluded: The teacher featured in the story is not a central character in the story.

Walker, Kate. (1995). *I hate books!* Chicago, IL: Cricket Books.

This is a realistic children's novel about a young boy named Hamish. One of Hamish's favorite things to do is make up stories. On one hand, he loves to use his imagination to make up stories. On the other hand, Hamish likes to make up stories because he can not read. In third grade, his inability to read is discovered by his classroom teacher, Miss Margin. Once aware of his difficulty, Miss Margin schedules for him to meet with a reading specialist named Mr. Robinson. After several days of assessment and months of individual instruction from Mr. Robinson, Hamish still cannot read. It is not until his older brother, Nathan, steps in that Hamish finally learns to read. ***Excluded: The publication date is outside the scope of inquiry.

Wells, Rosemary. (2008). *Yoko writes her name*. New York, NY: Hyperion Books for Children.

This is a fantasy picture storybook about a green-eyed kitten named Yoko. At first, Yoko is excited about the first day of kindergarten. Mrs. Jenkins, the kindergarten teacher, celebrates Yoko for her beautiful hand writing and math skills. Most of Yoko's peers do not feel the same. Because Yoko writes and reads according to her Japanese culture some of the students tease her and taunt her. Yoko feels very alone and sad. After school, Angelo finds Yoko hiding under a table. Realizing why she is hiding, Angelo tries to help Yoko understand that she is special because she knows a secret language. Yoko and Angelo become friends. Yoko helps Angelo write his name in Japanese and Angelo helps Yoko learn the English letters and numbers.

Whybrow, Ian, & Reynolds, Adrian. (2006). *Harry and the dinosaurs go to school*. New York, NY: Random House.

This is a realistic fiction storybook about the first day of school. Harry loves dinosaurs. After breakfast, Harry and his mom bike to school. When Harry arrives at school his teacher is there to greet him. He hangs up his coat and leaves his bucket of dinosaur figures outside with his coat. Harry is sad to leave his bucket of dinosaurs. Harry notices another

student is sad. So, he turns his attention to help the other student feel better. In the end, the bucket of dinosaurs emerges in the classroom leading both Harry and his new friend to have a happy ending to their first day of school.

Willis, Jeanne. (2007). *Delilah D. at the library*. New York, NY: Clarion Books.

This is a fantasy picture storybook about Delilah's trip to the library. Delilah is a little girl who believes wholeheartedly that she is a queen in a faraway land. In this faraway land, libraries offer free cupcakes and donuts as well as swinging trapeze to help reach books located high up on the library shelves. Delilah goes to the library one day and tries to implement her library fantasy. In the real world library, Library Anne imposes a different set of rules. While the imaginary library stands in contrast what a real library is like, Delilah ends up enjoying her visit and looks forward to returning again. ***Excluded: The library setting does not meet the criteria for inclusion.

Wilson, Karma. (2003). *Sweet Briar goes to school*. New York, NY: Dial Books.

This is a fantasy picture storybook about a little skunk. On the first day of school, all the other animal students exclude Sweet Briar because

she is a skunk. Several days go by and Sweet Briar's peers continue to make fun of her. The teasing continues until the day a daring wolf comes on the school playground. Once there, the wolf captures one of Sweet Briar's classmates. Remembering what her mother taught her, Sweet Briar sprays the wolf with her perfume. Wormwood, Sweet Briar's classmate, is released by the wolf. Sweet Briar is heralded as a hero by the classroom teacher Miss Chickory.

Yee, Lisa. (2005). *Stanford Wong flunks big time*. New York, NY:

Scholastic.

This is a realistic children's novel about a boy named Stanford Wong. Since birth, people have expected great things of Stanford. Due to a host of family issues, Stanford lacks interest in learning. As a result, he flunks sixth grade. Over the summer, Stanford misses out on attending basketball camp because of summer school and afternoon tutoring sessions with Millicent. Millicent, the class genius, is Stanford's nemesis. After several tutoring sessions, Stanford and Millicent realize they have a lot in common. In the end, each helps the other overcome messy situations that rise up from embarrassing situations and the telling of lies.

***Excluded: The middle school setting does not meet the criteria for inclusion.

APPENDIX B
DATA COLLECTION MATRIX

Author/Date	Children's Literature Titles	Social Identities	Personal Dispositions	Pedagogy
Avi/2001	Secret School	Female Light Tone	Friendly Nurturing	Connects Supportive Expectations
Bush&Bush/ 2008	Read All About It	Female Light Tone	Friendly	Connects
Carlson/ 2004	Henry's 100 Days of Kindergarten	Female Animal	Friendly	Connects Supportive
Carlson/ 2006	1 st Grade Here I Come	Male Animal	Friendly	Connects
Carlson/ 2006	I Don't Like To Read	Male Animal	Friendly Nurturing	Connects Supportive Nurturing
Codell/2003	Sahara Special	Female Light Tone	Friendly Nurturing	Connects Supportive Expectations

Author/Date	Children's Literature Titles	Social Identities	Personal Dispositions	Pedagogy
Cox/2005	Don't Be Silly, Mrs. Millie	Female Light Tone	Friendly	Connects
Cuyler/2008	Hooray for Reading Day!	Male Light Tone	Friendly Nurturing	Connects Supportive
Danneberg/ 2003	First Day Letters	Female Light Tone	Friendly	Connects Supportive
Danneberg/ 2006	Last Day Blues	Female Light Tone	Friendly	Connects
Danzinger/ 2004	2 nd Grade Rules, Amber Brown	Female Light Tone	Friendly Nurturing	Connects Supportive Expectations

Author/Date	Children's Literature Titles	Social Identities	Personal Dispositions	Pedagogy
deGroat/ 2005	Brand New Pencils, Brand New Books	Female Animal	Friendly Nurturing	Connects Supportive
deGroat/ 2006	No More Pencils, No More Books	Female Animal	Friendly Nurturing	Connects Supportive Expectations
DiPucchio/ 2005	Mrs. McBloom, Clean Up Your Room	Female Light Tone	Friendly Nurturing	Connects Supportive
Dodd/ 2006	Teacher's Pet	Female Light Tone	Friendly Nurturing	Connects

Author/Date	Children's Literature Titles	Social Identities	Personal Dispositions	Pedagogy
Finchler & O'Malley/ 2006	Miss Malarkey Leaves No Reader Behind	Female Light Tone	Friendly Nurturing	Connects Supportive Expectations
Fleming/ 2007	Fabled 4 th Graders	Male No Description	Friendly Nurturing	Connects Supportive Expectations
Garland/ 2003	Miss Smith's Storybook	Female Light Tone	Friendly	Connects
Garland/ 2006	Miss Smith Reads Again	Female Light Tone	Friendly	Connects
Haddix/ 2007	Dexter, The Tough	Female No Description	Friendly Nurturing	Connects Supportive

Author/Date	Children's Literature Titles	Social Identities	Personal Dispositions	Pedagogy
Hennessy/ 2006	Mr. Ouchy's First Day	Male Light Tone	Friendly Nurturing	Connects Supportive Expectations
Hill/2000	Year of Miss Agnes	Female Light Tone "English"	Friendly Nurturing	Connects Supportive Expectations
Kenan/2007	Best Teacher in 2 nd Grade	Male Light Tone	Friendly Nurturing	Connects Supportive Expectations
Loribecki/ 1998	Sister Anne's Hands	Female "Black"	Friendly Nurturing	Connects Supportive Expectations
McGhee/ 2007	Mrs. Watson Wants Your Teeth	Female Light Tone	Friendly Nurturing	Connects Supportive

Author/Date	Children's Literature Titles	Social Identities	Personal Dispositions	Pedagogy
Morrow/2007	Panda Goes to School	Female Animal	Friendly Nurturing	Connects Supportive
Passen/2000	Attack of the 50-Foot Teacher	Female Light Tone	Friendly	Connects
Passen/2002	Incredible Shrinking Teacher	Female Light Tone	Friendly	Connects
Pattou/2001	Mrs. Spitzer's Garden	Female Light Tone	Friendly Nurturing	Connects Supportive Expectations
Peck/2004	Teacher's Funeral	Female No Description	Friendly Nurturing	Connects Supportive Expectations

Author/Date	Children's Literature Titles	Social Identities	Personal Dispositions	Pedagogy
Plourde/ 2005	Pajama Day	Female Light Tone	Friendly Nurturing	Connects Supportive
Polacco/ 1998	Thank You, Mr. Falker	Male Light Tone	Friendly Nurturing	Connects Supportive Expectations
Recorvitis/ 2003	My Name Is Yoon	Female Light Tone	Friendly Nurturing	Connects Supportive Expectations
Rosen/2006	Totally Wonderful Miss Plumberry	Female Light Tone	Friendly Nurturing	Connects Supportive
Spinelli/2002	Loser	Male No Description	Friendly Nurturing	Connects Supportive Expectations

Author/Date	Children's Literature Titles	Social Identities	Personal Dispositions	Pedagogy
Wells/2008	Yoko Writes Her Name	Female Animal	Friendly Nurturing	Connects Supportive Expectations
Whybrow & Reynolds/ 2006	Harry & The Dinosaurs	Female Dark Tone	Friendly Nurturing	Connects Supportive
Wilson/2003	Sweet Briar Goes to School	Female Animal	Friendly Nurturing	Connects Supportive