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Reflections Of Self: Images Of People With Specific Learning Disabilities And Attention Deficit/hyperactive Disorder In Children's Literature

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REFLECTIONS OF SELF: IMAGES OF PEOPLE WITH SPECIFIC LEARNING

DISABILITIES AND ATTENTION/DEFICIT/HYPERACTIVE DISORDER

IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

Elizabeth R. Hayes

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In this dissertation, I explored the portrayals of people with a specific learning disability or with attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder in children's literature. Eighteen books were analyzed to determine what themes and messages were being conveyed to children.

The major themes were about friendship, and overcoming issues associated with a SLD or AD/HD. In addition, the portrayals suggest that children with SLD and AD/HD have similar problems like their peers with these conditions. However, there were portrayals of stereotypical roles and usage of negative language.

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IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

ELIZABETH R. HAYES

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial
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for the Degree of

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2014

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ELIZABETH R. HAYES

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ACKNOWLEGMENTS

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CHAPTER I

THE RESEARCH PROBLEM AND ITS BACKGROUND

Introduction

Every school day since Ulysses was in fourth grade he has been pulled out of his homeroom to come to me for his "special" class. He had been told that he had a learning disability and needed help with his schoolwork. At fourteen, Ulysses needed a transition plan for high school. We had a conference, and I asked him if he liked coming to see me.

"Yes," Ulysses answered. "Of course I do."

I accepted his reply without question. What else would he answer? Even with Ulysses' social problems and lack of respect for authority, he knew he should answer in the affirmative. But the truth of the matter was that he really did not know what coming to me meant. He knew he had a learning disability, but I never fully explained to him what a learning disability was. For the past four years, I helped Ulysses and other children with their reading, but we never discussed the reason or the purpose.

"Ulysses, do you get any benefit from coming here?" I asked.

"The good thing is you tell the teachers that I don't have to do all the homework that they assign" he replied. "But I miss some of my regular classes and the other students tease me by calling me 'LD'. Everyone knows you teach the dummies."

"Are you a dummy?" I asked.

"No. Maybe, sometimes. I don't like to write," Ulysses replied.

"So, how do you feel when your classmates call you 'LD' or a dummy?" I replied.

Ulysses was quiet for a moment. I imagined that was a hard question for him to answer. I also knew that for a teenager living on the State Street Corridor, an area of Chicago where gang members were constantly fighting over turf and gunshots were heard daily, it was important to have a reputation. Being considered LD was not going to help Ulysses define his place in the neighborhood.

Finally, Ulysses answered. "I pretend I don't need the help. I only participate in class discussions when I understand the topic. Of course, I have to be tough and pretend that the teasing doesn't matter. Even with my pretending, there are people around me who will not let me forget. Today, that is you. Do I like coming to see you? What you are really asking me is do I like being a kid with a disability?"

Ulysses and I talked some more about school. He admitted that he did not want to continue to see me because it made him feel different from the other children. Ulysses stated that he started to feel different when he was in third grade when mid-year he was placed in a self-contained classroom with other children who had behavior issues. No one mentioned a disability but he knew why he was in the class. I asked him about the stories his teachers used for reading and if they were about people with disabilities. He stated he did not read books that had characters with disabilities that he could relate to his life.

Statement of the Problem

In order to help Ulysses and other students like him understand disability, I started with the resources that were most commonly used in his school which are textbooks. As I skimmed the books, I did not see many people with disabilities or disorders. Secondly, I

surveyed my colleagues' classroom libraries to see what selections they offered. Once again, there were very few books that portrayed people with disabilities or disorders. If children's literature is used in school curriculum, this presents a problem when someone, like Ulysses, is searching for his place in this world. Other cultures are portrayed widely in modern children's literature because the use of multicultural text engages students, increases their understanding of cultural contributions, and gives them a sense of pride about themselves and their culture (Landt, 2006; and Naido & Dahlen, 2013). Without all cultures represented in children's literature, children do not gain knowledge that will help them develop positive attitudes and improve intergroup relations (Banks, 2005; Naido & Dahlen, 2013).

The problem addressed in this study is the representation of people with disabilities or disorders in children's literature. The storylines of books often convey certain values and beliefs of the dominant culture. When teachers use those books, children may adopt the views the books espouse. Research shows that those values and beliefs impact children's understanding and acceptance of different cultures (Altieri, 2008; Botelho & Rudman, 2009). Unfortunately, text sometimes stereotypically portrays people with disabilities as passive, troubled, and damaged (Shapiro, 1999). As a result, children with a disability may develop feelings of inadequacy, low self-esteem, and become isolated from family and peers (Ellis, 1995). If children with disabilities are exposed to stereotypical images, they might begin to think that they do not have value or a place in the world. Children who do not have a disability/disorder may develop negative attitudes and behaviors. They may think people with disabilities/disorders are not normal; they may tease, bully, or avoid interacting with people with disabilities/disorders altogether.

Historically, there have been many perceptions about people with disabilities/disorders. The attitudes emerged from the customs, laws, and practices of different societies. "Disabled people have been the recipients of a range of offensive responses by other people. These include horror, fear, anxiety, hostility, distrust, pity, over-protection, and patronizing behavior" (Shapiro, 1999, p 144).

Early nomadic civilizations pursued their prey, and members who were weak or unable to perform their share of the work were left behind to die (Shapiro, 1999). Their exclusion was necessary to insure the continuance of the civilization. In addition, people with impairments were often feared. Shapiro stated that in some civilizations, mothers were killed along with their disabled children. The Aztecs sacrificed people with physical impairments because it was

believed they had magic powers, and killing them would bring good fortune (Shapiro, 1999).

Religious practices also contributed to early attitudes. Some religions considered disabilities as violating natural law. According to Shapiro (1999),

a deformed child was an example of parents angering the gods. Or, the condition was caused by evil parents (Beauchamp, Chung, & Mogliner, 2009). Also, Hebrews viewed madness as another example of sinning and angering God (Shapiro, 1999). Christianity also includes references to disabilities. Jesus preached sympathy and pity towards people with disabilities. "Laying hands" cured them of their impairments and exorcised them from the devil. The Roman Catholic Church segregated people with disabilities by putting them into asylums for their own protection (Shapiro, 1999).

People with disabilities have also been seen as a source of entertainment. People with physical and mental disabilities often sought employment with a circus. However, the stigma of their deformity reduced them to being treated as sub-human creatures (Circus Historical Society, 2008).

Since more and more children with disabilities are being included in general education classes, it is important for children to understand and accept people with disabilities. Children bring their previous experiences to any reading event, which helps them construct meaning of the new text (Rosenblatt, 1982; Nodelman, 2008). If children bring their negative experiences of people with disabilities as they read literature, then the teacher has to help the children acquire new perceptions. Altieri (2008) adds that using realistic fictional books that include characters with disabilities can teach children new perceptions about disabilities. In addition, it is important to consider how text influences the psychological, educational, and social development of children with disabilities. Well-chosen literature has the potential to change children's insight, perceptions, and attitudes (Kruger, 2008). Therefore, it is important to acquire a better understanding of the impact of attitudes that are reflected in children's literature.

Identity, self-concept, and self-esteem are important variables of psychological well-being. According to Moshman (2005), identity is ". . . an explicit theory of oneself as a person" (p. 89). In addition, the development of one's identity is caused by cognitive and social experiences (Moshman, 2005; Kroger, 2007). Through those experiences, children learn their sense of self. As children interact within their community, they identify with important influences that help to shape their self-image.

Children with disabilities/disorders face the same identity development as most youth. However, their undesirable physical, cognitive, or social characteristics make them particularly vulnerable to teasing, ridicule, and exclusion. This can preclude a healthy identity or as Yoder (2000) suggests barriers. Those barriers may include biases, negative attitudes, and social or economic limitations.

For children with disabilities a strong connection exists between self-concept and acceptance of their disability (Li & Moore, 1998). Identity, confidence, and self-worth influence the way an individual interacts with the community. Fully participating in the community and being accepted by others requires a healthy self-concept. Also, since self-concept is learned there is great potential for its development through many contexts. School provides a myriad of experiences in which a child can develop. A child's self-concept is formed through teacher, peer, and academic relationships (Caselman & Self, 2007; Kroger, 2007). Also, family and peer reactions of one's identity affect identity formation. If an adolescent's choices are supported by the significant people in his/her life, then the adolescent will have typical identity development (Grotevant, 1987).

Societal attitudes impact children, specifically; attitudes about children with disabilities are formed from influences such as school and literature. According to Cartledge and Kiarie (2001), reading literature is an extremely important experience in childhood because reading provides a sense of adventure, excitement, humor, the love of words, the beauty of the books, and increased knowledge. Diamond (2001) further states that an individual's attitude develops through interaction with others and through indirect vicarious experiences, such as reading books. Literature invites children to benefit from these experiences.

One way children benefit is from societal change. According to Nodelman (2008), literature affects societal change by exposing readers to experiences that are relevant to their lives and communities. Students identify with or empathize with the characters in texts. An associated change in their behavior often follows. Therefore, it is crucial that educators select literature that would most benefit their students. If children with disabilities are exposed to negative attitudes or even apathy this adversely affects their social, intellectual, and emotional development. Shapiro (1999), states that non-disabled children's negative attitudes cause children with disabilities to feel rejected and alienated. However, if educators use certain texts that encourage social understanding in regards to children with disabilities, then the result is an improvement of self-image and interpersonal relationships with others in the community (Bazerman, 2004; Nodelman, 2008).

Unfortunately, there are still outdated beliefs that continue to influence current attitudes, and they are found in children's literature. Children's fairytales have evil or maladjusted characters with physical or mental impairments. The physical attribute of Carlo Collodi's Pinocchio was directly tied to his honesty and when he lied he became progressively more disfigured (Disney Archives, 2008). Classic literature also offers stereotypical portrayals of people with disabilities. Tiny Tim in Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* (1914) is portrayed as tragic and pitiful. Lennie, in Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* (1937)*,* is big, mentally disabled, and he needs protection because he is unaware of his own strength.

Although books about people with disabilities are becoming more popular, the quality is questionable. According to Sze and Valentin (2007) and Margolis and Shapiro

(1987), storylines focus on stereotypical problems and one-dimensional characters. The characters are portrayed as uncivilized or child-like and dependent on other people for assistance. In addition, Margolis and Shapiro state that people with disabilities are rarely the main characters. They are used to move the storyline forward for other characters. As a result, people with disabilities may develop a negative self-image and think that they are not important (Sze & Valentin, 2007).

School experiences affect children's self-perceptions, academic ability, and social acceptance. Literacy instruction is a school activity. Therefore, it is important that the text that children are exposed to contribute to positive self-concept. In Carl Rogers' view, the self is an important component in personal adjustment (Kahn & Rachman, 2000). Rogers maintained that healthy development comes from the positive regard of others and from oneself (Rogers, 1957). Therefore, children will experience academic and social success if they have positive relationships with others.

Purpose of the Study

Despite the legislative movement during the 1970's, people with disabilities are still being persistently sent messages through pictures and language that having a disability is undesirable. This study seeks to address the problem of determining how people with disabilities are portrayed as characters in children's literature. Specifically, this study focused on the representations of people with specific learning disabilities and attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder who account for more than half of the special education population in the United States. The purpose of this study was to analyze the characters and to determine what themes were conveyed and whether these themes promote understanding of people with a SLD or AD/HD or if they reinforce stereotypes.

The results of this study will aid teachers and other educational professionals in providing the most appropriate literature selection for their classrooms and curriculums.

<div align="center">**Significance of the Study**</div>

Children with disabilities represent an especially vulnerable group. Therefore, special laws and policies have been in place for over 25 years to promote full participation and integration into society-especially the educational settings. Parents of children with disabilities state that attitudinal and social barriers are the biggest difficulty for their children (Pivik, McComas & LaFlamme, 2002). A recent report from the U.S. Department of Education states that 53.7% of children with disabilities spend most of the school day in general education classrooms (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). Therefore, the more time children with disabilities or who have AD/HD are educated with their non-disabled peers there is an increased potential for social isolation and rejection (Zic & Igric, 2001).

Since Dyches, Prater, and Jenson's (2006) bibliography, there has not been a critical analysis of children's disability literature published in the United States. However, their study was limited to Caldecott Medal and Honor Books. Beckett, Ellison, Barrett, and Shah (2009) completed a study on literature published in the United Kingdom. Dissertations analyzing fiction include Brenna, (2010), Cissell (2001), Darragh (2010), Karambatsos (2010), Marsh (2003), and Smith (2000). Brenna analyzed the portrayals of characters with disabilities in Canadian novels published since 1995. Cissell's study analyzed books from 1995-2000 that had characters with learning disabilities. Her selections were taken from booklists used by school librarians and reading teachers. Darragh focused on young adult novels published from 2000-2004.

Karambatsos studied the responses of children without disabilities to five books about a character with a disability. Marsh analyzed realistic fiction published between 1980 and 2002 that had a character with mental retardation. Smith analyzed children's literature from 1975 – 2000 that included characters with all categories of disabilities.

In reviewing the literature, it was found that there is a strong need for qualitative research in regard to disabilities literature. According to Matthew and Clow (2007), current research has focused on the impact of perceptions of disability and children's literature for older readers. However, attitude development begins earlier. In addition, there are few reports specifically about learning or social/emotional disabled characters in children's books. In 1997, Pinsent examined the disabled culture as one form of bias in children's literature but not the disabilities culture specifically (Saunders, 2004).

This study analyzes selections from the American Library Association booklist published from 1993 to 2009 that portray characters with specific learning disabilities or attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder. The prominence of the ALA book lists and awards makes it worthwhile to examine their content since teachers make selections based on the organization's recommendation. This study examines the text to determine whether they include authentic portrayals of people with the two most common disabilities encountered in the inclusion classroom – specific learning disabilities and Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder.

The data from this study identifies appropriate literature that classroom teachers can use to increase children's knowledge of the disability culture. Lamme, Fu, and Lowery (2004) state that literature can help children understand other cultures. Also, teachers can use literature to address specific disability issues that may arise in the

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classroom (Iaquinta & Hipsky, 2006). The books can start a conversation, giving students an insight into the lives of their classmates that have disabilities. Lastly, there is an increased emphasis on professional teaching standards in Illinois with the passage of the Performance Evaluation Reform Act (Performance Evaluation Advisory Council, 2014). Using literature can be a tool to meet important pedagogical competencies.

Learning Theories

This study was guided by social learning, sociocultural, and transactional learning theories. These theories help explain the formation of children's attitudes and how those attitudes affect the way they respond to literature.

According to social learning theorists, infants arrive on this earth without a sense of self or personal agency; therefore, they have not developed positive or negative attitudes. The self is constructed through experience with the environment. Social learning theorists believe that children learn from observing and imitating the actions of other people. Bandura (2006) states that children's personal agency develops from imitating what they see or hear other people say or do. However, children must be able to visualize their actions and recognize they are the agent of their own actions (Bandura, 2006).

Sociocultural theory values children's social and cultural identities in order to facilitate learning. Vygotsky began his studies in educational psychology researching how language, social interaction, and culture influence learning (Vygotsky, 1993; McGlann-Nelson, 2005). Vygotsky theorized that children start learning from their parents or caregivers. They learn from observing body language, actions, and word usage. Repetitious behaviors emerge as the family's values, attitudes, and rules. In time, children understand the rules and respond accordingly. This in turn

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constitutes their culture (Vygotsky, 1993; McGlann-Nelson, 2005). Vygotsky (1978) concluded, "Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological)" (p. 57).

Applying social learning and sociocultural theories to literacy suggests that children's social and cultural views influence how they respond to text. They learn how to respond to text from teachers' discussions, and observing their peers' reactions. Additionally, the children's past experiences, cultural values, and social assumptions help construct the text's meaning.

Rosenblatt's transactional theory (1960) states that as children read books they construct different meanings which are based on the different attitudes and values they have. These attitudes and values have been shaped by their moral and social philosophy assimilated from family and community (Rosenblatt, 1982). Simultaneously, the "text shapes the reader's experiences by selecting, limiting, and ordering the ideas that best conform to the text" (Bressler, 1999, p. 67). Children are engaged in transactions with text as they reflect on their attitudes and assumptions. The transactional nature between reader and the text results in fluid meaning of the text. As children read and discuss the text, they develop new perspectives and interpretations. In order to change attitudes there has to be a link "with the past experiences and present interests, anxieties, and hopes of the reader" (Bressler, 1999, p. 305).

The linkage "will narrow his attention to building up the meanings, the ideas, the directions to be retained; attention focuses on accumulating what is to be carried away at the end of the reading" (Rosenblatt, 1982, p. 269). Therefore, readers will adapt their

thinking to the changing attitudes set forth from the discussions and the text. Their ZPD shifts forward as they critically analyze portrayals in text. For instance, children will read a book about a child with a physical disability. They will adapt their thinking to the way the person is portrayed in the story. If the person is portrayed as helpless, and they consistently see this portrayal in other books, they will think all people with physical disabilities are helpless. However, if storylines change and disabilities are portrayed authentically, the children will change their perceptions and accept classmates that have disabilities (Shapiro, 1999).

Because of the way children are influenced by literature, it is important to use authentic books that depict positive attitudes and images of people with disabilities, especially people with learning or social/emotional disabilities. As our society increases in diversity, it is important for all children to recognize, respect, and appreciate the legitimacy of all groups. Further, for those from minority or disenfranchised groups, issues of identity may dominate and undermine appropriate social development.

<div align="center">**Research Questions**</div>

The following research questions were used to guide this study.

1. What themes are conveyed through the characterization of characters with a specific learning disabilities or Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder?

   a. How are characters with a specific learning disability or Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder viewed and treated by those without these conditions?

b. Do the characterizations encourage or discourage inclusion of children with a specific learning disability or Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder in activities?

2. To what extent are stereotypes reinforced?

3. How does the text reflect the current prevalence of people with a specific learning disability or Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder?

Assumptions

Several concepts are assumed for this study. It is assumed that:

1. Children can be influenced by the stories they read which shape their attitudes (Banks,1994; Bennett, 1999).

2. Children's literature that realistically portrays people with disabilities provide knowledge about disabilities (Kurtts & Gavigan, 2008).

3. The sample titles represent books that are likely to be available to elementary school children. Most students can access the books through their school libraries, public libraries and through Bookshare, which is an online library for people with disabilities (Beneficent Technology, Inc., 2014).

4. The sample titles are representative of what has been published.

5. The portrayal of people with disabilities can be examined systematically and accurately with content analysis. Since content analysis is used to make inferences from text and "making sense of these interpretations in a context surrounding the text (Duke & Mallette, p. 30).

Limitations

The following limitations were established for this study:

1. The study was limited to books identifying characters with a specific learning disabilities or attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder because people with these conditions are highly likely to be encountered in the school setting (Merikangas, He, Burstein, Swanson, et. al., 2010; U. S. Department of Education, 2008).

2. The study limited its sample to realistic fiction books written for children ages 10-14 as this is the stage in development where literature is effective in facilitating self and social understanding (Hancock, 2004; Landt, 2006).

3. Each book examined had a contemporary setting within North America as they are relatable to children in the United States.

4. The study limited its sample to books written after 1993 to continue where the National Dissemination Center of Children with Disabilities guide stopped (National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities, 2000).

Definition of Terms

Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD) – an inability to focus, to control impulsive or hyperactive behavior or a combination of these that is more severe than the typical range of development (U. S. National Library of Medicine, 2013)

Characterization – revealing the personality of a person, animal, or a thing in a story, through dialogue, physical appearance, behavior, thoughts, feelings, relationships

with other characters and commentary by the author (Anderson, Brinnin, Leggett, et. al, 1993).

Children's literature – Published fiction and non-fiction stories whose primary audience is children 0-12 years old (Galda & Cullinan, 2003). Fiction genres are fantasy, folklore, historical fiction, realistic fiction, science fiction, and biographies.

Disability – According to the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1992, a disability is a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one of more major life activities (U.S. Department of Justice, 2005).

Plot – Events in a story that are built upon: (a) an introduction that tells who the characters are; (b) a complication that arises; (c) a climax that is usually the most exciting event when the complication is resolved; and (d) a resolution that closes the story (Anderson, et. al., 1993). Typically, plots in young adult literature are about "coming-of-age issues" (Cole, 2009, p. 49), such as, identity, maturity, and relationships.

Specific Learning Disability (SLD) – learning problems in the areas of reading, writing, reasoning, listening, speaking, and mathematics (National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities, 2011).

Stereotype – The attribution of supposed characteristics of the whole groups to all its individual members. Stereotyping has the effect of exaggerating the uniformity within a group and its distinction from others (Klein, 1984).

Theme – similar codes are collected together in order to state a central idea (Creswell, 2005).

Background of the Researcher

My analysis of the characters in this study is based on my own background and experiences. I am a black middle-class female that teaches reading to adolescents with disabilities. As a special education teacher, I participate in annual meetings with my students and their parents. We discuss the students' academic progress and develop Individual Education Programs.

As a certified public school teacher, I have held positions whose duties included researching, selecting, and implementing various reading programs for general and special education students. For the past 22 years, I have taught various grade levels with eleven years teaching students with disabilities at the middle school level.

During those eleven years, I found that the students did not understand their academic situation. They thought that they were doing fine and did not need, and in some cases, did not want the instructional support. However, they were bothered about their classmates' teasing and found that their time in a resource classroom was a respite from the intolerance. During this time, I tried to provide disability cultural experiences that allowed them to explore their identity. We would read and discuss text in an effort to understand themselves and how they fit into society.

Summary of Chapter I

In Chapter 1, a case was made for a systematic study of children's literature that represented people with SLD and AD/HD as related to cultural themes and authenticity. The study's significance focuses on addressing a major gap in the current research which does not adequately include children's literature about people with SLD and AD/HD. Also, the study will influence instructional practices by providing teachers and students

with a window and mirror into the disabilities culture. This chapter briefly addresses the impact of cultural literacy – of bringing one's experiences to understand text about different cultures; and the effect of the current representations of disabilities literature within the school curriculum.

In addition, the chapter outlines the purpose of my study including my research questions. The research questions examine the: (1) the extent perceptions or themes are conveyed through the portrayal of characters with a SLD or AD/HD; (2) the extent stereotypes are reinforced; (3) the extent characters with a SLD or AD/HD are viewed and treated by those without; (4) the extent portrayals encourage or discourage inclusion of children with a SLD or AD/HD in activities; (5) the extent the plots represent the real world perspective of people with a SLD or AD/HD; and (6) the extent the text reflects the current prevalence of people with a SLD or AD/HD.

The concepts of social and sociocultural learning suggest that children learn new ideas, attitudes, and behaviors from modeling and identifying with people from different sources including children's literature. The study is further guided by Transactional Learning Theory which suggests that children bring their own experiences to text yet their viewpoints of societal issues can be shaped through the interweaving of their culture and the content of the text. In the next chapter, I provide the theoretical framework that guided the study, and review related literature.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

This study examines children's literature to determine how characters with specific learning disabilities and Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder are represented. The literature selected was analyzed to determine any common themes and if those themes promote understanding of people with disabilities or if they reinforce stereotypes.

The following literature review provides discussion related to how children learn and how they respond to literature. Three theories are presented as a conceptual framework for this research and are related to my decisions regarding the analysis of children's literature. Additionally, this review will discuss the rationale for using disabilities children's literature; the social and psychological development of children with disabilities; and authentic forms of disabilities children's literature. Also, an examination of previous studies on disability in children's literature will reveal trends and set the context for further exploration on this subject.

Theoretical Framework

Reading is a social and contextual activity that stimulates questions of identity and purpose: What do children read; what is the purpose for reading the text; and what linkages to their lives do they make while reading the text. Children from different cultures may read, experience, and make linkages from the same text quite differently. In

order to understand this difference, it is necessary to study how children learn from social constructs; and how they develop meanings from looking at themselves and from the reflection of others (Banks, 2005). Therefore, social learning, sociocultural, and transactional learning theories provide the theoretical framework for this study.

Social Learning Theory

Social learning theory suggests that children's attitudes, values, and behaviors interact with their environment (Grusec, 1992). While interacting with their environment, particularly their culture, children internalize those attitudes, values, and behavior. There are four main tenets of social learning theory: (1) children learn from observing other people's behaviors of others, (2) children learn through identification with the observation, (3) children learn through reinforcement of behaviors and positive consequences, and (4) children learn from internalizing the behaviors (Ormrod, 1990).

Sears researched children's identification development. Children's identification is related to the behaviors of people that they think are significant in their lives. Sears initially researched children's identification with their mothers. He noted that children perceived their mothers' action as an important part of their own actions (Sears, 1957). Imitation of the mother's actions is reinforcing, thus a habit of imitation is established.

Children do not develop their identity though isolation. Instead, they abstract and integrate information from discussions, models and literature to help form their identity (Grusec, 1992). Therefore, Bandura suggests that identify development occurs through children's social experiences – their relationships with people. These relationships influence one another and guide the choices that are made (Bandura, 2001). There are

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four concepts that help in the development of these relationships: intentionality, forethought, self-reactivity, and self-reflection.

Intentionality can occur throughout a child's school day. The child is given assignments or tasks, and then he/she is expected to produce a result. The motivation to participate in those activities is influenced by personal agency (Bandura, 2001). Intentionality involves actively making an event happen to serve a purpose. For instance, the teacher assigns a research paper. The child chooses a book from the classroom library for the purpose of completing the assignment.

Forethought involves planning an action. Bandura (1986) stated, "Through exercise of forethought, people motivate themselves and guide their actions anticipatorily" (p. 19). In addition, children are able to think of a course of action before they actually carry it out. However, they are not able to think of the likely consequences of those actions until they have experienced similar actions. As children develop, they learn to change their actions based on their desired outcomes. At first, children may choose a book because of its color or the intriguing picture on the cover. But the selections may not be at their readability levels and too difficult to comprehend. In time, the children will learn how to choose suitable books.

Self-reactivity involves children focusing on their motivations and goals. In the example of the research assignment, either the child's goal was to choose a book to complete the assignment or the child chose the book because he/she was interested in the topic. Either way, the child acted because he/she was motivated to complete a goal. In the beginning, goals are "fashioned from, and occasionally supported by external influences" (Bandura, 1986, p. 20). As children develop, their goals become more complex and self-

driven. Children are not only able to receive information but influence the community. "Thus, by arranging facilitative environmental conditions, recruiting cognitive guides, and creating incentives for their own efforts, people make causal contribution to their own motivation and actions" (Bandura, 1986, p. 20). Also, Bandura (2001) stated that challenging goals keeps children interested in activities.

Self-reflection involves children being able to examine and evaluate their actions. Self-efficacy, the thought that one can produce one's own results, is central to self-reflection. Children choose what action to take based on their beliefs that their desired outcomes will happen. If they feel they do not have control, they will not attempt the goals. They will reflect on which challenges to explore and what to do if they face difficulties. Also, some meta-cognitive activity results in faulty thought patterns. According to Bandura (1986), "Forceful actions arising from erroneous beliefs often create social effects that confirm the misbeliefs" (p. 21). For instance, erroneous portrayals of dwarfs in fairytales create faulty thoughts about people with disabilities.

Children select their beliefs from the many experiences they have within their relationships. Important to this process is observational learning (Bandura, 1986). Children must first pay attention to the experiences. Next, the information is converted into symbolic representation in order to be retained. In the next step, children model their actions based on the original experience. Lastly, there must be a reinforcer to motivate children to model the actions.

Another aspect of symbolic representation is the abundance of experiences available to children. According to Bandura (1986), most of children's learning is from "causal or directed observation of other people in everyday situations" (p. 70). Children's

literature, television, video games, and the Internet have expanded the range of experiences available. In order for children to select positive behaviors to imitate, they must experience many behaviors that emphasize acceptable attitudes and values. In addition, the models can be characters portrayed in children's literature (Zambo, 2006).

Children not only imitate the behavior of characters in children's literature but they also identify with them. Bandura contended that children use self-regulation or self-reflection to learn which behaviors are appropriate (Bandura, 2006; Caprara, et al., 2008). Children observe which attitudes, values, and behaviors are reinforced and punished. Then, they develop and internalize their own standards. Once they identify with the standards, they are able to think independently and further develop their own understandings.

Additionally, children will begin to participate only in activities and environments that promote the values and interests that are beneficial to them in order to avoid those that are detrimental to their sense of self. Children with disabilities might have little engagement in literacy activities if the activity is not connected to their identity (Moje, Dillon, & O'Brien, 2000). Therefore, teachers should use "culturally sensitive, culturally knowledgeable perspectives and practices" (Perez, 1998, p. 256) to increase children's knowledge about themselves and how their culture fits with the mainstream culture.

The characters in culturally sensitive text will help children learn new ideas, attitudes, and behaviors (Pirofski, 2001). Social learning theory suggests that children will identify with characters that are portrayed positively while rejecting negative images. For example, Helen Keller in *The Miracle Worker* (1962) is portrayed as a role model, who overcame her disabilities to become a well-known public figure, while the disfigured

Quasimodo from *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* is grotesque, pitied and equated to the devil. As stated previously, children also are more likely to imitate their beliefs and behaviors after significant people in their lives. This is important because it suggests that in order for children to identify with characters those characters must be significant. In addition, Methe and Hintze (2003) assert that modeling with children's literature and the teacher's instruction demonstrates acceptable behaviors. When teachers model acceptable behaviors using literature that have characters with disabilities, they demonstrate for children why reading those stories are important. Ultimately, the children are likely to identify with those behaviors. Also, it is important for teachers to make connections of the storylines to the children's lives (Walker, 2005). Then the children are able to identify with the characters and apply the stories' themes to their lives.

Sociocultural Theory

Sociocultural theory evolved from Vygotsky's thinking that human behavior was socially and culturally organized (Vygotsky, 1987). Human behavior is dependent upon the social interaction between individuals which is mediated by language. One's language is formulated by the cultural values and mores of the dominating group. Subsequently, a child learns the language and "begins to apply to himself the same forms of behavior that were initially applied to him by others" (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 21). The child internalizes the behavior and it is transmitted from one generation to the next.

Vygotsky's theory developed while investigating the relationship between learning and development. He and his colleague, Aleksandr Luria relied on Piaget's learning theory to help them make the connection of children's learning metamorphous to their biological and physical growth (Vygotsky & Luria, 1993). Vygotsky and Luria agreed

with Piaget in that children develop through stages. They believed that children start out as blank slates in which their main concern is with their "physiological functions" (Vygotsky & Luria, 1993, p. 150). As children develop, their thinking is influenced by culture and multiple, active encounters with the external world. For instance, in the beginning children may take objects, such as pencils, and play with them without any connection to the environment. As the children's thinking develops, they are able to understand how they can use the pencils to make marks. A caregiver praises the children and this reinforces their behavior.

Vygotsky synthesized Piaget's cognitive development theory as he researched a variety of topics including the education of students with disabilities. In 1926, he created a laboratory to obtain data from students with disabilities to support his theoretical concepts (Newman & Holzman, 1998; Vygotsky, 1994). When Vygotsky started studying the children, he proposed that a disability is an abnormality only within a social context (Vygotsky, 1993). Having a disability only becomes a problem within its social implications. For instance, children with a hearing impairment can perform must functions just like their peers. However, when they are in a social setting and they have to communicate, they have an impairment – they have to use sign language or read lips. This is probably more uncomfortable for the non-disabled people than for the hearing-impaired children.

Vygotsky distinguished between primary disability and secondary disability (Vygotsky & Luria, 1993). A primary disability is the biological or cognitive impairment, while the secondary disability is due to social factors. The biological or cognitive impairment prevents a child from mastering physiological or academic skills. However,

the secondary disability interrupts the child's social development. Gindis (1999) added that "Expectations and attitudes of social milieu and conditions created by the society influence the access of a child with disability to socio-cultural knowledge, experiences, and opportunity to acquire the psychological tools" (p. 44). Therefore, the community's attitudes influence the child's acquisition of sociocultural experiences which causes distortions and delays in self-concept.

However, the complications from the secondary disability can be mediated. One way is through social experiences. Vygotsky maintained it is important for children with disabilities to interact with their peers in order to develop social and cultural identities (Vygotsky, 1994). He states that if children with disabilities are segregated from their non-disabled peers, then their experiences become very narrow and they will not learn acceptable social behavior. Verbal discourse provides learning opportunities for children to understand the social and cultural meanings of various practices within the community (Putney, Green, Dixon, Durdn, & Yeager, 2000). In addition, children are viewed as innocent and inexperienced; therefore, they are unable to make meanings from literature without help. Nodelman (2008) states that literature supplies children with models in order to educate them about themselves, others, and the world. Also, Kruger (2008) stated literature's meaning has to be explained in order for children to grasp the storyline's theme but also to acquire a self-understanding. Teachers orchestrate the reading activities and the materials that are used. They also direct the discussions highlighting the ideas and values that they deem are important. Children view the teacher as a significant model and they acquire her ideas and thoughts in order to extend their knowledge. Therein lies a problem – children's knowledge is dependent upon one

person's view. The teacher's biases impact her instruction and the materials selected; therefore, the children's self-understanding is limited due to the teacher's point of view.

It is not enough for children to interact with experiences to learn. Children must use those experiences to generalize, abstract, and use the concepts in novel situations. Making meaning from the experiences includes the help of a more experienced adult (teacher) or peer. The teacher or peer guides children through extended thinking to the desired outcome (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996).

The gap in the children's knowledge in which they need help is called the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Vygotsky defined ZPD as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Lee, 2000, p 194).

Symbolic experiences also mediate the complications from the secondary disability. This includes material instruments, such as, text, and social signs/language (Gindis, 1999). Reading children's literature is an avenue to learn about different cultures, ask questions, and express emotions. From a Vygotskian perspective, reading is a perfect cultural interaction activity.

Even though Vygotsky believed children learn individually, social constructs influence what the children learn. Caregivers pass on their ideas, values, and attitudes to children. Those children pass on their culture to others. Matthews and Kesner (2003) add that from a Vygotskian prospective children learn through cultural experiences and they construct knowledge based on those experiences within a certain context. The context in this instance is engagement with children's literature.

Transactional Learning Theory

Reader response is a term used to focus on an approach to reading. It emphasizes that the reader constructs meaning based on her or his experiences and understandings. Rosenblatt is a pioneer in this approach. While exploring the influence of children's literature on adolescent development, Rosenblatt decided that literature used in the classroom should represent the students' lives. "We all know that there will be no active evocation of the literary work, no such experience lived-through, if the text offers little or no linkage with the past experiences and present interests, anxieties, and hopes of the reader" (Rosenblatt, 1960, p. 305).

Rosenblatt's exploration led her into the personal nature of reading. She developed the Transactional Learning Theory, which explains that the reader interacts with the story (Rosenblatt, 1983). The text remains merely symbols on paper until a reader transforms them into something meaningful. "The literary work exists in the live circuit set up between reader and text: the reader infuses intellectual, emotional meanings into the pattern of verbal symbols, and those symbols channel his thoughts and feelings" (Rosenblatt, 1983, p. 25). This constructed meaning and connection was dependent on cultural contexts. In addition, each reader comprehends something different "based on consciously or unconsciously on different theoretical assumptions and interpretive methodologies (Bressler, 1999, p. 63). In other words, readers bring past experiences, thoughts, and ideas from their culture to make meaning of the text.

Transactional Learning Theory provides students a process to critically interpret text and to gain more knowledge about themselves. "Through books, the reader may explore his own nature, become aware of potentialities for thought and feeling within

himself, acquire clearer perspective, develop aims and a sense of direction" (Rosenblatt, 1983, p. v). Students are able to respond to literature by asking themselves "How does the literature or character affect me? What does it mean? How good is it? (Norton, 1995, p. 41).

Transactional learning fits well with sociocultural earning as both theories allow meanings to emerge from the reader's cultural viewpoint yet look at other cultures with new understanding. The various characters in children's literature serve as symbolic models of behavior. While reading about the characters, children identify and imitate the characters. The societal values that the characters are portraying are taught to the children (Bandura, 1977).

Crucial to transactional learning and sociocultural perspectives is the interaction of words and culture (Soter, 1999). One objective of sociocultural theory is to explain how culture influences learning. Transactional learning allows readers to consider how they perceive texts to be representative of cultures and the role that their own culture plays in their understanding. As children read the text, they may become resistant to the new attitudes and values portrayed. Soter adds that readers may be challenged to explore attitudes and values that they perceive as contradicting their stereotypical views.

Through children's literature, it is possible to transfer knowledge and to develop new frameworks for understanding disability culture (Soter, 1999). This is related to Vygotsky's notion of ZPD in that children are responding to the literature from their viewpoints yet there is room for them to learn new values. For example, children can learn from Judge Jenkins in *Egg-Drop Blues* (Banks, 2003) that having a learning disability does not limit participation in academic contests. Children will debunk the

stereotype that children with disabilities are "dumb" and gain sensitivity necessary for

respectful interaction with individuals from other cultural groups.

Once new frameworks have been developed, children will have greater

understanding of themselves and others (Wilhelm, 2008). Through case studies, Wilhelm

noted how adolescent readers relate to the characters in literature books. Adolescents

make a connection to characters by taking the characters' perspectives. They become the

character, "merging with him or her   . . . or becoming a friend. Sometimes the readers

establish a more distanced relationship, observing characters from outside, either from

close in or

afar . . . " (Wilhelm 2008, p. 57). After merging, comes critiquing. According to

Wilhelm, adolescents judge characters and decide if the characters' perspectives align

with theirs. Also, they would apply new perspectives to their own lives. In the end, "the

readers made conscious connections from the fictional world that helped them to gain

heightened awareness of their personal identities and to formulate guidelines for personal

ways of living" (p. 70).

Once children understand their personal identities, they have respect for other cultures.

Rosenblatt (1976) stated that the adolescent reader's "desire for self-understanding and

for knowledge about people provides an important avenue into literature" (p. 53).

Therefore, children's responses to disability literature facilitate human understanding.

Rationale for Using Disabilities Children's Literature

The United States is a multicultural society. Current census data indicates that one-

third of the population is a member of an ethnic group (United States Census Bureau,

2008). However, historically, immigrants have not been valued for their languages and

cultures. They are expected to assimilate into mainstream (White European) culture. The school system reflects this expectation. Students were socialized into the existing ideologies by learning the knowledge, social and moral rules of the majority culture (Novick, 1996).

The Civil Rights Movement facilitated a change in schools' curriculum. In the 1960's and 1970's, more attention was given to the storylines of books used in reading programs. Books were written with greater care and sensitivity in order not to offend members of various cultures (Sutherland & Arbuthnot, 1977). The books included exciting plots, interesting settings, and appealing characters. However, these books were not necessarily used in predominately White schools. According to Banks (2005), instead of implementing literature programs, schools infused cultural education through celebrations and holidays.

Today, an emerging literature genre is geared specifically toward minority cultures and is being used across the nation. The intent to teach multicultural content is to include tolerance of other cultures, to reduce prejudice, to view society from different perspectives, and to empower members of different cultures (Banks, 1995; and Carithers, 1998). State boards of education responded by implementing new standards. The Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts requires teachers to use text "whose range extends across genres, cultures, and centuries" (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010, p. 36).

Research also supports the use of children's literature instead of basal readers in the curriculum (Barone, 2006; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996; and McCollum, McNeese, Styron, &

Lee, 2007). Barone (2006) and Fountas and Pinnell (1996) state that a good reading program gives children opportunities to read a large variety of texts and not rely on one source. Fountas and Pinnell added that children's literature allow students to think deeply about different types of text. A variety of text expands their knowledge and understanding of their world.

McCollum, McNeese, Styron, and Lee (2007) also found that using basal readers did not increase children's reading fluency and comprehension as much as reading programs that were literature based. They conducted a study comparing the reading scores of 323 students. The students received instruction through one of three curriculums: literature-based, Direct Instruction or basal reader. The findings show that the students whose curriculum was literature-based had higher reading scores.

In addition, DeKay (1996) states that using children's literature increases children's knowledge, facilitates comprehension, promotes critical thinking, and influences their attitudes. Since children's literature is an effective tool to teach values and attitudes, it is important that the storylines do not portray stereotypical and discriminatory viewpoints. Conversely, literature that portrays stereotypical characters negatively shape children's behavior and restrict their socialization practices (Worland, 2008).

Also, Carithers (1998) states stereotypical characterization or absent characters causes children to lose their heritage and identity. Members of cultural groups lose their heritage when their customs and values are not celebrated within the classroom. If all children see are Easter bunnies, pilgrim hats, and Christmas trees, they do not think their traditions are important. Therefore, they lose their cultural identity.

According to Erikson (1987), children form their identity from birth but it becomes most important in adolescence. Adolescents are undergoing physical as well as social changes. In addition, they are being bombarded with decisions to make regarding their personal, occupational, and ideological identities. Thus, identity is contingent on the attitudes imposed by significant others. For instance, the identity of a child with a disability may have come from the parents' involvement in support groups. Once the child is at school, classroom activities do not reflect his culture; therefore, he/she will begin to take on the classroom's attitude towards disabilities. The loss of the child's heritage and identity diminishes his/hers self-esteem. A long term effect is that the child will begin to despise himself/herself and others that are like him (Erikson).

In addition, children with disabilities develop low self-esteem because of their low academic performance and tend to see themselves as incapable and dumb (Guidon, 1993; Klassen & Lynch, 2007; Young, 1990). Coupled with the lack of positive images, they begin to see themselves as inferior. On the other hand, children with disabilities, who have a positive self-concept and more academic competence usually, have less negative perceptions of their disabilities (Robertson, Harding, & Morrison, 1998).

Guidon (1993) also suggested that children's low self-esteem hinders their peer bonding. He studied the self-concept and self-esteem of upper elementary grade students with learning disabilities. Guidon had students and teachers complete questionnaires. He also interviewed the students. Guidon found that children with disabilities tend to feel so frustrated by their poor academic ability that they develop feelings of personal dislike. Due to these feelings, they use misbehavior as a coping strategy. They disregard the

teacher's classroom rules. They do not follow directions and refuse to complete assignments. With their classmates, they initiate arguments and provoke altercations.

On the other end of the spectrum, children with disabilities might be the quiet student who never participates in class discussion or they are withdrawn and do not engage with their peers. However, this causes a cycle of alienation. Their classmates reject these children for their academic and behavior shortcomings. Then, the children with disabilities feel even more worthless because of their social failure. Armed with these results, Guidon implemented an intervention program that focused on self-esteem. At the end of the nine-month program, data showed that all of the participants had a "better self-concept and self-esteem" (Guidon, 1993, p. 49).

Children with disabilities and AD/HD have socialization barriers other than their low self-esteem. They must overcome their peers' negative attitudes. Research confirms that considerable negative attitudes about children with disabilities exist.

Nowicki (2006) conducted a study in Canada with 100 children to assess their attitudes towards classmates with intellectual disabilities. The participants were given drawings of children with and without disabilities. The children were given cards that had positive and negative adjectives. They placed the cards with each drawing. Nowicki found that the children attributed more positive adjective to the drawing of the child without a disability. In addition, the drawing of the child with an intellectual disability was given more negative adjectives. This is consistent with Schulz and Carpenter (1995) who found that children with cognitive disabilities and emotional disorders are accepted less than children with other categories.

Carlson, Flannery, and Kral (2005) found that negative attitudes can be so severe that it results in victimization. The participants in their study were adolescents with a specific learning disability or without a disability. They were given a bully/victim questionnaire. The results showed that over half (55.6%) of the students had experienced bullying. However, the participants with a SLD reported being bullied and victimized more than the participants without a SLD. The researchers noted that "several protective influences were identified" (p. 20). Children with a social network and who enjoy school are less likely to experience bullying.

Wiener and Mak (2009) found similar result with their study. They studied the negative behaviors of 104 adolescents with and without AD/HD. The participants completed a bully/victim questionnaire – a self-report survey about their experiences with peer victimization. Results showed that "children with ADHD reported higher levels of being victimized by peers that did comparison children" (p. 122). The children with AD/HD reported that they experienced verbal, physical, and relational victimization.

Research on victims of violence suggests that repeated victimization has detrimental effects on a child's emotional and social development (Brockenbrough, Cornell & Loper, 2002; Estell, Cairns, Farmer & Cairns, 2002). In addition, they state that negative image and constant bullying causes isolation, anxiety, depression, lower self-esteem, sustains their problematic peer relations and antisocial behavior. Also, these problems follow the children into adulthood. According to Carlson, Flannery, and Kral (2005), they continue to experience depressive and aggressive tendencies and this affects they job performance and relationships.

Children are more likely to select friends that are more like them. If they do not have experiences with children with disabilities, they are likely to reject the idea of forming friendships with children with disabilities (Odom, Zercher, Li, Marquart, Sandall, & Brown, 2006). Some disabilities, for instance physical, vision and cognitive disabilities hinder children from fully participating in group activities. Thus, the children are isolated from their classmates and they are unable to form friendships (Tamm & Prellwitz, 2001).

Research shows that children's attitudes are more positive towards children with disabilities if they have frequent interactions with them. For example, in a study by Diamond (2001) it was found that contact with children with disabilities lead to more positive attitudes toward children with disabilities. 40% of the participants previously had not had any contact with a classmate with a disability. Diamond administered three measures: social acceptance, social problem solving, and social contacts. The results showed that the children who interact with classmates with a disability are more likely to have higher social acceptance than children who had no interaction.

Another study shows that positive social interactions are a requisite for academic success (Merrell, Johnson, Merz, & Ring, 1992). The purpose of the study was to assess the relationship of social competence to educational classification, and to make a link to academics. For the study, teachers rated the behavior of over 600 children with and without disabilities. As a result, the researchers found that students with SLD have deficits in social competence more than children without a disability. Also, children who were academically at-risk had social competence deficits.

Gordon, Feldman, and Chiriboga (2005) add that friendships assist with learning. They reviewed literature on "the impact of disability on relationship development" (p. 1). A summary shows children with disabilities are often alienated due to the stigma of having a disability and generally do not have many friends. Gordon, Feldman, and Chiriboga stated that in order for this to change, there needs to be more and better interaction among children with and without disabilities. They say that children who have positive self-regard are more likely to enjoy school; are liked by their teachers and peers; and have academic success.

On the other hand, if children with disabilities do not get enough support for their academic and social inadequacies, this could lead to a feeling of worthlessness (Klassen & Lynch, 2007). This may then be followed by a sense of helplessness and decreased self-determination that will cause them to give up entirely on school. In addition, Adler (1929), warned educators of the long-term effects of the feeling of worthlessness. He states that children who feel worthless become adults that feel worthless. ". . . a man whose childhood has been spent in a loveless atmosphere shows, even in old age, indications of this bringing-up. He will always suspect that people desire to be unkind to him and will shut himself off from others." (p. 321).

In their study, Klassen and Lynch (2007) investigated the self-efficacy of adolescents with a specific learning disability. The adolescents participated in focus groups and individual interviews. During the focus groups, mentioned that their teachers' approach or public acknowledgement of their SLD reduced their confidence. Others mentioned that they were hesitant to ask for help because of being embarrassed in front of their classmates. The researchers surmised that:

The students expected teachers to observe a delicate balance in providing

classroom support--they recognized the need for help from teachers, but

they believed that the support should be offered unobtrusively and that

teachers needed to display at least initial confidence in the students'

abilities to complete academic tasks. (p. 503)

The students in this study had not yet given up on school but they were concerned about

their poor academics. Klassen and Lynch added that their teachers did provide support

and encouragement and this might have contributed to their optimistic academic beliefs.

However, students with a SLD or AD/HD tend to struggle in school. According to

Gwynne, Lesnick, Hart and Allensworth (2009) these students have more absences, lower

GPA's, course failures, and subsequently, do not graduate high school within five years.

Their study focused on whether "on-track status" (p. 1) is useful in identifying freshman

students with disabilities who might drop out of high school. Freshmen are on-track if

they earn at least five credits by the end of the school year and have not failed more than

one course (Chicago Public Schools Department of Graduation Pathways in the Office of

Student Support Services, 2009). The main reason why students with disabilities are less

likely to be on-track is absences. Gwynne, Lesnick, Hart and Allensworth state that

students with disabilities tend to have higher absences which on contribute to lower

grades and courses failures. They admit they are unsure as to why the students had more

absences. They inferred that disengagement from school as a cause.

Langberg, et al. (2011) wanted to determine the cause of lower grades and higher

dropout rates. Therefore, they studied the predictors of academic achievement in

adolescents with AD/HD. Several predictors were assessed: classroom performance,

demographics, grades, homework completion, medication use, and special education services received. They found that the students with AD/HD had low skill sets, classroom performance, and homework completion. Langberg, et al. suggested that problems in these areas have "significant long-term implications for academic performance" (p. 529).

Another unfortunate consequence is that children with disabilities and AD/HD have emotional difficulties. Maag and Reid (2006) reviewed fourteen studies to determine if students with a SLD are more depressed. They found that students with a SLD had "significantly higher depression scores than students without LD" (p. 7). They stated that because students with a SLD have greater levels of loneliness, stress and anxiety there is a greater likelihood of depression. In another example, MacPhee and Andrews (2006) studied over 2,000 adolescents to determine the risk factors for depression. They found that low self-esteem and having AD/HD were the two highest risk factors. In another study, Yoshimasu, et al. (2012) completed a longitudinal study on 379 children with AD/HD. They found that "213 (62%) had one or more comorbid psychiatric disorders by 19 years of age" (p.1038) as compared with 19% of the children without AD/HD. Adjustment was the most prevalent disorder.

The emotional difficulties that children with AD/HD suffer can lead to suicidal behaviors. Galera, Bouvard, Encrenaz, Messiah, and Fombonne (2008) studied the link between AD/HD and completed suicide. They questioned the participants about suicidal behaviors and substance use. The results showed that males with AD/HD were more likely to have plans to or attempted suicide than females. Males tend to have symptoms of hyperactivity/impulsivity while females tend to have symptoms of inattentiveness and "impulsivity has be shown to be associated with more severe suicidal outcomes (p. 487).

The data suggested that social and academic difficulties are associated with AD/HD to suicidal behaviors.

The effects of stereotypes and social isolation are not just damaging to children with disabilities and other minority groups, but it is damaging to members of the majority group. According to Banks (2005), members of the majority culture become accustomed to seeing their culture reflected and they start to believe that their values, beliefs, and expectations are universally accepted. In the absence of culturally different experiences, children may be exposed to stereotypes which are then perpetuated by books (Leung, 2003).

In addition, without opportunities to have contact with children with disabilities, children do not understand the concept of disability. Smith and Williams (2001) explored children's judgments of children with disabilities and AD/HD. Most of the participants (age four through twelve) had not had any contact with a person with a disability or AD/HD. The children to rate the competency of children was in different vignettes. The ratings for children with a SLD were more negative for cognitive ability. In addition, adolescents gave more negative ratings for SLD than the other age groups. Except for preschoolers, all age groups gave more negative social ratings for children with AD/HD. Smith and Williams concluded that children develop attitudes about disorders even without direct contact. However, young children do not see any differentiation among them. A child with a physical disability is viewed the same as a child with a SLD. They both possess the same skill deficits. On the other hand, older children have a more advanced understanding although they still have negative attitudes.

A strong influence in developing attitudes is literature. Words and pictures shape children's attitudes. In modern times, one of children's first encounters with literature is fairytales (Sutherland & Arbuthnot, 1977). However, the stories include stereotypical characters. *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (Sears, et al., 1937) include funny-looking dwarfs. The main antagonist (Scar) in Disney's *The Lion King* (Mecchi & Roberts, 1994). 1994*)* is depicted with a physical deformity. According to Shapiro (1999), these images cause children to think that people with physical disabilities are funny, scary, and pitiful. On the other hand, characters with physical beauty are seen as good and desirable. The effect of this exposure is that children view people with disabilities as different from them and they may segregate themselves.

Another consequence is the forming of stereotypes. According to Shapiro (1999), stereotyping first occurs with the labeling. The emphasis switches from the individual to the disability. Then children only see how the individual is different. Eventually, children come to expect that certain traits are always associated with the label. For instance, children have been taught that using abusive language is inappropriate. However, they may interact with a child that has an emotional disability who uses abusive language during all personal interactions. Eventually, the children will associate using abusive language with someone who has a disability or they will expect all people with emotional disabilities to use abusive language.

Exposing children to multicultural literature helps to combat stereotypes (Pyterek, 2006). For her study, Pyterek developed a curriculum that she used with primary children in order for them to learn about a culture different from their own. Pyterek state that as children use literature they become more critical of books and tend to show less bias

towards other cultures. For example, one child initially depicted Native Americans as warriors with spears. At the end of the unit, the child depicted two Native American boys playing a game. No longer did the child view Native Americans behaving stereotypically. Through literature, the child was able to see someone different as being like him.

Authentic Disabilities Literature

Disability is another culture children need to be exposed to through literature. By exposing children to authentic disability literature, that nurtures a positive concept of people and relationships, children without disabilities are able to see people with disabilities in non-stereotypical representations (Heim, 1994).

Bishop (2003), states there are two types of disability books: (1) neutral books, in which characters with disabilities are included but it is not emphasized in the plot; and (2) specific books, in which the central issue is the character's disability. She adds that both types of books should be included in the curriculum. These types of books allow children to view and relate to the disability culture. Also, these books help children clarify their identity, and the perceptions of other children (Taylor, 2000 and Collier, 2000). In addition, Collier states that literature enhances children's identity and self-image by immersing them in stories of their culture. Children see "a cultural mirror image which would reflect their place in the world as valid, valuable, and voiced" (p. 235). An added benefit is that children who feel valued achieve higher academic standards. They will strive harder if they feel they belong in the school environment (Collier).

In order to help children feel that they belonged, teachers wanted to use disability literature that included positive representations. Therefore, researchers turned to the evaluation of disability literature (Ayala, 1999; Baskin & Harris, 1977; Baskin & Harrris,

1984; Beckett, Ellison, Barrett, & Shah, 2009; Friedberg, Mullins, & Sukiennik, 1985; Heim, 1994; Robertson, 1992; Smith-D'Arezzo, 2003; and Ward, 2002).

Baskin and Harris compiled two bibliographies on disability literature. The first one published in 1977 and the second one in 1984 provide a comprehensive review of children's books which include characters with disabilities that were published from 1940-1981. They include a discussion of the trends in portrayals of disabilities and detailed review of 659 books. Baskin and Harris analyzed the books based on the following criteria: (1) accuracy (2) character development (3) didactic messages – writing to raise consciousness or change attitudes and (4) emotional tone – compassion should be informed rather than sentimental. Since the publishing of the first volume, the authors noticed some changes in disability literature. First, the prevalence of orthopedic disabilities dropped from one third to one fourth. Second, the prevalence of characters with emotional disorders increased as well as the depiction of dwarfs. Third, there was an increase in the number of minor characters with disabilities. Some trends stayed the same. Characters with disabilities were mostly White males and they were involved in inadequate familial and social relationships. Many times the books did not include one or both parents. Baskin and Harris concluded that "some books intentionally or inadvertently deliver derogatory messages about people with impairments; other combine inspired, insightful writing with honest, accurate presentation" (1984, p. 49). Also, the literature can be used to inform and to promote attitudinal changes.

Friedberg, Mullins, and Sukiennik (1985) reviewed nonfiction books from 1950's to the early 1980's. The authors divided their book into five sections that dealt with physical disability, sensory disability, cognitive/behavior disability, multiple/severe

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disabilities, and various disorders. They based their selection criteria on the premise that literature should reflect human experiences; therefore, quality disability literature will include accurate information, believable dialog, non-stereotypical recognition of the disabilities' limitations, and hones feelings about disabilities. Of the books selected, 35 books were about cognitive and behavior disabilities. However, only six were about children with a learning disability. The other 29 covered autism, schizophrenia, and social/emotional maladjustment. From analyzing the books, the authors concluded that older published books were more descriptive and optimistic. However, the newer books included more personal reflections. In addition, several themes were evident. The literature emphasized personal accounts of living or coping with a disability; the commonalities of people; and social change. Also, the books' illustrations were more realistic. Friedberg, Mullins, and Sukiennik were concerned about the terminology used in the books. Correct labels were not consistently used even by professionals. They prefer that people use the term "people with disabilities or impairments" and not "handicap" or "exceptional".

Robertson (1992) continued where Friedberg, Mullins, and Sukiennik stopped - she analyzed trends in disability fiction that was published from 1982-1991. Also, she kept the same categories as Friedberg, Mullins, and Sukiennik but used the evaluation criteria from Baskin and Harris. From analyzing the books, Robertson saw three trends. First, people with emotional disturbances were rarely labeled. Their condition was only revealed through comments to mental health professionals and from a progression of behavior changes. Second, the description of health impairments was more defined. The

books included storylines about AIDS, allergies, cancer and eating disorders. Lastly, terminology to identify people with cognitive disabilities included "dull" or "slow".

Instead of focusing on all disabilities, Heim (1994) only analyzed characters with mental disabilities in young adult books. She analyzed a small number of books based on how characters were portrayed within the themes of family, friends, and community. Heim tried to avoid books that used the person with the mental disability as a vehicle for a character without a disability. She stated she chose books where "The mentally handicapped are not ignored or used. They make their own choices and initiate their own activities. They are individuals who *act* in addition to be acted upon" (Heim, 1994, p.140).

Ayala (1999) shifted the focus to the cultural and linguistic characteristics associated with disability. He analyzed 59 picture books and books for intermediate readers published between 1974 and 1996 that featured a primary character with a disability. The analysis included the language of the book's text, the ethnicity of the characters with disabilities, and any cultural emphasis communicated in the story. Ayala found that only a small number of the sampled books depicted African American, Latino or Asian characters. In addition, most were written in English, and did not place emphasis on specific cultural practices. The author concluded that if books written for youth are to portray accurately children's lives, they must portray ethnically diverse children with disabilities.

Ward (2002) included more genres in her bibliography than other studies. She included picture books, contemporary realistic fiction, historical fiction, mysteries, fantasies, and poetry that were published between 1990 and 2001. Her criteria were

similar to other researchers. Text should include accurate information; realistic and believable portrayal of people; reasonable story resolution, and it should be well written. Since Ward's book was published during the timeframe when children with disabilities were beginning to be included in general education classrooms, she included a criterion that had not been mentioned in previous studies. Disability literature should include descriptions of accommodations and modifications within the home and school environments. In addition, settings should be integral to the action and characters "if special classes or schools are depicted in a book, it should be made clear the good reasons from removing the students from the mainstream and placing them in specially designed classrooms." (p. xviii). Sixteen of the selected books dealt with learning and emotional/social disabilities. Within the contemporary realistic fiction genre, books tended to focus on identity and roles within the family, among peers, and in society.

In the just mentioned previous studies, the researcher was the reviewer. In contrast, Smith-D'Arezzo (2003) included adolescents as reviewers in her study. She selected contemporary realistic fiction books about characters with cognitive disabilities that were published since 1975. Smith-D'Arezzo analyzed the books and discussed a selected few with the children. She concluded that literature is effective in the development of compassion and understanding towards children with disabilities; however, children will need guidance. Smith-D'Arezzo reiterates that children bring their experiences to the text and draws conclusions based on those experiences. For instance, the children viewed Patrick from *Just Call Me Stupid* (1993) by Tom Birdseye differently than did Smith-D'Arezzo. They thought that Patrick, who has a learning disability, did not try to do his best academically. However, Smith-D'Arezzo, a former special education teacher, felt

empathy towards Patrick as he struggled to read. She adds that "by allowing children to discuss their reactions to books and providing additional background information about disabilities, a teacher could be in a position to positively influence the attitudes children have toward their peers with cognitive disabilities" (p. 92).

A study that evaluated literature frequently used in the classrooms of the United Kingdom was completed by Beckett, Ellison, Barrett, and Shah (2009). The researchers analyzed 100 fiction and nonfiction books for primary-age children. The criteria was based on the premise that disability literature influences children's "general perceptions of social life (p. 373) and "the extent to

which the books were free from negative stereotypes/ideas about disabled people and the degree to which they promoted more positive messages about disability" (p. 378). Beckett, Ellison, Barrett, and Shah concluded that even though quality inclusion literature is available in the UK, literature that uses discriminatory language and portray negative stereotypes still exists. They cited 30 books that used the term "handicapped" instead of "disability". Also, descriptions of some characters were demeaning. In the example of Ambrose who was described as ". . . so pale and skinny he looks dead . . . He dribbles and twitches and doesn't say much. Actually, he doesn't say anything, so it's like sharing with a window dummy" (Kebbe, 2002, p. 20-21).The themes that promoted negative stereotypes included tragedy view of disability; curiosity of disability; moral or spiritual lesson from disability; and miracle cure for disability. For the last theme, characters with disabilities were "fixed" as if their condition was temporary. Beckett, Ellison, Barrett, and Shah state that this storyline implies that disability lies within the individual.

Another group of studies combined content analysis with suggestions of how to incorporate the books into language arts curricula (Blaska, 2003, Dyches, Prater, &

Jenson 2006; Quicke, 1985; and Saunders, 2000). The researchers contend that negative attitudes and stereotypes about people with disabilities can be changed through reading and discussing quality children's literature.

Because of United Kingdom's Education Act 1981 children with disabilities were included in general education classrooms. Quicke (1985) responded with a content analysis of disability text grouped under themes rather that under disability labels in order to avoid the assumption that all people with the same disability have the same issues. In addition, he focused on themes that all children would face rather they had a disability or not. Quicke asked the following questions while he analyzed the novels: (1) Is the book pessimistic or optimistic? (2) How is the disabled character portrayed – physical appearance, behavior, romanticized view of handicap, - overestimates the talents of a disabled child or underestimation of the talents? (3) How does the book deal with prejudice, discrimination, and role-stereotyping in society generally? (4) How does the book deal with official labeling and special provision? and (5) How does the book deal with social and psychological change in childhood and adolescence? (p.154-160). In a somewhat contradictory approach, Quickie's study offered suggestions on how to use the books to teach about disability rather than about how to incorporate the books to teach about the themes. The suggestions focused on art projects, drama, and field trips with teachers guiding discussion. Lastly, Quicke concluded that disability literature should emphasize relationships so children will not learn negative attitudes about people with disabilities.

Dyches, Prater, and Jenson (2006) surveyed Caldecott Medal and Honor Books for those that include characters with disabilities. In the end, they conducted a content

analysis using guidelines from previous studies on eleven books to determine how those characters were portrayed. In addition, they included discussion questions and teaching tips. The findings are not completely favorable. Dyches, Prater and Jenson found that some of the portrayals were not accurate "(e.g., curing blindness with tears in *Rapine*), nor are all portrayals favorable to persons with disabilities (e.g., Peter's accident not only paralyzing his body, but also his spirit in *Tibet: Through the Red Box*)" (p. 4). In addition, Dyches, Prater, and Jenson concluded that the uncommon disabilities like dwarfism were prominent in the storylines. Also, the people with disabilities were portrayed unlike the types of people children are used to. A caveat is that most of the books were fairy tales. Lastly, Dyches, Prater, and Jenson stated that eleven books is too little a number in proportion to the number of children who have disabilities.

The next study did not use criteria to analyze portrayals of characters. Instead, Saunders (2000) developed an awareness code to evaluate literature and to generate questions to use with readers. Ninety-one books on physical, sensory, and emotional disabilities were analyzed using the DISCEY Code (Disability, Images, Control, Society, Enabled, Young carers). Like Heim and Quicke, Saunders' analysis is focused on understanding disability through a social model rather than a technical model. She thinks that "disability affects the whole society or family and not just the person with a condition" (p. 10). Lastly, Saunders cautions teachers in using some of the books for independent reading. She stated that complex themes, such as gender and race bias, are integrated within the text and readers may need guidance to understand the themes.

The last study is an extensive review of more than 250 children's books that included a character with a disability (Blaska, 2004). Blaska analyzed each book deciding

whether it: (1) promoted empathy; (2) depicted acceptance; (3) emphasized success; (4) promoted positive images; (5) assisted children in gaining accurate understanding of the disability; (6) demonstrated respect for persons with disabilities; (7) promoted attitude of inclusion; (8) used language which stressed person first and disability second; (9) described the disability or person with the disability as realistic; and (10) illustrated character in a realistic manner. The book was written as a resource for parents and educators of children in grades K-3. She suggested that when discussing disability language that identifies the person first and the disability second should be used. Also, she included ideas for thematic units related to disability (i.e. "alike and different").

Previous Academic Studies Similar to Current Study

Issues regarding authentic literature about disabilities prompted students pursuing advanced degrees to continue research in this area. The following dissertations studied the portrayal of characters with disabilities in literature.

Brena (2010) examined the representation of characters with disabilities in realistic fiction and historical fiction novels. She concentrated on temporality, place, and social context. Brena found that there was an almost even distribution across all time periods and settings. However, she was surprised that the novels were not diverse in regards to sexuality, ethnicity, and religion. Brena also analyzed the experiences of three Canadian authors, including herself, and how these experiences influenced their novels about disability. The three authors chose to write about disability because of their personal issues with identity, belonging, and social justice.

Another study concentrated just on realistic fiction. Cissell (2001) studied the portrayal of characters with disabilities in 72 realistic fiction books published between

1995 and 2001. She examined the text to see if it contained certain elements. For instance, she wanted to know if a disability was integrated in the character's personality. Cissell found that 86.3% of the books positively integrated the disability. However, when she examined other elements, she found that almost 33% of the books portrayed characters with disabilities as less valued than other people. Cissell was interested in quantifying elements then exploring the latent meanings and themes.

Darragh (2010) analyzed the attitudes of eighth graders who read young adult novels that portrayed characters with disabilities versus the attitudes of students who had not. She found that the majority of the students described a character with a disability as slow, weak or lonely regardless if they read a book about a character with a disability. Reading a book about a character with a disability did not have a statistically significant difference in students' attitudes.

Another study examining the responses of school children to disability literature was Karambatsos' study. Karambatso (2010) had five 7-year-old students read five storybooks and describe their favorite parts of the books. Additionally, Karambatsos analyzed the books based on an inclusion checklist developed by the University of Kansas. She found that only one of the books portrayed the character with a disability as a well-rounded, self-aware participant of society. The study also found that the students responded to the storylines about friendships and that they were open to having friendships with children with disabilities.

Another study focused on literature for children in preschool through the 12th grade, which were published between 1980 and 2002. Marsh (2003) found that characters with mental retardation are being depicted in stereotypical roles. For example,

60% of the characters were portrayed as having personal problems which causes them to cope with difficult situations. In addition, negative language was used in some of the books. However, specific examples were not mentioned in the study. While the majority of the 40 books presented mental retardation as only part of the characters' persona; overall, the text was prejudicial and stereotypical.

Smith (2000) studied the structural analysis of literary elements within disability literature that included characters with learning or mental disabilities. She selected 35 books to determine the quality of theme, plot, characterization, style, setting, and accuracy of issues dealing with disabilities. Unlike Cissell and Marsh, Smith used children as well as herself to review the books. The data presented some interesting findings. Even though the books dealt with disability, the themes varied as much as the themes from any group of children's literature. Alcoholism, friendship, and sibling relationships were common themes. In addition, most of the characters with disabilities were male – 29 out of 35 characters. Unfortunately, this perpetuates the stereotype that males are more likely to have a disability. However, the ration of male to female students in special education is 2:1 (Oswald, Best, Coutinho, 2006). Lastly, the children misinterpreted the plots. Smith stated that the children's background knowledge could have been the cause. For example, most of the children misinterpreted familial relationships and language. They did not understand the term extended family and that some words, such as "retard", would be offensive.

All of the studies mentioned highlight that teachers have a very important responsibility when selecting quality literature for their reading curriculums. The selections are invaluable in helping children make connections with other cultures and

new experiences. Mathis (2001) states teachers need to model the behavior of inclusiveness and selecting books that include people with disabilities is one way to do that. In addition, Bandura (1986) states that the experiences teachers supply to children have an impact on their social cognition especially stereotyping. "Social exemplars provide directly observable information for social cognition, thus requiring less inference about thought processes. When stereotyping is covertly condoned but publicly disavowed, the teaching is more by example than by direct tuition" (p 103). Also, collections should include quality fiction and nonfiction books that represent various themes about people with disabilities (Reddish, 2000). The themes should cover all aspects of people's lives and experiences.

Unfortunately, many teachers tend to select books which they are most familiar. Brown (2001) states that teachers need to increase their knowledge of available literature. However, teachers cannot possibly read all the available books; therefore, they can turn to ALA's Booklist magazine that reviews thousands of literature books each year (http://www.ala.org). The magazine covers all genres and themes including multiculturalism. Also, the National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities provides information on children's literature and disabilities (http://www.nichcy.org).

The Current Study

This study, like most of the studies mentioned in the literature review, carried out a content analysis of books that are available to teachers and children. In comparison to the other studies, this study also focused on character portrayals, and investigated whether people with disabilities were portrayed in stereotypic ways. In contrast, this study focused

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on people with a SLD or AD/HD. It was important to include portrayals of people with AD/HD as the prevalence of children with AD/HD has increased (APA, 2000). Also, there has been an increased concern of how those children are faring in the school setting. A review of the literature did not find any studies that included people with AD/HD. This study tried to provide new information on the people's perceptions about specific learning disabilities and AD/HD.

Summary of Literature Review

Chapter II provides a synthesis of current research as it relates to the educational foundation of cognitive development, social learning theory, transactional learning theory, and children's literature that deals with disabilities. In addition, it was articulated how the current study attempts to fill a gap in the current research.

As stated previously, culture and community play important roles in a child's learning development. The way a child learns to talk or walk is mirrored from the environment that modeled the behavior. In addition, Bandura, and Vygotsky think that children are not passive learners but are cognitively involved in the modeling process. However, the environment that shaped a child with a disability may have provided different experiences and support than a child who does not have a disability. Experiences that represent a child's culture and beliefs are fundamental to Vygotsky's concept of internalization. In addition, there is a consensus that children's literature allows children to develop an understanding of others while validating their own cultures.

Reader response also informed this study. Rosenblatt presented a transactional learning model in which the reader interacts with the text to create meaning. In other words, the meaning of a text is not fixed so readers bring multiple perspectives to the

interpretation and discussion of a story. Thus, the complementary theories of sociocultural perspective and reader response provide a sound framework for exploring the portrayals of people with disabilities in literature.

Using children's literature to discuss the disabilities culture involves the concept of windows and mirrors (Bond, 2006; Collier, 2000; and Glazier & Seo, 2005). This concept proposes that all children should be able to see other cultures while making connections with their own culture. The connections will help them see a reflection of their culture within other cultures. In addition, the children will develop a positive identity and self-image. Ultimately, children will naturally value and accept differences.

Over the decades, there has been an increased awareness of the need to add diversity into the reading curriculum. Several studies were completed that added to the scholarship about the portrayal of disabilities in literature. However, the utilization of those books is not widespread. Multicultural books that depict African-Americans, Latinos, and women are utilized more. Furthermore, books that represent people with disabilities still need to be examined. Storylines should represent a broad range of personalities, disabilities, and issues in a sensitive manner without stereotypes. Reading curricula that have broadened to encourage ethnic and gender understanding should be extended to include people with disabilities and AD/HD. In Chapter III, I will define the essential components of content analysis and propose this as a viable research method for this type of study. Also, I will outline the research design.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter details the methods and process of the study discussing research foundation and approach, design, data collection, and analysis. In this study, I explored whether people with disabilities are portrayed in stereotypic ways in children's literature. Realistic fiction that depicts characters with specific learning disabilities or attention deficit/hyperactive disorder was analyzed for commonalities in the description of characters and cultural authenticity.

I conducted a content analysis using a theoretical framework fusing three theories - social, sociocultural, and transactional learning. I examined: (a) the messages conveyed through the portrayal of these characters (b) the cultural perspective of the portrayals and (c) the extent these portrayals reinforce stereotypes.

Research Foundation and Approach

Inquiry research involves four assumptions (Lincoln & Guba, 1994). The first assumption involves ontology – the nature and relation of existence. In this case, the researcher is discovering reality or truth within the text of children's literature. According to Schostak (2002), "truth often refers to checking a particular statement against an observable event" (p. 134). However, in inquiry research the truth is not in the observable event but in the fact that individuals recognize that the words fit a particular theme. The

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researcher interprets examples of text and it is checked against the evidence from the text. In addition, the researcher provides details to show that the interpretation makes sense based on the theoretical framework being used. "The acceptance of the truth or the conclusions depends on the researcher's supporting arguments" (p. 135).

The second assumption is epistemology – the study of knowledge within certain limits and validity. The researcher has to be aware of the extent her background and biases influence the interpretations. Still, the researcher has to maintain objectivity when discovering the reality or truth.

The third assumption involves methodology – the rules and procedures of inquiry. The researcher is using the appropriate method to discover reality and truth. For this study, the researcher will use content analysis. According to Krippendorff (2004), content analysis is an effective research methodology to use because it provides a representation of facts with new insights. Also, it provides a technique to look at symbolic data from numerous perspectives. Therefore, a researcher can use content analysis to guide her as she discovers the reality and the full picture of the text.

Lincoln and Guba (2000) added axiology – qualitative research involves values and moral judgments. The researcher is aware of her biases and openly discusses them within the framework of the analysis. Because I have been a special education teacher for several years, I am knowledgeable about the self-esteem and identity issues my students face. My experiences will influence my interpretation. These four assumptions provide a guide for my research processes in the present study, including design, data collection, and analysis.

I kept the four assumptions in the forefront as the questions were answered through qualitative research. I: (a) was accurate as I understood and explained the meaning of the portrayals of people with disabilities in children's literature; (b) recognized my biases as I built concepts or theories; (c) responded to changing conditions even if the new concepts and theories did not fit my initial framework; and (d) followed current theory in analyzing and coding the data.

The form of qualitative research that was used in this study was content analysis. Hsieh and Shannon (2005) state that content analysis is one of various methods that is utilized to analyze text. Content analysis uses a systematic approach to describe characteristics and messages from text in order to formulate valid inferences. "Content analysis provides new insights, increases a researcher's understanding of a particular phenomena, and informs practical action" (Krippendorff, 2004, p.18). White and Marsh (2006) noted that the product of qualitative analysis is a complete picture of the phenomenon being examined. They state that the "goal is to depict the 'big picture' of a given subject, displaying conceptual depth through thoughtful arrangement of a wealth of detailed observations" (p. 39).

Content analysis requires the researcher to structure the study in specific steps. The study must be designed to gather data relevant to the study (White & Marsh, 2006). The study's questions determine what text is to be analyzed and how it is to be analyzed. The researcher reads through the documents, begins to tag key phrases and text segments that correspond to those questions. Once the text is identified, the researcher makes judgments as to how to categorize the text. The coding is related to the major categories of the study's questions. According to Crabtree and Miller (1992) as themes emerge, different

questions may be generated. The researcher will review previous coding and text to compare to the new questions. Lastly, the results of the coding and final analysis must have a measure of general application. The researcher must be able to supply a reason as to what led to the one coding rather than an alternative one.

Content analysis is widely used to analyze children's literature not only because it is systematic, but also because it can be objective and subjective (White & Marsh, 2006). Content analysis is objective when the categories of analysis are defined so precisely that different researchers can apply them to the same body of content and get the same results. On the other hand, content analysis is subjective when the researcher formulates perceptions and themes. Crabtree and Miller (1992) state that the researcher, through the analysis, creates new understandings, generates changes in the research question, and uncovers new themes. In addition, the researcher identifies the distinctiveness of the text and the various interpretations that can emerge (White & Marsh, 2006).

Content analysis is the best methodology for this study as it is useful for examining trends and patterns in children's literature that are based on social and cultural contexts. According to Galda and Beach (2001), content analysis allows the researcher to ask questions about cultural groups' identities, relationships, and their values. The researcher selects words or phrases, and looks for patterns (Creswell, 2005). The patterns are reduced to themes about the culture's attitudes and beliefs. Overall, content analysis "provides in-depth contextual analyses and so presents a powerful exploration of content with the framework" (Short, 1995, p. 21).

Research Design

Description of Sample

In order to execute content analysis study design, I first had to select the books for the sample. I searched the following databases: American Library Association, LD Online, and National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities. I narrowed my focus by concentrating on books published after 1993 in order to start where NICHCY's guide ended. I searched for books that fit my criteria using the following terms: (a) learning disability; (b) reading problem (c) dyslexia; (d) attention deficit or problem; and e) hyperactivity disorder or problem. The initial search yielded 35 titles as possible texts for the study. Originally, criteria were limited to characters with SLD and emotional/social disabilities. However, there were few books that explicitly identified a character with an emotional disorder. The criteria was changed to include characters with AD/HD. Next, I reviewed each book to find at least one character with a specific learning disability or Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder unlike NICHCY, which included all disabilities. Only realistic contemporary fiction books were selected for possible analysis in an attempt to keep the sample more manageable.

Eighteen books met the criterion with 28 characters having disabilities or AD/HD and therefore consisted of the sample for this study. However, some of those characters with disabilities played very minor parts in some plots and were not used in the analysis for study question one and two. These minor characters were analyzed for question three, however. The final sample for questions one and two included twelve characters with a specific learning disability and nine characters with AD/HD, for a total of 21 characters.

Instrumentation

This researcher developed a two-part recording form (Appendix A) which assisted in organization of the data. The first part of the evaluative tool provides general information such as the title of the book, whether the character(s) represented had a SLD or ADHD, list of major characters, author, year published, publisher and summary of the plot. Heim's (1994) evaluation criteria was used as a guide to develop the second part of the recording form. This part was used to note disability, plot development, character development, terminology, and major themes. These elements were selected to answer the study's questions. Plot development showed whether storylines reflected the disability culture or reinforce stereotypes. In addition, the plot and demographics showed whether the text reflects the current prevalence of people with a SLD and AD/HD. Character development showed how the characters with these conditions interact with others and how others treat them. Implications of condition also showed whether the text reinforces stereotypes and the current perspective about people with a SLD and AD/HD. Terminology used in the storylines showed whether there are any misrepresentations or stereotypes, and how people with and without a SLD and AD/HD perceive these conditions.

Data Analysis Strategy

According to Merriam (1998), data collection and analysis should be done simultaneously. A lot of data will be amassed; therefore, it is beneficial to manage the data in an organized fashion. These procedures were used to organize the data:

- select instance - in content analysis, the whole text is broken down into smaller units; therefore, the researcher will chose words, phrases, or sentences that fit the research questions.

- code instance – the researcher will interpreted the instance based on the theoretical framework.

- compared instance with previous data – the researcher constantly compare the selection of instances to make sure they are consistent.

- note emerging themes – the researcher analyzed the instances and noted similarities of meanings and concepts. Also, the frequency and variety of themes were noted.

The process was aided by coding data, writing notes, analyzing patterns, and diagramming. All data was record on the instrument in Appendix A.

First, open-ended, or initial coding was used. This researcher read the text and noted initial impressions as suggested by Saldana (2009). Next, instances were found that matched the categories on the evaluative tool. Each occurrence was noted, including the page number on which it occurred. This allowed both a frequency count as well as a reference for specific examples of behaviors.

Second, the relationships between the instances were categorized into concepts. For example, the main character from Susan Shreve's book *Trout and Me* (2002) has difficulty reading, he has a lisp, and he is known as "Ben Carter in Trouble". An instance from the book was selected: "Because you're a little different, not entirely a middle-of-the-road, regular ten-year-old boy" (p. 20). A non-disabled friend has observed Ben and perceives him as different because of his behaviors in relation to his disabilities. Another

instance from the book illustrates that Ben thinks he is separated from his classmates because of his disabilities: "Because of my *special* teachers and my learning disabilities. Because everyone-first the teachers and then the kids-is looking at me waiting to see what will happen next" (p. 21). The two instances were compared and they both show that others and the character view disability as different. *Difference* is emerged as a concept.

Next, the concepts were analyzed to see any patterns that were present among books. According to Saldana (2009), a pattern can be characterized by similarity, difference, frequency, or correspondence. The researcher noted how words or phrases used in one book were similar or different to words or phrases in other books.

In addition, the books were evaluated in terms of whether they (a) included accurate information about disabilities, (b) had well-developed characters, (c) lack stereotypes, (d) had literary quality–positive representations of characters and plot, and (e) confronted the disability (Heim, 1994). According to Dyches, Prater and Jenson (2006), inaccurate information has the potential to undermine children's socialization with children who are different from them. This could lead to reinforcement of stereotypes. In addition, Heim (2005) stated that characters should not be minor characters and disappear into the plot. Instead, characters should be complex and included in the storyline. The storyline should engage the reader just as non-disability literature does (Dyches, Prater and Jenson, 2006; and Heim, 2005). Also, the storyline should use technical terminology and the characters should behave authentically in order to promote awareness and lessen misconceptions about the disability culture (Heim, 1994).

Lastly, notes were taken on themes found in the stories, including personal characteristics, point of view, etc. Also, while the data was coded, connections, reflections, new questions, and unanswered questions were noted. Saldana (2009) advised that the researcher write down "anything related to and significant about the coding or analysis" (p.33).

Reliability and Trustworthiness

In addition to interpreting the data, the data were examined to assess the quality of the data. All research should be conducted with the highest ethical standards in order to produce valid, trustworthy, and reliable results (Merriam, 1998). In addition, Rourke and Anderson (2004) state that "validity is an integrated evaluative judgment of the degree to which theoretical rationales and empirical evidence support the adequacy and appropriateness of interpretations and actions based on . . . assessments" (p.13). Reliability addresses the data that is gathered from the research. According to Creswell (2005), reliability is achieved if the data gathered is the same or nearly the same when the work is repeated, in the same context, with the same methods and with the same sample. According to Lincoln and Guba (2000), in order to address the reliability issue more directly, the process within the study should be reported in detail, thereby enabling a future researcher to repeat the work, and gain the similar results.

Also, inter-rater reliability was used. A school librarian was solicited to determine whether the coding would remain consistent. The rater read three randomly selected books from the sample. Then, the rater completed the Recording Form and Evaluative Instrument for Content Analysis. The rater's and the researcher's responses were

compared for similarities. The Inter-rater agreement equaled 91.6%. According to Wallen and Fraenkel (2001), for research purposes, agreement should be at least 70%.

In order to ensure trustworthiness, researchers should develop a theoretically valid protocol. In following Rourke and Anderson (2004), I developed guidelines for administration of scoring, and interpretation of the coding scheme; identified the coding data; identified the indicators that represent the construct; and reviewed and revised as necessary. Each selected instance was scored by indicating YES if the criterion was addressed and NO if the criterion was not addressed. Instances that could not be answered with a YES or NO were noted in the comments column along with a narrative explaining the significance of the instance. If there was more than one instance per question, each instance was given a numerical code.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to examine fiction for adolescents to determine how

characters with specific learning disabilities (SLD) or Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity

Disorder (AD/HD) are represented and to determine the extent to which stereotyping

exists. This study examined the content of 18 books that include a character with

disabilities in order to address the research questions. This chapter presents the results

and a discussion of the analysis organized by research question.

Research Questions

Subsidiary Research Question 1

The first subsidiary research question was*:* What are the themes conveyed through

the characterization of characters with a SLD or AD/HD? a. How are characters with a

SLD or AD/HD viewed and treated by those without these conditions? b. Do the

characterizations encourage or discourage inclusion of children with a SLD or AD/HD in

activities. The data obtained from all sections of the Content Analysis Form were used to

answer this question.

Plot. The plot of each story was analyzed to determine whether the focus of the

theme would be about the disability or about another theme, and whether the focus was to

accommodate the disability within the school setting. Table 1 indicates that the majority

of the books' themes were about disability. Thirteen of the eighteen books emphasized

the character's ability to overcome the problems caused by having a disability.

Table 1

Focus of Plot

Theme	n	%
Focus on the Disability	13	72.2
Focus on Accommodation	2	11.1
Accommodations Mentioned	13	72.2
Types of Accommodations:		
Assistive Technology	1	5.5
Books on tape	1	5.5
Desk turned facing wall	1	5.5
Extra time to take tests	2	11.1
Flexible schedule for activities	1	5.5
Individualized instruction	1	5.5
Large-print books	1	5.5
Mainstreamed in general education classroom	1	5.5
Medication patch	1	5.5
Pictures are used to remind student of tasks	1	5.5
Preferential seating in classroom	1	5.5
Resource room	6	33.3
Self-contained special education classroom	3	16.6
Separate area in classroom	2	11.1
Separate school	1	5.5
Saw a therapist	2	11.1
Tape recorder	2	11.1
Teacher gives assignment or test at a different time	1	5.5
Teacher writes assignments in a notebook	1	5.5
Tutor	1	5.5

Key: n = number of portrayals; % = percentage of the total 18 books

For example, in <u>Rainy</u> (Deans, 2005), the main character attended summer camp and made new friends. Over time, each one of them found a reason to dislike Rainy because of social traits connected to her AD/HD. Feeling lonely, Rainy decided to take a journey to find the place where a girl died a century earlier. Along the way, she thought about what people have said to her about having AD/HD, and she realized that in certain circumstances they were right. For instance, over the years her teachers told her to "follow." As Rainy was starting her journey, she thought about thunderstorms and "during thunderstorms you had to follow the rules" (p. 125). During the journey the terrain became steeper and slippery. Rainy remembered her mother ordering her to pay attention. "If I don't pay attention . . . I'll never play b-ball again" (p. 171).

In another example, Benny Whitley in <u>How Dyslexic Benny Became a Star: A Story of Hope for Dyslexic Children and their Parents</u> (Griffith, 1997) had problems with his sister and classmates teasing him because of his reading deficits. He became disruptive at school, and he thought "If the other kids were going to laugh at him anyway, he decided to be the class clown" (p. 5). Benny's only salvation at school was joining the football team. The football coach, Coach Watkins, took an interest in Benny and suggested to Benny's parents that he be evaluated for a SLD. It is determined that Benny has dyslexia, and by the end of the story, Benny is earning good grades and participating in his classes. "His whole outlook had changed" (p. 93).

In five of the eighteen books a character thought the disability was a "personal problem" or disease. Todd Foster in <u>Sparks</u> (McNamee, 2002) used to be in a self-contained special education class and now he is in a regular education class. Todd explained to the reader how he was placed in special education. He stated, ". . . they

brought in a head doctor to find out what was wrong with me . . ." (p. 37). In <u>Zipper the</u>
<u>Kid with ADHD</u> (Janover, 2007), Zach Winston (Zipper) has AD/HD. He is impulsive,
and he speaks and acts without thinking. His parents take Zipper to a neurologist, and
they decide to try medication and behavioral modifications. Isabel, Zipper's sister, told
him, "Mom told me about your disease" (p. 144). In <u>Trout and Me</u> (Shreve, 2002), an
educator calls the character's disability an illness. Ben who has specific learning and
speech disabilities became friends with a new classmate (Morris "Trout" Sanger).Trout
got into a lot of trouble in school and convinced Ben to join him in his escapades. During
a conference about Ben's behavior, Mr. O'Dell, the principal, tells Ben's dad, "The
symptom of the illness is that a child can't pay attention or sit still" (p. 105).

 The five books that were not about having a SLD or AD/HD included themes about
being adopted, changing identities, completing a school project, transitioning to junior
high school, and investigating parents' death. In these books the emphasis was on the
character's ability to cope with the situations instead of the characters coping with the
condition. For example, in <u>Parents Wanted</u> (Harrar, 2001) Andrew (Andy) Fleck has
AD/HD. He is living with foster parents who want to adopt him; however, Andy is
struggling to adjust to the new situation. He is misbehaving at school—throwing a ball
and hitting the gym teacher. Andy is also causing trouble in his neighborhood—knocking
over mailboxes. He learns to accept love and friendship instead of blaming his behavior
on his AD/HD

 In another example, Maxwell (the Mighty) is a student in a special education class.
Kevin (Freak), who has a physical disability, moves into Maxwell's neighborhood, and
they become friends. In <u>Freak the Mighty</u> (Philbrick, 1993) their classmates tease

Maxwell because of his SLD and because he is big for his age. The classmates tease Kevin because he is small in stature due to his disability. However, Kevin stands up to them, and he names himself and Maxwell "Freak the Mighty." One day, Maxwell's father is released from prison and kidnaps Maxwell. The rest of the plot focuses on Maxwell being rescued.

In addition, Table 1 shows that 72% of the books mention school accommodations with a character receiving instruction in a resource classroom being the most prevalent. Characters also receive instruction in a self-contained special education class (16.6%); mainstreamed in general education class (5.5%); and a special education school (5.5%). The other accommodations involve instructional strategies and assessments.

Even though the majority of the books are concerned with accommodations, they are also concerned with changing how the character with the disability copes with the disability. For example, in Two-minute Drill (Lupica, 2007), Scott Parry is attending a new school and joined the town football team to make his father happy. He meets Chris Conlan, the star quarterback. Chris has kept the fact that he has dyslexia a secret from his friends and teammates because he is afraid of being placed in a special education classroom. If he is placed, Chris thinks that his friends will tease him. Chris stated, "You hear what the other kids say about Special Ed kids" (p.75). Therefore, Chris gets a tutor to help him improve his reading skills.

Medication as a tool to cope was mentioned in 62.5% of the books about AD/HD. In Zipper the Kid with ADHD (Janover, 2007), Mr. Winson stated, "Medication may make your life easier, Zip" (p. 45). Sometimes a person wanted the character with the disability to take medication for his/her convenience. In Rainy (Deans, 2005), Jewel

Tucker, Rainy's sister, stated, "Mom, can't we *please* give her some drugs. She's driving

me crazy" (p. 65). However, only three of the nine (33.3%) characters with AD/HD in the

books actually were on medication. At the time that most of the books in this study were

published, 4.8% of children diagnosed with AD/HD were taking medication (Visser,

Danielson, Bitsko, Holbrook, Kogan, Ghandour, Perou, & Blumberg, 2013). This

percentage is much lower than this study shows.

  Characterization. Characterization was analyzed to determine whether the

character with a disability was developed as a complex or a one-dimensional character.

Table 2 presents a summary of the total number and percentage of positive and negative

perceptions conveyed through characterization.

Table 2

Character Portrayal Through Characterization

Character Representation	Positive		Negative	
	n	%	n	%
Character is portrayed as participant vs. non-participant.	20	95.2	1	8.6
Character is depicted as multi-faceted vs. one-dimensional.	21	100	0	0
Character is portrayed as survivor vs. victim.	16	76.2	5	23.8
Character is portrayed as independent vs. dependent upon others.	20	95.2	1	4.8

Key: n = number of portrayals; % = percentage of the total; 21 portrayals analyzed

  95.2% of the portrayals, the characters with a SLD or AD/HD are depicted as

participating in society. They attended school, interacted with their family, participated in

extra-curricular activities, and held jobs. Also, they have similar social interactions as

their non-disabled peers. Several of the male characters participated in sports: Judge

Jenkins in Egg-Drop Blues (Banks, 1995) plays soccer; Benny in How Dyslexic Benny Became a Star: A Story of Hope for Dyslexic Children and their Parents (Griffith, 1997) plays football; Chris Conlan in Two-minute Drill (Lupica, 2007) plays football; and Maxie and Jake Livingston in Underwater (Levy, 2007) play soccer. Maxi also attends summer camp and Jake takes an art class. In addition, Zipper and Josh in Zipper the Kid with ADHD (Janover, 1997) played on a baseball team, and Zipper participated in Boy Scouts.

Only one of the characters did not have similar social interactions. In Spaceman (Cutler, 1997), Gary Harris's classmates constantly tease him because he has a SLD. When he gets angry he stares into space, which causes the students to tease him more. Gary deliberately stayed away from his classmates so they would not tease him. Also, his relationship with his father is strained because Mr. Harris keeps telling Gary to "try harder" (p. 7) to improve his academics. Eventually, Gary attends a special school for students with disabilities. Until then, his social interactions were minimal and negative.

Table 2 also shows that all of the characters were multi-faceted. They all participated in multiple activities. They attended school, worked, and interacted with family and friends. However, not all of the interactions were pleasant. The unpleasant interactions caused the characters to have difficulty dealing with school or people's attitudes.

Of all of the characters, fourteen or 66.7% did not like school. However, ten of the twelve (83.3%) characters with a SLD did not like school. Benny Whitley in How Dyslexic Benny Became a Star: A Story of Hope for Dyslexic Children and their Parents (Griffith & Schulz, 1998) joins his school's football team. One day Benny stated, "I don't

ever want to go to school again. I hate school" (p. 63). In another example, while he is thinking about his schoolwork, Todd Foster in <u>Sparks</u> (McNamee, 2002) stated, "I like the way books have spines, so I can crack them and torture the books the way they torture me" (p.19). Also, Maxwell Kane in <u>Freak the Mighty</u> (Philbrick, 1993) stated, "School. For the last week or so it's like getting jabbed with a little needle every time I hear that word" (p. 73).

Eight of the 21 characters or 38% were told that they could control their disability or AD/HD. Mr. Harris told his son Gary in <u>Spaceman</u> (Cutler, 1997) that he should try harder in school. In <u>Freak the Mighty</u> (Philbrick, 1993), Mr. Meeham, the reading teacher, tells Maxwell Kane ". . . my personal opinion has always been that you're lazy and stubborn and you didn't *want* to learn" (p.81).

The books portray the characters as survivors. Table 2 shows that over three-fourths of the characters are able to cope with their disability or AD/HD. For example, Katie Kelso in <u>The Worst Speller in Jr. High</u> (Janover, 2000) understands her SLD and does not let it limit her. Katie has dyslexia and she considers herself to be "the worst speller in junior high." However, she has friends, attends dances, and participates in extra-curricular activities. Also, Jake Livingston in <u>Underwater</u> (Levy, 2007) is a seventh grader with a SLD and AD/HD. He states that when he becomes an adult he wants to be a professional artist.

Five or 21.7% of the portrayals are seen as victims. Aaron is constantly bullied or ignored by classmates in <u>The Mealworm Diaries</u>. He is very talkative, clumsy, he crawls on the classroom floor, he has difficulty in gym class because he is not able to skip rope, and he either rocks or bangs his body when he gets upset. He is constantly bullied or

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ignored by classmates because these behaviors do not conform to his classmates' views as to how a student should behave. Even Jeremy, the main character in the story, who Aaron considers a friend, called him a "pain" (p. 15). Aaron was bullied because of his social skill deficits. This is consistent with the research (Carlson, Flannery & Kral, 2005).

Another example is Benny Whitley, who he sees himself as a victim. His classmates and sister tease him. Also, he does not think his teachers like him and he states,

His mom was the only one who never called him stupid or lazy. But she

never said anything very good about him either. She just seemed to feel

sorry for him when other people criticized him or made fun of him, and that

didn't help his feelings at all (Griffith & Schulz, 1998 p. 42).

The constant teasing has left Benny with lower self-esteem. This is consistent with the research on people who are constantly victimized. They usually have lower self-esteem and a negative self-image (Brockenbrough, Cornell & Loper, 2002; Estell, Cairns, Farmer & Cairns, 2002).

The majority of the portrayals show the person with a disability as independent who does not need any extra assistance to function. The only character that was portrayed as dependent was Gary Harris. Gary could do daily living tasks but his mother would not allow him because she thinks he is unable to take care of himself.

Implication of disability. The portrayals were analyzed to determine whether there were any inaccuracies, or misrepresentations in the treatment of people with SLD and AD/HD. The majority of the portrayals were accurate.

According to the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (2014), children with SLD typically have difficulty with reading, writing, spelling, and distinguishing left from right. In this study, all of the characters with SLD had difficulty with reading. Three of the twelve or 25% of the characters had difficulty with writing. For example, Katie Kelso in The Worst Speller in Jr. High (Janover, 2000) uses a tape recorder for her writing assignments. Nine out of twelve of the characters with a SLD (75%) had difficulty with spelling and transposing letters. Sometimes, Brian Toomey in My Name is Brain Brian (Betancourt, 1993) transposes the "i" and "a" in his name. Maxwell Kane in Freak the Mighty (Philbrick, 1993) was the only character that had difficulty with distinguishing left from right.

One misrepresentation about SLD was that Coach Watkins in How Dyslexic Benny Became a Star: A Story of Hope for Dyslexic Children and their Parents tells Benny Whitley's dad that Benny will be reading at grade level within three years. ". . . one year for every year he's behind" (Griffith & Schulz, p. 79). According to National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (2012), there is not a cure, but interventions can help people cope with having a SLD. No one can predict how well and within what time frame a person will respond to the interventions.

Four out of the nine characters that had AD/HD (44%) were represented as having difficulty focusing on one task for a long period of time. In addition, to Rainy in Rainy (Deans, 2005) and Jake Livingston (Levy, 2007), Andy Fleck in Parents Wanted (Harrar, 2001) is portrayed as not being able to focus on tasks for a long period of time. Andy explained his behavior by saying "I can't keep my mind on one thing for very long because something else comes along and my brain says, hey, that's more interesting"

(Harrar, 2001, p. 92). Also, in The Middle of Somewhere (Cheaney, 2007), Gerald (Gee) Sparks and Veronica (Ronnie) Sparks have to stay with their grandfather while their mother recuperates from an illness. The grandfather is a wind prospector, and they go on a road trip from Missouri to Kansas looking for a place with strong winds. Gee, who has AD/HD, wanders off to investigate his surroundings at each road stop the family visits.

Additionally, seven of the characters with AD/HD (78%) were portrayed as being overactive. In I Am Not Joey Pigza (Gantos, 2007), Joey's father comes back into his life after winning a lottery. Mr. Pigza decided to move his family to a different part of town and start a new life running a restaurant. To denote their new life, Mr. Pigza decided they should all change their names. Joey decided to stop taking his medication for AD/HD. When he is off his medication he is jumping, kicking, and blurts out his thoughts. Joey stated, "I feel like I'm buzzing all over on the inside" (p. 67). Gee in The Middle of Somewhere (Cheaney, 2007), Aaron in The Mealworm Diaries (Kerz, 2009), and Maxie in Underwater (Levy, 2007) are portrayed as not being able to sit still. Instead of sitting with his family in the hospital, Gee played with the revolving door and climbed the drapes. During a science lesson, Aaron put a pencil in his nose and took a pencil sharpener apart. Maxie's teacher would send him to the principal's office for not sitting still or "sitting like a pretzel in the rug area" (Levy, 2007, p. 61).

Six of the characters with AD/HD (67%) were portrayed as not being able to control their behavior. Three of the six characters take medication to help them control themselves: Joey Pigza in I Am Not Joey Pigza Gantos, 2007), Rainy in Rainy (Deans, 2005), and Andy Fleck in Parents Wanted (Harrar, 2001). Allison, the social worker in Parents Wanted, is helping Andy adjust to life with his new foster parents. She explained

to him why he takes medication, "You know the Ritalin helps you focus, Andy, and the Depakote helps your behavior . . ." (Harrar, 2001, p. 50).

According to the National Institute of Mental Health (2012), inattentiveness, hyperactivity, and impulsivity are typical symptoms of AD/HD. One of the nine characters was not portrayed as exhibiting typical behavior. Gregory Dubosc is a 95-pound sixth grader who has AD/HD in 95 Pounds of Hope (Gavalda, 2003). He disliked school and did not have a positive relationship with his parents because they argue about him. The plot implied that Gregory was not successful in school because he was not interested in school. Gregory states, "I have no problem. Not a single one. It's just that school doesn't interest me" (p. 5). However, Gregory did admit that he did not understand his schoolwork. He stated, "For me, it's like everything is in Chinese" (p. 5). But the plot did not state the reason he did not understand. Also, Gregory did not have any friends in school or in his neighborhood. He only socialized with his grandparents and his elderly neighbors. Lastly, Gregory got expelled from school because of his behavior. The plot suggested that Gregory is deliberately misbehaving in school. He states, " . . . I decide to be the gym class clown" (p. 17).

Overall, the portrayals of AD/HD were accurate. However, there was one misrepresentation: sugar. Sugar was mentioned as contributing to AD/HD in two of the books. Andy Fleck in Parents Wanted (Harrar, 2001) stated, "I don't like cookies I mean, I like them, but the sugar gets me hyper" (p.35). Also, as Rainy rowed across the lake to get to her destination, she mentioned she is getting a power surge. She stated, "Perhaps it was the sugar in the candy bar kicking in" (Deans, 2005, p. 131). According to Johnston

and Freeman (2002), high sugar consumption is a non-scientifically-based belief about the cause of AD/HD.

Also, the social and psychological implications of having a SLD or AD/HD were examined to determine if they were presented accurately. All of the portrayals were presented accurately. Characters went through the typical adolescent development as it relates to relationships. According to Waldrip, Malcolm, and Jensen-Campbell (2008), as adolescence begins, peer groups are highly influential as socializing agents. The peer groups tend to set the norms of behavior and viewpoints. Adolescents tend to conform to the norms in order to belong (Kroger, 2007). All of the characters wanted to have friends and be accepted by them. For example, Gee in The Middle of Somewhere (Cheaney, 2007) was able to find a friend at each place his family stopped. Also, Ben Carter in Trout and Me (Shreve, 2002) made a new friend in school (Trout Sanger) even though Trout misbehaved in school and his parents disapproved of the relationship.

However, only eight or 44.4% of the books had storylines where the character started with a friend. They are: Egg-drop Blues (Banks, 1995), My Name is Brain Brian (Betancourt, 1993), Rainy (Deans, 2005), Parents Wanted (Harrar, 2001), The Worst Speller in Jr. High (Janover, 2000), Underwater (Levy, 2007), Two-minute Drill (Lupica, 2007), and Sparks, (McNamee, 2002).

In seven of the books, characters started out as friendless but by the end of the story they had at least one friend. Those books are: Spaceman (Cutler, 1997), Eleven (Giff, 2008), How Dyslexic Benny Became a Star: A Story of Hope for Dyslexic Children and their Parents (Griffith & Schulz, 1998), Zipper the Kid with ADHD (Janover, 2007), The Mealworm Diaries (Kerz, 2009), Freak the Mighty

(Philbrick, 1993), and <u>Trout and Me</u> (Shreve, 2002). In <u>I am Not Joey Pigza</u> (Gantos, 2007) and <u>95 Pounds of Hope</u> (Gavalda, 2003) the characters with a SLD or AD/HD did not have a friend.

Six or 28.6% of the characters were satisfied with their life or did not mind having a SLD or AD/HD. They are: Rainy in <u>Rainy</u> (Deans, 2005), Gee Sparks in <u>The Middle of Somewhere</u> (Cheaney, 2007), Josh in <u>Zipper the Kid with ADHD</u> (Janover, 1997), Maxie and Jake Livingston in <u>Underwater</u> (Levy, 2007), and Eva in <u>Sparks</u> (McNamee, 2002). For example, Rainy took ownership of her AD/HD but she does not like people's reactions to it. A camper repeatedly mentioned that Rainy should take medication. Rainy responded to herself ". . . tired of her and everybody else's remedies to make Rainy like everybody else, make her behave and sit still, make her better, like she was a freak or sick or something" (Deans, 2005, p.122). In addition, Josh, who has dyslexia, told his friend Zach that even though he attends a special education class and that students call the class "Mantimer's Mentals" that he is smart "You can be really, really smart and still have dyslexia" (Janover, 1997, p. 113).

The other fifteen or 71.4% were not satisfied and experienced stress. Individuals with stressful lives tend to experience difficulty with their psychological development (Suldo & Huebner, 2004). The characters' had difficulty with self-esteem and identity because they did like having a disability/disorder, were embarrassed by their condition and/or did not want anyone to know about it, and they blamed themselves for the condition.

Eleven of the characters or 52.3% did not like having a SLD or AD/HD. Eleven-year-old Sam MacKenzie in <u>Eleven</u> (Giff, 2008), has been living with his grandfather

since his parents died. Because of his SLD, he becomes frustrated and angry when he has to read something. One day, while working in his grandfather's shop a customer comes in and leaves information for the grandfather. Sam struggled to write down this information. He thought, "There was always something to remind him about the reading." (p.123). In 95 Pounds of Hope (Gavalda, 2003), Gregory Dubosc is frustrated by his circumstances. He stated, ". . . all those years at school where I had been bottom of the class. Always the village idiot . . ." (p. 72).

In addition, eleven of the characters or 52.3% were embarrassed by their situation. In Trout and Me (Shreve, 2002), Ben Carter goes to a resource room for one hour of reading instruction. He stated, "It's called the Reading and Math Center and I usually slink in the back door and up the steps to Ms. Sutton's office so no one will see me." (p. 49). Also, Gary in Spaceman (Cutler, 1997) did not want his parents to see his special education classroom. He thought that "He didn't want his mother and father to find out that he was a weirdo" (p. 119).

Some of the characters were not embarrassed by their condition once people knew; however, they did not want to call attention to it. Nine characters did not want other people to know they had a disability or AD/HD. For example, Joey Pigza has a new name in I Am Not Joey Pigza (Gantos, 2007). So, he decided he is going to have a new identity at school. Therefore, Joey did not let the principal at his new school know he has AD/HD. Joey stated, " . . if she knew I had been in special ed she would always think there was something wrong with me" (p. 80). Also, in Two-minute Drill (Lupica, 2007), when Chris Conlan told Scott Parry that he cannot read, he ran off so he would not have to hear Scott's response.

Four of the characters or 19% blamed themselves for their condition and the problems that it caused. Brian Toomey and his friends decided to make school more fun in My Name is Brain Brian (Betancourt, 1993). They are going to tease students and make jokes. Brian, who has a SLD, accidentally wrote "Brain" instead of "Brian" on the chalkboard in class one day. His classmates thought he was making a joke. A class project made Brian decide to stop making jokes and focus on school. Brian stated, "I just didn't try hard enough before. This year I'll try real hard . . "(p. 11). As if this is the cause of his disability. Also, Gary Harris in Spaceman (Cutler, 1997) and Todd Foster in Sparks (McNamee, 2002) thought their problem was that they were not smart. Until he was diagnosed with AD/HD, Zipper in Zipper the Kid with ADHD (Janover, 1997) thought his problems at school were his fault. He stated, "It made him feel good to know that what he felt inside his head had a name. He wasn't alone. It wasn't all his fault" (p. 137).

On a positive note, seven or 30.4% had coping skills that they used to deal with their SLD or AD/HD to deal with how they feel about having their condition. Sam MacKenzie's grandfather in Eleven (Giff, 2008) gave him wood and nails to hammer when he got angry because he cannot read. Josh in Zipper the Kid with ADHD (Janover, 2007) and Rainy Tucker in Rainy (Deans, 2005) had things written down to help them remember and be organized.

Character development. The development of the characters was examined in relationship to having a SLD or AD/HD. The majority or 66.7% of the characters were portrayed as experiencing cognitive, moral, psychological, or social growth. All of the fifteen main characters with a SLD or AD/HD experienced growth.

Two of the main characters experienced growth through learning a life lesson. Andy Fleck in <u>Parents Wanted</u> (Harrar, 2001) is adopted by Laura and Jeff Sizeracy. Throughout the plot Andy challenges authority, tells lies, and disrupts his classroom. The story concluded with Andy learning about trust and doing what is right. Sam MacKenzie in <u>Eleven</u> (Giff, 2008) had nightmares about how he came to live with his grandfather. He wanted to find out the truth but he needs help from his new friend Caroline in order to read a note that was hidden in a box. Through his friendship with Caroline and learning the truth about his parents' death, Sam gained confidence.

Table 3 indicates that thirteen characters experienced growth based on coming to terms with their SLD or AD/HD. For example, Judge Jenkins in <u>Egg-drop Blues</u> (Banks, 1995) has dyslexia. He may have to go to a new school that has a better special education program if his grades do not improve. Even though Judge has learned skills to cope with his SLD, he is sensitive about having a disability. Judge stated, ". . . they seem to think I'm incapable of a normal thought" (p. 41). After winning an egg-drop contest, Judge's brother, Jury stated that Judge should feel wonderful now. Judge replied, "I don't need the award ceremony to feel wonderful" (p. 120).

Two of the thirteen main characters experienced growth because they were given specialized services, and they became more confident as a result. For example, Gary Harris in <u>Spaceman</u> (Cutler, 1997) was placed at a specialized school, but Mr. Harris is still not convinced that Gary should be at the school. Mrs. Harris tells him ". . . Gary's learning. And he's not so angry or lonely or discouraged anymore" (p. 129). Also, once Benny Whitley started receiving services in a resource room, his grades and behavior

Table 3

Character Portrayal through Implication of SLD and AD/HD

Character Representation	Total n
Main character with SLD or AD/HD grows based on the catalyst of the condition	13
Secondary character with SLD or AD/HD grows based on the catalyst of the condition.	0
Character with SLD or AD/HD grows based on catalyst of another character's condition.	3
Parent grows based on the catalyst of the SLD or AD/HD.	7
Peer grows based on the catalyst of the SLD or AD/HD.	1
Sibling grows based on the catalyst of the SLD or AD/HD.	2

Key: n = number of portrayals; total, n = 26

improved. Benny stated, ". . . he felt better about himself" (Griffith & Schulz, 1998, p. 89).

Four characters experienced social growth through new friendships. However, the friends had issues that they were dealing with. For example, Gary Harris in Spaceman, stated he has friends now because "we are all weirdos" (Cutler, 1997, p. 87). One of his friends is Jesse Green who also has a SLD. Jesse had to turn in his shoes to the teacher because he liked to run away. By the end of the story, Gary is happier and Jesse ran away less. Also, Maxwell Kane in Freak the Mighty (Philbrick, 1993) gained more friends at school through his relationship with his new neighbor, Kevin. However, Kevin, who had a physical disability, was dying from an enlarged heart.

Two characters grow socially by forming a bond with one special friend. For example, Sam MacKenzie in <u>Eleven</u> (Giff, 2008), decided that Caroline, the new girl in school, would be the perfect classmate to help him read an article about his parents' death. Sam suggested to Caroline that they partner to make a castle for a project on the Middle Ages. While they are discussing the details, Caroline told Sam "Don't think I'm going to be friends. I won't be here long enough (p. 17). She told him that because her family moves a lot. Like Caroline predicted, towards the end of the story she has to move again. She told Sam to look for more friends. "Just go to the classroom door. Just pick out a kid, and smile. You have a great smile. You'll see" (p.162). She and Sam MacKenzie shared a bond as being outsiders. Ben Carter in <u>Trout and Me</u> (Shreve, 2002) also felt like an outsider. He befriends Trout Sanger, the new boy at school. However, Trout has behavior issues, and it is implied that he might have a learning disability. Ben and Trout get in trouble at school playing pranks. Ben commented about their relationship, "Trout Sanger is the best friend I've ever had. He understands what it is to be in trouble in school when it's not your fault and what it is to be different from the other kids who know how to read and what it is to feel lonely because you're outside the group"

Three of the main characters learned to be more tolerant through accepting someone else for his/her disability. In <u>Zipper the Kid with ADHD</u> (Janover, 2007), Josh has dyslexia and is mainstreamed into Zipper's health class. Zipper stated, "You *idiot!* Look what the moron did! That dope wrote 'Say no to drugs!' How stupid can you be? I should never have picked one of Mantimer's mentals as a partner" (p. 30). As their friendship developed, Zipper came to realize that they have a lot in common—they both

play on a baseball team, and they consider themselves smart. In addition, Zipper started to use some of the strategies that Josh uses in school, such as an assignment planner. Also, Todd Foster in <u>Sparks</u> (McNamee, 2002) learned to accept his disability by learning to accept his friend Eva's disability. When Todd was placed in a general education class, he did not want to socialize with his former classmates, especially Eva. ". . . I can't hang around with her anymore. People will think I'm still Brain-Dead" (p. 9). However, Eva continued to seek out Todd and be his friend. She even supported him when Todd was struggling with his assignments. Todd realized, "Now all I'm finding out is what an idiot I am . . . I'd help out Eva. And she'd help me out sometimes too. She's not dumb. She just gets stuck on things . . ." (p. 75). At the end of the story, Todd visited the special education class and reflected about his friendship with Eva, "I came to see her. And who cares who knows anymore" (p. 111).

Chris Conlan in <u>Two-minute Drill</u> (Lupica, 2007) also learned to accept people with disabilities while struggling with coming to terms with his SLD. At first, Chris did not want to be associated with the students at his school who attend special education classes. Also, he did not want it known that he had a disability. Chris joined in teasing Scott Parry after a classmate asked him "You been hanging out with the brain, Conlan? What for— you need help with your homework? (p. 64). Later in the day, Chris apologized to Scott and opens up about his dyslexia. Eventually, Chris and Scott struck a deal—Chris will help Scott become a better football player and Scott will help Chris read a book page in less than two-minutes. Chris learned strategies to help him take a comprehensive exam, and he admits that he is not ashamed of being associated with children that have disabilities but that "I just want things to stay the way they are (p.76).

None of the six secondary characters that had a SLD or AD/HD were depicted as experiencing growth based on their disability. Eve in Sparks (McNamee, 2002) and Josh in The Worst Speller in Jr. High (Janover, 2000) did not play major roles that were integral to their storylines. Three of the characters were well-adjusted: Gee Sparks, Maxi Livingston and Jake Livingston. Gee in The Middle of Somewhere (Cheanery, 2007) was able to make friends, and he felt good about himself. He reminded his family ". . . I'm differently abled" (p.123). Maxi and Jake in Underwater (Levy, 2007) also had friends, good relationships with family members, and participated in extra-curricular activities. Jake told his brother Gabe that Maxi is fine with having AD/HD "He's happy" (p. 34).

Aaron in The Mealworm Diaries (Kerz, 2009) experienced growth; however, it was because of his friendship with Jeremy. Jeremy helped Aaron learn to skip rope. Also, when it was time for him to present his report on mealworms Jeremy stated, "He wasn't even too silly" (p. 152).

In some of the books, authors portrayed secondary characters without a SLD or AD/HD as learning from a person with a SLD or AD/HD. Table 3 indicates that ten characters learned from other characters. Five of those ten characters were parents. They learned to accept the fact that their child has a SLD or AD/HD and their relationships improved. For example, in How Dyslexic Benny Became a Star: A Story of Hope for Dyslexic Children and their Parents (Griffith & Schulz, 1998), Mr. Whitley started giving Benny compliments after he improved his academics. Then, Mr. and Mrs. Whitley stopped arguing. Also, in 95 Pounds of Hope (Gavalda, 2003), Mr. Dubosc told Gregory, "You know, I've never said this, but I think you're a good guy . . . a really good guy" (p. 80).

One of the ten was a peer. In <u>The Mealworm Diaries</u> (Kerz, 2009) Jeremy is struggling with the recent death of his father. His mother thought they should move to a new city to have a fresh start. One day at school, Jeremy is paired with Aaron on a science project about mealworms. Jeremy was not happy about this because of Aaron's behaviors. While working on the project, Jeremy accidently killed one of the mealworms; however, Aaron is blamed. Jeremy did not come to Aaron's defense. Aaron got very upset, sat down, and rocked back and forth. They worked on the project and got to know one another. Jeremy learned that Aaron had one thing that he longed for—a father. One night, Jeremy had a nightmare about the circumstances surrounding his father's death. He woke up and realized that he was rocking "Like Aaron, he thought. Just like Aaron" (p. 132). That is when Jeremy decided to become Aaron's friend and teach Aaron how to skip rope. Also, at the end of the story, Jeremy admitted that he killed the mealworm.

Two siblings were depicted as accepting their brothers instead of expecting things to change. Ronnie Sparks in <u>The Middle of Somewhere</u> (Cheaney, 2007) wanted "A nice, normal family . . . " (p.168). By the end of the story, she realized "Maybe I'd been wind-prospecting like Pop, chasing something that couldn't be caught" (p. 210). Also, Gabe Livingston in <u>Underwater</u> (Levy, 2007) has low self-confidence even though he earned good grades in school, is a good swimmer, and has at least one friend. But, he is bothered by the fact that his older brother (Jake) has a SLD and AD/HD, and his younger brother (Maxie) has AD/HD. Classmates call Jake "retarded" and Maxie crazy because he yells "Whee-yah" when he is excited. Also, Gabe wished his difficulties could be explained like his brothers. Talking about Jake, Gabe stated, "If he acts different, it has a reason: ADHD" (p. 69). By the end of the story, Gabe realized that he is lucky to have his

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brothers. During a swimming competition Gabe is winning and he stated, "And then I hear what I am listening for 'Whee-yah! Whee-yah! Maxie" (p. 146).

The findings for question 1 show that the majority of characters with a SLD or AD/HD were portrayed as multi-faceted, independent children. However, they were not satisfied with their lives. Over 50% were embarrassed because they had a disability or AD/HD or they did not want to mention it. In addition, over two-thirds of the characters did not enjoy going to school because they were teased or belittled. However, 83.3% of the characters with a SLD did not enjoy school not only because of the teasing but because they struggled with academics. In addition, two-thirds of the characters did not have one friend when the plot started. Only three characters did not have a friend by the end to their storylines. In two of those books, the focus of the plot was not about friendship.

Subsidiary Research Question 2

The second subsidiary research question was: To what extent are stereotypes reinforced? Do the characters encourage children without disabilities to see children with disabilities positively? The data obtained from of the characterization, implications of disability and terminology sections of the Content Analysis form was used to answer this question.

Stereotypes. According to Nario-Redmoond (2010), stereotypes are the means of categorizing traits and attributes. People are assigned stereotypes based on their membership in social groups. In addition, stereotypes or terms used to describe people with disabilities may lead to negative attitudes, marginalization, stigma, and oppression (Reid-Cunningham, 2009). For this study, the characters in the books were analyzed

based on disability stereotypes that are common in children's literature: bitter, burden, dependent, exotic, hero, isolated, laughable, non-participant, non-sexual, pitiable, victim, and villain (Biklen & Bogdan, 1977). Table 4 indicates that nine of the twelve stereotypes were found in the portrayals. Seven of the eighteen books in this study portray characters with a SLD or AD/HD in stereotypical roles.

Table 4

Character Representation Through Stereotype

Stereotype	Total
	n
Bitter	2
Burden	3
Dependent	1
Exotic	2
Laughable	3
Maladjusted	1
Non-participant	1
Pitiable	3
Victim	5

Key: Total, n = number of portrayals; total, n = 21

The most common stereotype was victim. In five out of the nine books, the characters were criticized, teased and assaulted because of their conditions. For example, Aaron in The Mealworm Diaries (Kerz, 2009) did not respond to his classmates' teasing and bullying. In addition, Benny Whitley in How Dyslexic Benny Became a Star (Griffith, 1997) and Zipper Winson in Zipper the Kid with ADHD (Janover, 1997) felt they were victims. They both thought that they were not liked. Zack's teacher reprimands him for teasing his friend Josh. Zack cried, "Nobody likes me! Everyone in this school *hates*

me!" (Janover,1997, p. 32). The other two characters are Gary Harris in <u>Spaceman</u> (Cutler, 1997) and Maxwell Kane in <u>Freak the Mighty</u> (Philbrick, 1993).

Other characters that were portrayed in stereotypical roles were Brian Toomey in My Name is Brain Brian (Betancourt, 1993), Gregory Dubosc in <u>95 Pounds of Hope</u> (Gavalda, 2003), Andy Fleck in <u>Parents Wanted</u> (Harrar, 2001) and Ben Carter in <u>Trout and Me</u> (Shreve, 2002). Brian and Gregory are portrayed as the clown. Brian made jokes and teased students during classtime. Gregory did pranks in the gym to get laughs. Andy was portrayed as a burden. Not only was he abandoned by his father but the principal at his new school stated that Andy might "be better off in a school that was used to handling kids" like him (Harrar, 2001, p. 92). Ben pretended he had asthma when he was asked to read; associated with a classmate (Trout) that did pranks; and skipped school. Those characteristics would classify him as maladjusted.

Some characters were portrayed as more than one stereotype. For example, Benny Whitley was also portrayed as a clown. He admitted that "If the other kids were going to laugh at him anyway, he decided to be the class clown" (Griffith, 1997, p. 5). Andy Fleck in <u>Parents Wanted</u> (Harrar, 2001) was also portrayed as villain. He lied to his social worker about being inappropriately touched, stole, and vandalized the neighbor's property. Not only was Zipper portrayed as a victim, he was portrayed as bitter and villain in <u>Zipper the Kid with ADHD</u> (Janover, 2007). He was bitter about having AD/HD so much that he would get angry and throw things. He also was a villain when he teased Josh for having dyslexia. Also, Aaron in <u>The Mealworm Diaries</u> (Kerz, 2009) was depicted as exotic. He repeated what he said, crawled on his knees, and sat underneath the science lab table and rocked.

Two characters in the study were portrayed the most stereotypically. For example, Maxwell Kane is a big eighth grader that sleeps in his grandparents' basement. His classmates call him "goon," and they throw school supplies at him. In <u>Freak the Mighty</u> (Philbrick, 1993), he is portrayed as a burden, exotic, pitiable, and victim. In <u>Spaceman</u> (Cutler, 1997), Gary Harris is portrayed as a burden, bitter, dependent, non-participant, pitiable, and victim. He is a friendless fifth grader who is shoved and teased by his classmates.

Terminology. Terminology to describe or refer to characters with a SLD or AD/HD, or the condition itself was examined to determine any use of language that shows disrespect, discrimination, or stereotyping. Ninety-four percent of the books used non-discriminatory language to describe the characters, SLD, and AD/HD. Table 5 shows the different types of positive language and the number of occurrences. They mostly pertained to the condition, medication, and schooling.

However, 100% of the books depicted someone using negative or outdated language. Most of the offenders were children. They used the language to tease or hurt the child with a disability. Table 6 shows the types of negative language and the number of occurrences. Of the 116 occurrences, 78 or 67.2% questioned the characters' cognitive abilities. The characters were dumb, stupid or idiots.

The terms were not limited to characters with SLD. Characters with AD/HD were also called imbeciles and slow. In addition, they were called crazy, fruit loop, insane, and mental. There were 20 occurrences of language that questioned the characters' mental status.

Table 5

Types of Non-discriminatory Language Used

Type	Total
	n
Attention Deficit Disorder/Hyperactivity Disorder	3
Auditory learners	1
Depakote	1
dyslexia	9
Hyper, hyperactive, hyperactivity	3
Obsessive Compulsive Disorder	1
Learning Disabilities class	1
Learning disabled	7
Learning difference	1
Learning disorder	1
Learning problem	2
Ritalin	2
Social, emotional and physical development is delayed	1
Spatial orientation	1
Special education teacher	1
Special needs	2
Special needs class	1
Visual memory	1
Zoloft	1
Key: n = number of occurrences; total, n = 40	

Outdated language such as dyslexic children, learning disabled child or classes

does not fit with the current use in schools. There has been a move away from "within

child" labels that name the disability first to acknowledging the child first then the

disability (Florian, Hollenweger, Simeonsson, Wedell, Riddell,

Terzi, & Holland, 2006). However, the usage of these terms only occurred in Egg-drop

Blues (Banks, 1995). Children used outdated language to describe physical disabilities,

such as, midget and cripple. That also occurred only in one book: Freak the Mighty

(Philbrick, 1993).

Table 6

Types of Discriminatory Language Used

Type	Total
	n
banana brain, dumb brain	2
ADHD questions	1
basket case	1
brain dead	2
bone head, butt head, dweebhead	4
crippled, crippled up, cripple van	3
crazy(iness)	10
ding-dong	1
dope, dopeyhead	2
drooling idiot	2
dumb, dummy, dummy(ies)	8
dwarf	1
dyslexic children	1
freak, freak show	2
fruit loop	1
goon	2
got no brains	1
Gump	1
head doctor	1
idiot	9
imbeciles	2
insane mood, insane world	2
lazy	1
LD's, learning disabled child, learning disabled classes	3
Losers lodge	1
lunatic	1
med kid	1
mental(s)	4
midget	1
Mr. Retardo, retard(ed)	13
Mr. Special Ed	1
moron	9
nut	1
slow	3
stupid	17
think brain	1
weirdo	1
Key: n = number of occurrences; total, n = 116	

The results show that stereotypes were reinforced in seven out of the eighteen books (38.8%). However, the terminology used in the books does not encourage children without disabilities to view children with disabilities positively as 100% of the books used discriminatory language. In addition, outdated language that is no longer used in school settings was used in two of the eighteen books (11.1%).

Subsidiary Research Question 3

The third subsidiary research question was: How does the text reflect the current prevalence of people with a SLD or AD/HD? The data obtained from the recording form and all sections of the content analysis form was used to answer this question. The analysis for this question will include both the primary and secondary characters.

Types of conditions and gender representation. The 28 portrayals of characters with disabilities in the eighteen books were assessed to determine the occurrence of SLD and AD/HD, the role they play in the plot, as well as the gender of each. Tables 7 and 8 indicate the disability and gender of both the main and secondary characters. Six or 21.4% of the characters are female and 22 or 78.6% are male.

Although three adults were mentioned as having disabilities, none of them were prominently portrayed as having a disability in the storylines. Coach Watkins in <u>How Dyslexic Benny Became a Star: A Story of Hope for Dyslexic Children and their Parents</u> (Griffith & Schulz, 1998) mentioned he has dyslexia towards the end of the story. In <u>The Worst Speller in Jr. High</u> (Janover, 2000), it is mentioned that Katie Kelso's mother and aunt have a SLD.

There were 25 students with a SLD or AD/HD portrayed in the storylines.

Four or 16% are female compared to 21 or 84% are male. This is not aligned to the national average. In 2006, 33% of students with disabilities were female and 66.9% were male (Blackorby, Schiller, Mallik, Hebbeler, Huang, Javitz, & National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, 2010).

Table 7

Type of Condition Portrayed and Gender of Character

Type of Condition	Female	Male	Total
	n	n	n
Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder	1	8*	9
Specific Learning Disability	5	14	19

Key: n = number of characters; total, n = 28; *one character had both disabilities

Family member with a SLD or AD/HD. Among the 25 children, four had a family member(s) that had a SLD or AD/HD. Table 8 lists the breakdown of portrayals of characters with a SLD or AD/HD according to family relation. One character, Katie Kelso, in The Worst Speller in Jr. High (Janover, 2000) mentioned three relatives with a SLD: an aunt, a male cousin, and her mother. Mr. Winson in Zipper the Kid he Kid with ADHD (Janover, 2007) stated he may have the disorder. According to the American Psychiatric Association (2000), it is common for a child to have AD/HD or a SLD if a first-degree biological relative also has it. In addition to Mr. Winson, two fathers, and a grandfather stated that they struggled in school, and that they may have had a disability.

Plot. According to Nelson (1994), with the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 there was a new awareness by the general population that people with disabilities "have a right to equal treatment and consideration" (p. x). The plot was

analyzed to determine if character's actions and attitudes were reflective of equal

treatment or discrimination based on having a SLD or AD/HD.

Table 8

Person with Disability by Relationship to Character with Disability

Relationship	AD/HD	SLD	Total
	n	n	n
Aunt	0	1	1
Brother	1	1	2
Cousin	0	1	1
Father	1	0	1
Mother	0	1	1

Key: n = number of characters with a disability; total, n = 6

Relationships were integral in all of the plots. Table 9 shows how family, peers and

teachers react to the character with a SLD or AD/HD or to the situation the condition

causes. In thirteen or 72.2% of the books, a parent or parental figure was supportive of

his/her child with a SLD or AD/HD. However, there were negative portrayals. In five or

27.7% of the books, a parent was unsupportive. Larry Whitley in <u>How Dyslexic Benny

Became a Star: A Story of Hope for Dyslexic Children and their Parents</u> (Griffith &

Schulz, 1998) stated about his son "He's just lazy, that's all" (p.3).

 In addition, parents assigned blame to people for the cause of the SLD or AD/HD.

Fifteen of the books had a father or father-figure as an integral part of the character with a

disability's life. In eight of the books or 53.3%, the father was portrayed as being in

denial about the situation. They blamed the character, the   education institution or the

other parent. In <u>Spaceman</u> (Cutler, 1997), Mr. Harris thinks a different school is the

solution. He stated, "No nonsense over there

Table 9

Implication of Condition Through Relationship

Representation	Positive n	Negative n
Father's support of character	7	4
Father figure's (grandparent and foster parent) is supportive of character	2	0
Grandfather's support of character	2	0
Mother's support of character	11	1
Mother figure's support of character	1	0
Peers' support of character	8	9
Sibling's support of character		
Brother's support	3	1
Sister's support	3	5
Teacher's support of character	5	6

Key: n = number of portrayals

about learning differences. Everybody learns the same and everybody learns. Or else" (p.

98). In contrast, of the seventeen books that had a mother or mother-figure, three of the

mothers or 17% were portrayed as being in denial. One mother blamed the father for her

son's situation. According to Gregory in 95 Pounds of Hope (Gavalda, 2003), " . . . my

mother blames my father for never having taken the time to do things with me . . . "

(p.12).

In the categories Peers, Siblings, and Teachers, the majority of portrayals were

negative. Table 9 shows that of the seventeen books that had peer portrayals, nine or

52.9% had unsupportive depictions. Liz, a camper in Rainy (Deans, 2005) has become

frustrated with Rainy Tucker's constant talking, competiveness, and sleeplessness. She

stated, "Go hang around someone else; we're sick of babysitting you" (p. 105). In nine books a character with a disability had a brother or a sister. Sixty-six percent of the siblings were depicted as unsupportive. Gabe in <u>Underwater</u> (Levy, 2007) states "Jake is a crazy retard . . . " (p. 22). Lastly, ten books had a teacher in the storyline. Five of those teachers were unsupportive. For example, the reading teacher in <u>Freak the Mighty</u> (Philbrick, 1993) tells Maxwell Kane, "As you know, heh heh, my personal opinion has always been that you're lazy and stubborn and you didn't *want* to learn" (p. 81).

The results do reflect the current prevalence of people with a SLD or AD/HD in some areas. In this study, more males than females were featured characters in the storylines which does reflect the current prevalence. However, the ratio of males to females exceeded the norm. In addition, the books mentioned parents or relatives as having a SLD or AD/HD which is a typical occurrence. Also, the results show that having relationships was a major theme in the books and this is aligned with current literature. According to Clarke-Stewart and Dunn (2006), Kroger (2007), and Rice and Dolgin (2005), family and peer relationships are important to adolescents and their social development.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to analyze the portrayals of characters with a SLD or AD/HD in contemporary children's literature to determine what images are being conveyed and whether they encourage awareness or reinforce discrimination. Utilizing content analysis, the researcher analyzed eighteen books for adolescents, ages 10-14, published between 1993 and 2009. The sample consisted of books that could be considered for selection by teachers.

Analysis of the books revealed the following results:

- The books' themes were mostly about disability. However, some of the books also focused on friendships, grief, and self-confidence.

- Characters with a SLD or ADHD were treated disrespectfully through teasing and bullying.

- The characterizations encourage inclusion in activities by teaching the reader that people with a SLD or AD/HD are not different from them.

- There was one misrepresentation of a SLD and one misrepresentation of AD/HD.

- Fifty percent of the books portrayed characters in stereotypical roles.

- One hundred percent of the books had someone using discriminatory language.

- Most of the characters with a SLD or AD/HD were male.

The implications of these results will be discussed in the next section.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to analyze the portrayal of characters with a SLD and AD/HD in children's literature to determine what messages are being conveyed and whether the characterizations encourage understanding or reinforce stereotypes regarding people with specific disabilities. Using content analysis methodology, the researcher analyzed children's literature that contained main or supporting characters with disabilities. The results of that analysis were presented in Chapter IV.

Discussion

The findings were analyzed and are discussed here in relationship to the research questions. It should be noted that in this study, the majority of the characters with a SLD or AD/HD were adolescents. Therefore, the analysis is based on how a SLD or AD/HD affects adolescents.

Academic studies that were the most similar to this study were compared. Table 10 shows that portrayals have improved in two areas – characters being portrayed as equal to others and accuracy of portrayals. This study found that there are slightly more instances of characters with a SLD being portrayed stereotypically than in Cissell's 2001 study. The use of discriminatory language was more prevalent in this study.

One of the themes conveyed in the books was overcoming problems associated with having a disability. In thirteen or 72.2% of the books, the storyline is about a

Table 10

Comparisons of Studies

Portrayal	Cissell (2001)	Marsh (2003)	Smith (2000)	Current Study
Equal to Others	53.8%	54.8%	68.4%	95.0%
Accurate	67.7%	66.7%	51.4%	83.3%
Stereotypical Roles	48.6%	87.5%	-	50.0%
Use of Discriminatory Language	46.3%	45.2%	-	100%

character's disability. The disability is the catalyst of the character's difficulty with

school and/or relationships. In a previous study this was also found to be the case (Smith,

2000).

In addition, data from the comparison studies suggests that there is a perception

that having a disability is considered a problem to overcome. The disability is overcome

by the end of the story in 61.3% of the books in Cissell's study (2001) and 59.4% of the

books in Marsh's study (2003). The data from this study shows that the perception has

improved. In only five or 27.7% of the books in this study the perception was that the

disability was a personal problem or a disease. The majority of the characters were

portrayed as overcoming their problems and dealing with their disability. As the

storylines progressed, the characters' identities were much more than their disability. The

characters were taken through the process of self-discovery and gained self-confidence.

This allowed them to solve their problems. This is a good example of where readers

could make a literary transaction-reflecting on their current attitudes about disability and

connecting with the perceptions presented in the texts. The readers would be able to see that having a SLD or AD/HD is typical instead of abnormal.

Even though in thirteen or 72.2% of the books an accommodation was mentioned, only two or 11.1% of the storylines focused on accommodation. Both of those stories dealt with placement. One character attended a school for children with disabilities and another character used to be placed in a self-contained special education classroom. Similar to Smith's study (2005), data from this study show that the most prevalent accommodation was the resource classroom. This is consistent with the national norm. Over half of students with a SLD are educated in the resource classroom for 20% or less of the day (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). Since children with a SLD are spending more time in the general education classroom, there is more opportunity for non-disabled children to interact with them. Therefore, all students can develop a better understanding of what is SLD or AD/HD. This could help reduce teasing, stereotypes, and victimization.

Another theme is that people with disabilities are multi-faceted, participating members of society. Ninety-five percent of the characters with SLD or AD/HD are viewed as equal to non-disabled characters in having conflicts, education, employment, families, and hobbies. This is a significant increase from the results of Cissell (2000) and Marsh (2003). In their studies, a little over half of the characters were portrayed as equal to others.

Previous studies report that almost a third of disability portrayals were inaccurate or misrepresented (Cissell, 200; Dyches, Prater, Jenson, 2006; Marsh, 2003; and Smith, 2000). Smith does mention that the process of placing children in special education was

over-simplified. That was also the case in the current study. Also, parents of a son with a SLD were told that with special education services he would be at reading level in three years. There was one misrepresentation about the cause of AD/HD. Two books portrayed that sugar consumption contributes to AD/HD.

In all of the books in this study, the reader is made aware of the psychological and social implications of having a disability. According to the research previously mentioned, identity is affected by what is seen as valued within society or culture. The children with a SLD or AD/HD in this study saw that doing well academically was valued. Over half of the characters with a SLD or AD/HD did not like school, and were ashamed of having their conditions. It is not surprising that the characters with a SLD struggle the most since children are often diagnosed because of issues pertaining to academic progress. School is the place that first notices there is an issue with academics. School is also the place that children socialize the most. Therefore, students with a SLD face many hurdles as they navigate through the educational system. In this study, the majority of characters with a SLD did not enjoy going to school. They felt tormented by their classmates, they thought their teachers and family were unsupportive, and they perceived they were less than adequate. Maxwell Kane in Freak the Mighty stated, "I'm just this critter hiding out in the basement, drooling in my comic books or whatever" (p. 6).

In addition, the reader is made aware of the stereotypical assumptions that are made about children with disabilities. In this study, stereotypical roles were depicted in half of the books. This is comparable to previous studies. However, the difference is the type of roles portrayed. In previous studies, the majority of characters are portrayed as

dependent, a burden, and a victim (Cissell, 2000; and Marsh, 2003). In this study, the most prevalent role is victim as portrayed by five characters.

The most disturbing finding was the use of negative and discriminatory language. All of the books had a character that used disrespectful and dehumanizing terminology to refer to children with disabilities. Stupid and retarded were used most frequently to degrade children with a SLD. Children with AD/HD were more likely to be called crazy by their peers.

Some of the peers who used the discriminatory language were portrayed as bullies. The classmates in <u>Spaceman</u> (Cutler, 2007), <u>The Mealworm Diaries</u> (Kerz, 2009), and <u>Freak the Mighty</u> (Philbrick, 1993) constantly teased and humiliated the characters with SLD or AD/HD. In two books, the authors implied that secondary characters had a SLD and that is why they addressed the main character with discriminatory language. Ronald (Zero) in Sparks (McNamee, 2002) and Morris (Trout) Sanger in <u>Trout and Me</u> (Shreve, 2002) used the terms "retard" and "banana brain". It could be inferred that that the characters were trying to deflect from their own issues. Todd stated about Zero, "He got nicknamed Zero because that's how smart he is" (McNamee, 2002, p. 12). Also, Trout admitted that he could not read.

Parents and siblings also used discriminatory language referring to a character with a SLD or AD/HD. Fran Pigza called her son Joey "You fruit loop" (Gantos, 2007, p.110) and Larry Whitley asked his son Benny "Did you go totally brain-dead or something?" (Griffith, 1997, p. 42). Also, Simon called his brother, who has dyslexia a "moron" (Janover, 2000, p.155) while Veronica (Ronnie) Sparks called her brother Gerald (Gee) "retarded" (Cheaney, 2007, p.136). Fran was the only character that was joking. The

other characters used the terms during frustrating situations. However, the terms were still hurtful to the receiver. Benny stated, "Why couldn't his dad understand once in a while? Why did he always have to make Benny feel so miserable, so hopeless?" (Griffith, 1997, p. 42-43). Gee yelled back at Ronnie ""I'm *not* retarded!" (Cheaney, 2007, p.136).

In addition, several of the children began to think of themselves in derogatory terms. Seven characters called themselves dumb, idiot, moron, retarded, slow or stupid. Also, four characters called other children with disabilities crippled, dumb, idiot, and stupid. According to Carlson, Flannery, and Kral (2005), children with disabilities began to believe that they deserve the abuse. This affects their self-esteem so it is likely that the characters in this study were self-depreciating. However, the most distressing example of the psychological damage that was done was when Gary Harris in Spaceman called a toddler "stupid, uncooperative, lazy" (Cutler, 2007, p. 63) – the same words that he has heard from his classmates and father. Gary has been teased and humiliated so much that it has become the norm for him. Therefore, he teased and tried to humiliate his teacher's son.

It was expected that earlier published books would have more negative portrayals than the later books. However, that was not always the case. Egg-drop Blues published in 1995 had the most positive images. Authors may have used negative images and stereotypical terms in an attempt to realistically portray attitudes and situations. However, without discussion, children might misinterpret the usage as acceptable.

Demographics of SLD and AD/HD were examined to see if the portrayals were representative of the United States population. The ratio for gender was not close to the national average. There should have been more female characters with disabilities in the

stories. Children's literature in general is not representative. According to McCabe, Fairchild, Grauerholz, Pescosolido and Tope (2011), there continues to be gender inequality in children's literature. They analyzed 5,618 books and found that 26.4% of main characters were male while only nineteen percent were female. Females represent 50.8% of the U. S. population (United States Census Bureau, 2013).

In addition, the representation of children with a SLD or AD/HD having parents with the same condition was accurate. According to the American Psychiatric Association (2013), it is common for a child to have a SLD or if a first-degree biological relative also has it. Even though the most populous special education category is SLD, the prevalence is not reflected in children's literature. Previous studies found that characters with physical disabilities widely represented in contemporary children's literature about disability (Cissell, 2000; and Duello, 1994). In searching databases, this researcher found that the ratio of books about physical disabilities to a SLD was two to one.

The relationships a child with a SLD or AD/HD had with his/her family, classmates, and teachers were a prominent theme in the storylines. The portrayals were compared to data on the impact of relationships on children with disabilities.

This study found that fathers were portrayed more negatively than mothers. In fact, fathers of sons were portrayed more negatively than fathers of daughters. They blamed their sons' for their lack of academic progress. Similarly, Chen, Seipp, and Johnston (2008), found that fathers are more likely to attribute the child's low academics to a lack of effort than to a disability or disorder. Also, the fathers in the stories thought their sons' failures were a negative reflection of them.

The majority of the children with a SLD or AD/HD in this study had positive relationships with their mothers. However, data shows that adolescents with a SLD perceived their mothers' involvement in their life as problematic (Heiman, Zinck, & Heath, 2008).

According to Dyson (2010) and Foley (2011), having a child with a disability places strain on the marital relationship. For instance, the parents may have different perceptions about the condition. The parents in My Name is Brain Brian (Betancourt, 1993), Spaceman (Cutler, 1997), How Dyslexic Benny Became a Star: A Story of Hope for dyslexic children and their Parents (Griffith & Schulz, 1998) disagreed about how to deal with child's disability. The mothers were supportive and wanted their children to receive services. However, the fathers thought their child was just not performing to his potential. Also, parents blamed one another for their child's problems. Mr. Dubosc thought Mrs. Dubosc spoiled Gregory in 95 Pound of Hope (Gavalda, 2003). While Mrs. Dubosc thought Mr. Dubosc should have been more involved in Gregory's life. Neither parent addressed Gregory's disability until there was a school crisis.

Foley (2011) also stated that sisters took on the responsibility of taking care of their siblings with a SLD. This study found that a greater percentage of sisters were not supportive of their sibling with a disability. They did not have empathy for their brothers' problems as it was their fault. This could be attributed to the fact that students are less likely to interact with female students with a SLD than males. Overall, however, the study found that sibling relationships were positive. This is consistent with previous studies (Aksoy, 2008; and Foley, 2011).

Previous studies found that social relationships between children with and without disabilities are problematic (Litvack, Ritchie, & Shore, 2011; and Wiener & Mak, 2009). The results of this study show that most of the children with disabilities had a close relationship with a friend; however, they still experienced negative interactions with their classmates. In the storylines, children harassed other children because of their academic differences. In addition, they used language that reflects that they think having a disability or disorder is a problem with the individual.

In addition, relationships between teachers and children with a SLD or AD/HD were portrayed as negative. This study showed that teachers have negative attitudes the students and the students felt unwelcome in their classrooms. However, previous studies found that teachers do not generally reject students based on a disability or AD/HD label (Anderson, Watt, Noble, & Shanley, 2012; and Gal, Schreur, & Engel-Yeger, 2010). One reason for the discrepancy is a difference in the character's perception of how the teacher is feeling and his/her actions. For example, in Trout and Me (Shreve, 2002) Ben Carter perceives that "Every teacher is mad at me before she even meets me" (p. 18). However, Ms. Ashford, one of his teachers, did not overtly say or do anything in the story to give him that impression.

Despite the use of stereotypical roles and negative language the perception portrayed in the literature is that children with a SLD or AD/HD were capable of functioning, had similar problems, and were able to persevere when faced with adversity. They have support systems and coping skills. Even when their situation was overwhelming the children were resilient. Judge Jenkins in Egg-drop Blues states "It's very frustrating to have this problem, but it's a lot better knowing I have it than just

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thinking I'm a big dummy" (p. 11). Children like my former student Ulysses who have a SLD or AD/HD would be able to see themselves in the selections and think positively about their place in society. Also, children without a SLD or AD/HD could use the selections to view role models that may behave differently from them. According to Franks (2014), the children would experience "cultural differences in interaction" while reading the selections (p. 424). They would change their cultural attitudes about disabilities and disorders. In addition, all children could use the selections to learn how to analyze text that promote cultural respect and authenticity.

The selections that would be the most beneficial in helping shape children's attitudes are the following:

- Egg-drop Blues (Banks, 1995) not only respectfully portrays a character with a SLD but the main characters are African American. This book was the only one that specifically mentioned a character's ethnicity. This is important as students from minority ethnic groups represent the highest percentage of students who have a SLD (U. S. Department of Education, 2008). In addition, the plot was interesting and relatable.

- My name is Brain Brian (Betancourt, 1993) illustrates the highs and lows of a character with a SLD. Even though Brian has friends and on the surface seems well-adjusted, he struggles with acceptance. He wants to be accepted by his friends and family. The plot is realistic as many adolescents – those with or without disabilities – struggle with those issues.

- The Middle of Somewhere (Cheaney, 2007) focused on how a sister deals with a sibling that has AD/HD. Once again, this book is one of few that portrayed a

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female. Also, the character with AD/HD was happy and others were not trying to change him. In addition, the book had an authentic portrayal of a child with AD/HD.

- Rainy (Deans, 2005) focused on a female with AD/HD and she was a positive role model. She was self-assured, she understood her condition, and she was multi-faceted-participating in all types of activities. Also, she was portrayed as multi-dimensional. She had positive relationships with her family, she cared for a pet, she supported a fellow camper that was being picked on, and she experienced the ups and downs of friendships. In addition, the plot was engaging as Rainy tried to solve a mystery.

- Eleven (Giff, 2008) accurately portrayed the frustrations of having a SLD while having an interesting and engaging plot. This book also had the main character trying to solve a mystery. In addition, a non-traditional family was featured which allows readers to gain a broader view of what constitutes a family.

- The Worst Speller in Jr. High (Janover, 2000) is one of the few books that had a female character with a SLD. Katie Kelso is also a role model. She has positive relationships with her friends and family. Also, she was one of the few characters with a SLD that enjoyed school. This shows students that there can be positive school experiences. Lastly, the book portrays Katie as going through typical adolescent angst-trying to be popular and worrying about dating.

Implications for Educators

We can use books to mirror our lives or to provide a window to see into other people's lives. As a result, educators must provide books that will give their students a wide range of learning opportunities. When teaching their students about the disability culture they must provide books that have a positive image of people with disabilities. Therefore, educators need to become aware of stereotypes and prejudice language that still exist in books so that they can evaluate and select books which promote positive representations of people with a SLD or AD/HD.

In addition, educators should become aware of the classroom climate and culture. Educators' beliefs and behaviors exert expectations and define the culture of the classroom. For example, educators have different beliefs and perceptions regarding classroom management and prefer different types of behaviors. Students perceive these behaviors and behave accordingly. Educators must make sure they are providing a climate of respect so their students recognize that teasing and bullying is unacceptable. Also, if diversity is celebrated then students with disabilities will not have the higher rates of loneliness, and lower rates of hope, effort and attachment security that have been reported (Al-Yagon, 2010).

At the present time, there are books available that show children with a SLD or AD/HD as well-adjusted, typical adolescents. However, there are few books that have characters with an emotional disability. This researcher had to search to find books that contained characters with an identified emotional disability. Since there were none, the researcher switched to characters with AD/HD.

The absence of characters with emotional disabilities implies that people with emotional disorders do not exist or it is not a concern. Therefore, educators must not depend on conventional sources when selecting books. Educators need to be proactive, specifically searching for books that portray characters with emotional disorders. Also, they need to inform publishers that they want books that portray characters with emotional disabilities.

This year Chicago Public Schools is mandating that educators view a webinar about AD/HD to increase their awareness about the disorder. Is this a nationwide concern? Is the reason for poor teacher relationship portrayals in some of the books due to a lack of awareness? Anderson, Watt, Nobel and Shanley (2010) conducted a study with in-service and pre-service teachers. They found that "In-service teachers had significantly higher total knowledge of ADHD

. . . " (p. 521). Therefore, teacher education programs should have course requirements that include more than an introductory or survey class on special education which is the minimum most states' teacher licensing boards require. Also, literacy methods courses should include disability literature to expose pre-service teachers to a variety of cultural texts.

Recommendations for Further Research

In this study, the sample was limited to books that could be found in library collections. Further research might focus on the prevalence of these kinds of books in basal readers that are typically used in English Language Arts programs. Questions to consider are: 1) If there are few selections in basals, do teachers supplement the curriculum with their own books? 2) If not, why not? 3) Are there obstacles that prevent

educators from offering literature about SLD and AD/HD? and 4) Are authors and publishers producing the type of literature that educators need for a diverse collection?

Also, a study could be conducted on the authors of disability literature. What motivated them to write the storylines? Is there a personal connection? Students might respond more to the texts if they knew the authors' background and motivation. Also, they would see that they can share their voice with others.

Finally, it's the hope that awareness will promote change. Teachers could use some of the books in this study to promote awareness of the disability culture. They could participate in organizations that advocate for people with disabilities and use the texts to facilitate conversations. Also, they could use the texts to develop curriculum for professional development workshops. Additional research could be conducted to analyze the effects of reading and discussing the books. Do these books change the attitudes of students? If we do not use literature to help children become culturally competent, people with disabilities will continue to have problems with identity, self-esteem, and self-concept.

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APPENDIX A

PROTOCOL FOR CONTENT ANALYSIS

Recording Form for Selected Literature Books:

Book Title	
Condition Represented	☐ Main Character ☐ Secondary Character
Major Characters and Their Gender	
Author	
Publication Year	
Publisher	
Summary	

Evaluative Instrument for Content Analysis:

PLOT	DOCUMENTA-TION and NOTES	PAGE NO.	NO	YES	Comments
Does the plot focus on the SLD or AD/HD?					
Is the focus on accommodation?	Instances:				
If there are accommodations, what are the accommodations?	Instances:				
Does the character with the SLD or AD/HD experience similar social interaction with other characters?	Instances:				
CHARACTERIZATION					
Does the characterization depict the character with the SLD or AD/HD as multi-faceted (attending school, working, interacting with family, etc.)?	Instances:				
Is the character with the SLD or AD/HD portrayed as a victim?	Instances:				
Is the character with the SLD or AD/HD portrayed as dependent upon others?	Instances:				

PLOT	DOCUMENTATION and NOTES	PAGE NO.	NO	YES	Comments
Does the character with the SLD or AD/HD grow (psychologically, socially, cognitively or morally?	Instances:				
Do the other characters grow based on the catalyst of the SLD or AD/HD?	Instances:				
IMPLICATIONS OF DISABILITY					
Are the actions of the character with the SLD or AD/HD reflective of typical psychological, social, physical, cognitive and moral development?	Instances:				
Do the actions of the character with the ALD or AD/HD match the condition?	Instances:				
Is the speech of the character with the SLD or AD/HD presented truthfully?	Instances:				
Are the thoughts of the character with the SLD or AD/HD presented truthfully?	Instances:				

PLOT	DOCUMENTATION and NOTES	PAGE NO.	NO	YES	Comment
Are the psychological implications presented truthfully?	Instances:				
Are the social implications presented truthfully?	Instances:				
Is the character with the disability embarrassed by his situation?	Instances:				
If anything, what could the reader learn from the theme?	Instances:				
TERMINOLOGY					
Does the title of the book reveal the author's attitudes toward the disability?	Instances:				
Is non-discriminatory language used?	Instances:				
Is discriminatory language used?	Instances:				

Other Findings:

Additional Researcher's Comments:

APPENDIX B

LIST OF BOOKS USED IN SAMPLE

Banks, J. T. (1995). *Egg-drop blues*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.

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