A STUDY OF COMMON CORE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS K-3 TEXT EXEMPLAR
PICTURE BOOKS

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To my mother and my daughter
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A STUDY OF COMMON CORE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS K-3 TEXT EXEMPLAR PICTURE BOOKS

By
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December 2018

Chair: Danling Fu
Major: Curriculum and Instruction

This study investigates the picture books listed as text exemplars in Appendix B of the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards for the grade bands K-1 and 2-3. Through the content and thematic analyses of a variety characteristics of the exemplar picture books, such as publication dates, author/illustrator information (gender, race, and nationality), traits of characters (gender, race, gender role, family structure, and disability) and themes, the findings of the study shed light on the aspects of today's society and world portrayed, as well as neglected, across the texts and illustrations in the books. This study also reports the findings from thematic analysis of the interviews conducted with local classroom teachers about their opinions and experiences of the exemplar books, examining how closely the exemplar text sets align with the classroom teachers’ actual views in children’s book selection.

The study indicates that the collection of the K-3 CCSS exemplar picture books does not have proportional, current, authentic or diverse representations of our lives, in terms of gender, race, gender role, family structure, disability and social perspectives. The findings of the study also allow an inference that the CCSS text exemplar sets are not only exclusive but also unrealistic or impractical. Based on that the local teachers
shared sceptical opinions about the actual exemplar picture books for their oldness, lengthiness and irrelevance, the CCSS text exemplar sets do not appear to be very helpful for teachers’ classroom use, nor representing the classroom teachers’ actual views of book selection.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Background

In the junior year of college, I had an opportunity to attend St. Cloud State University, Minnesota as a foreign exchange student. It was during the year that I was introduced to children’s literature as a subject for the first time; this experience piqued my interest to the extent that I decided to attend a graduate school and delve deeper into the field. The introduction to and the following discussions on the children’s books that candidly highlighted the supposed controversial topics, such as bullying, same-sex parents, experiences of racial discrimination, and so forth, fascinated me the most during the class. At that time, my Confucian-inspired Korean culture did not even consider such topics as controversial, because open discussions on these subjects were often avoided, especially with young children. Consequently, the availability of books for young readers on such controversial topics and the prospect that the books were permitted to be shared and discussed so candidly in classrooms, baffled me.

The experience gained in the children’s literature class proved eye opening, as I began to understand the necessity for books that presented many facets of the society and the books’ ability to help young readers learn about not only their world but also of others. Myself as an adult reader of the children’s books as well, the reading and discussions on children’s books on various topics and genres enabled me to learn about values, experiences, and lives, unique or universal, in our society and the world. The newly gained knowledge made me attentive to the topics, experiences, and perspectives portrayed in the children’s books, which young readers were introduced to in their learning about the world. More specifically, I became interested in the kinds of
books the children were provided with, or deprived of, according to adults’ selection of books for them. This research was conceived of the similar concern.

Purpose of the Study

A pattern is created, when a certain characteristic or a theme appears recurrently and repeatedly in any assortment; irrespective of the repetition being intentional or not, this pattern depicts a certain message being conveyed by that assortment. Similarly, when a collection of children’s books consists of a consistent pattern in texts and images about the society and the world, this pattern can contribute to creating and conveying certain messages to the readers in such a way that it shapes their perspectives of the society and world. The characteristics and themes repeated across the books to describe the society and world can also be deliberated as their norms and standards. Conversely, the aspects missing in the pattern, and thus, seldom introduced to children are prone to becoming estranged and alienated from children’s perspectives.

Common Core State Standards

This research investigates the children’s picture books enumerated as text exemplars in Appendix B of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) English Language Arts (ELA) for two grade bands, K-1 and 2-3; further, this research also explores the collective patterns in the exemplar picture books, through which the messages are created and conveyed to the children. The CCSS is an educational reform initiated by the National Governors Association (NGA) and The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), that presents academic standards of Mathematics and English Language Arts/Literacy (ELA) to be fulfilled by the students by the end of each grade year from kindergarten to 12th grade are presented by the CCSS. Since the initiation of CCSS in 2010, 45 states, the District of Columbia, and four territories
including Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, American Samoa, and US Virgin Islands have adopted both Mathematics and ELA standards into classroom instruction (Calkins, Ehrenworth & Lehman, 2012).

The CCSS endeavors to provide consistent learning goals to every state for each k-12 grade level; these learning goals offer the students specific skills and competencies, required to succeed in college education and career. In addition, the CCSS also aims to strengthen students' competitiveness in the global society and economy. To serve these objectives, the CCSS was developed substantiated in national and international research and practices, as well as the inputs provided by teachers, school chiefs, administrators, and other experts (Calkins, Ehrenworth & Lehman, 2012).

I highlighted the characteristics included explicitly in the selection, and the ones that are omitted, by examining a variety of characteristics such as publication dates, author/illustrator information (e.g., gender, race, and nationality), traits of primary and secondary characters (e.g., gender, race, gender role, family structure, and disability) and the themes presented in each picture book included as exemplars in K-3 CCSS Appendix B. Thus, in this research, I recognize the nature of picture books young readers are provided with or deprived of in the selection suggested by the CCSS, which is the most recent educational reform in the United States. Hence, the analysis will provide a basis for recognizing the overt and covert values (Apol, 1998) the CCSS selection reveals of our society. This research also investigates classroom teachers' opinions about the exemplar books and their experiences, to examine the magnitude of CCSS exemplar lists' in reflecting the teachers' views and values in selecting children's
books. Accordingly, I interviewed local classroom teachers to gain responses on questions associated with consulting the exemplar list while choosing books for classroom instruction. Furthermore, I examined the extent of similarity or difference between the CCSS selection and the teachers’ selection, to perceive how closely the exemplar text sets align with the classroom teachers’ actual views in children’s book selection. Therefore, analyzing whether the teachers would accept and adopt, or reject the picture books included in the CCSS selection and observing the corresponding reasons for the decisions, would allow the addition of another layer of understanding in analyzing the ideas and messages presented in the picture books within the framework of the CCSS selection; therefore, the critiquing of the underlying stances and possible influence of the selection on the young readers would be enabled.

In the midst of several suggested lists and selections of children’s books, I chose to focus on the CCSS selection because, as it is a nationwide educational reform in the United States while being adopted in classroom instruction and curriculum, it unavoidably maintains a top-down nature; for instance, the hierarchical aspect of the CCSS selection is clearly evident in the decisions of teachers, schools and districts about the texts to be adopted in classrooms, as they are in a rush to purchase the exemplar books to adapt in their curriculum (Moss, 2013; Short, 2013). Therefore, although the use of CCSS was only 'suggested', the CCSS selection represents certain power that particular group of people seem to hold in the contemporary society. Ultimately, the examination of CCSS exemplar picture books’ characteristics and the teachers’ perspectives and experience associated to these books, cast light on the
problematizing implicit and explicit messages, values and the power in the society that are collectively denoted as well as connoted in the CCSS selections.

**Research Questions**

The research questions pertaining to the objectives of this study are:

1. What kind of picture books are in the ELA CCSS exemplar sets for the grade band K-1 and 2-3? What are included and what are missing?

2. What messages are represented in the CCSS picture books about our society and the world?

3. How closely do the exemplar text sets align with the classroom teachers’ actual views about children’s book selection?
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Messages and Values in Children’s Literature

In early childhood and elementary school settings, children are provided with the time and opportunity to discern and listen to books (Boutte, 2002). As young readers lack life experiences and prior knowledge, they tend to depend on books to describe information and perspectives about the society and world. However, while children’s literature reflects a slice of the society by representing the experiences in our society, it also contains and conveys messages about the society and its “deepest hopes and fears, expectations and demands” (Apol, 1998, p. 34). Moreover, in the lower grades, often it is the adults such as teachers, parents and school districts, rather than the children themselves that choose the books introduced and shared with them; such selections reflect the adults’ intentional or unintentional preferences on the books. It can be implied that children’s literature can “present[s] to children the values approved by adult society and (overtly and covertly) attempts to explain, justify, and even impose on its audience what could be considered ‘correct’ patterns of behavior and belief” (Apol, 1998, p. 34).

Shannon’s (1986) study on social perspectives reflected in children’s favorite books, demonstrates the view that the values approved by the society are presented to the children. In this study, Shannon (1986) investigated the social perspectives, such as individualism, collectivism, and balanced, embedded in 30 children’s books selected by International Reading Association and the Children’s Book Council as children’s favorites in 1978, 1980, and 1982. The study established that among the selections, the books with an individualist perspective strikingly outnumbered the books written with
other two perspectives. Shannon deemed that the findings were not surprising, because individualism was so dominant and prevalent in the American society that individualistic perspective prevailed the most in books published for children in the United States; and thus, such books were frequently and inevitably selected as children’s favorite. In this context, Shannon (1986) stressed that if there is a hope for children to develop a well-balanced perspective of self and the society, awareness among the adults about implicit and explicit perspectives and messages in children’s books is required; this advocates the necessity for the adults to examine the kinds of books provided to children.

Corresponding to the ideologies present in children’s literature, Hollindale (1988) made distinctions between the levels of ideologies. The level most apparent and accessible is the surface ideology, which refers to “the explicit social, political or moral beliefs of the individual writer, and his wish to recommend them to children through the story” (p. 10). The second and third levels of ideologies in children’s literature are termed as “passive ideology” (p. 6) and “general ideology of the times,” (p. 35) (Hollindale, 1988 as cited in Apol, 1998). The second and third levels of ideologies seem more natural and less obvious, because they are expressed through “the individual writer’s unexamined assumptions” (Hollindale, 1988, p.12) about age, gender, race, or social class. Nonetheless, Hollindale (1988) asserted that these assumptions were more significant because if they are left unexamined or taken for granted by the writers, and ultimately by the readers, they will be reinforced and will significantly influence the readers.

Similarly, in the context of ideologies present in children’s texts, Nodelman (1996) added that irrespective of the writer’s intention to integrate their perspectives in
the books, the readers often subconsciously accept the author’s ideological positions and values unconsciously. Nodelman further emphasized that, “they [literary texts] are also expressions of the values and assumptions of a culture and a significant way of embedding readers in those values and assumptions” (p. 69).

Apol (1998) expanded the scope of the discussion on messages and ideologies that are transmitted to children; according to Apol, the scope should not only include its writing, but also the aspects of editing, publishing, marketing and purchasing. Apol (1998) further highlighted that in each factor related to children’s books, it is the adults who “select, read, and even teach them [children’s books] to children” (p. 34), as they want children to read certain books for specific reasons; this indicates that children’s literature is “revealing (and concealing) much about what adults wish for children to know, preserve, and put into practice…as a vehicle for education and a repository for cultural values” (p. 34).

Similarly, Boutte (2002) focused on the school selecting, in which children’s books are selected and shared with a classroom full of young readers. Drawing on Taxel (1984)’s assertion that “the norms, values, culture, and history presented to children in schools embody the norms, values, culture, and history of the dominant social class” (p. 9), Boutte (2002) also contended the essentiality for teachers to concentrate on the explicit and concealed messages in children’s books; the teachers’ failure to intervene would result in unconscious validation and replication of the existing and often, unjust social order.

Similarly, Boutte, Hopkins and Waklatsi (2008) observed the perspectives, voices and worldviews in frequently selected 29 children’s books, “official or required readings
that are often unexamined” (p. 942, emphasis in original). In their analysis, Boutte, Hopkins and Waklatsi (2008) examined the children’s books that appeared most frequently on 24 elementary school’s required reading lists, because “[m]any teachers rely on district or school reading lists when selecting books” (p. 942). The analysis included the ethnicity, gender, and social class of the main characters, along with the overt themes and implicit aspects of black culture reflected in the books. The findings suggested that the content, ideologies and voices of many essential books were based largely on those of the mainstream society, rather than the people from diverse socio-economic background or people of color. The study concluded that “[f]ew schools and districts systematically examine and update reading lists” (Boutte, Hopkins & Waklatsi, 2008, p. 957).

This section discussed the deliberation of children’s literature to convey explicit and implicit messages about the society, and the selection and omission of ideologies and values transmitted to children in different contexts, including publishing and education. As witnessed, many studies contended that “they [children’s texts] play a crucial role in transmitting to students exclusive world views and understanding, particularly those regarding gender, race, and class” (Luke, Cooke, & Luke, 1986, p. 210).

**Multicultural Literature**

For decades, messages from children’s books and reading experiences have shown the tendency to be different and not adequately balanced for children from mainstream society, culturally dominant groups, and marginalized groups; for instance, the mainstream readers have been able to locate themselves and their lives in the books. The case of children from mainstream society cautions us that “they will grow up
with an exaggerated sense of their importance and value in the world – a dangerous ethnocentrism” (Bishop, 1990a, p. x). Conversely, the readers from marginalized groups fail to find their reflections in the books that are read; rather, they often they find themselves in the books portrayed not only in a prejudiced and negative manner but are also ridiculed (Bishop, 1990), resulting in a “powerful lesson about how they are devalued in society” (Sims Bishop, 1990, p. x).

Therefore, the young readers from both dominant groups and marginalized groups, require an mirrors that authentically reflects their lives, and also the windows that display the new perspectives, enlarging their understanding of the unfamiliar. This suggests the need for multicultural literature that bears the ability to nurture a positive recognition of self, others, and the diversity among them; the appreciation can encourage appreciation of different values, traditions, customs, and perspectives, and ultimately, serve as a cultural common ground among readers. The discussion on multicultural literature requires examination of the definition and characteristics of multicultural literature and its importance for young readers.

**Definition of Multicultural Literature**

The social and political changes in the 1950s and 1960s in the United States, including the civil rights movement, and feminist movement gave rise to multiculturalism; this highlighted the socially and historically marginalized groups. Consequently, renowned scholars such as James A. Bank and Geneva Gay, in the field of education, were encouraged to fuel their effort to claim the need for multicultural education (Cai & Bishop, 1994; Cai, 2002; Kiefer, 2010; Taxel, 1997). The term ‘multicultural literature’ and its concept, therefore, grew out of the political and societal context and the idea of multiculturalism, rather than solely literary context.
However, since its emergence, the term ‘multicultural literature’ has initiated heated debates among the scholars on its meaning (Cai & Sims Bishop, 1994; Cai, 2002; Kiefer, 2010). The discussion is based on multicultural literature’s “extent of inclusion” (Cai, 1998, p. 311); this indicates that the researchers took the issue with the degree to the extent of the types and topics of literature to be included under the term ‘multicultural literature’. Cai (2002) distinguishes the definition of ‘multicultural literature’ into two categories; the literary definition concerns the literary nature and elements of texts; the pedagogical definition attends the educational aspects and influence of the texts. The debates associated with the differing opinions on the definitions are generally related to the pedagogical definitions, and the degree of “extent of inclusion” (Cai, 2003, p. 269).

In the most exclusive context of ‘extent of inclusion’, multicultural literature refers to the “works that focus on people of color” (Kruse and Homing, 1990, p. vii, as cited in Cai, 2002, p. 5), and concerns only specific racial groups. The scholars such as Rudine Sims Bishop and Violet J. Harris agree with this inference; they further argue that racial issues are critical to the extent that they require specific concentration from multicultural literature (Sims Bishop, 1994; Harris, 1994). In contrast, according to the most inclusive side, “all literature is multicultural” (Fishman, 1995, p. 79, as cited Cai, 2003, p. 6). Patrick Shannon in congruence with this view claims that rather than limiting the scope to only the issues of race or the books about racial groups, the emphasis should be on inequities in the issues of races, languages, genders and classes in any book. Shannon (1994) discusses this way of reading as “reading multiculturally” (p. 5), and to bring about discussions on injustice, calls for attention to the potential of every book.
In contrast to the distinguishing views already discussed in this section, the scholars Austin and Jenkins (1973) possess an intermediate view that multicultural literature refers to the “books other than those of the dominant culture” (as cited in Cai, 2003, p. 5); this understanding incorporates the themes of language minorities, religious minorities, disabilities, same-sex attraction, specific regions, and poverty (Temple, Martinez, Yokoto & Naylor, 2002). Adding to this view, Glazier and Seo (2005) define multicultural literature as “literature that represents voices typically omitted from the traditional canon” (p. 686). In the latest edition of the classic textbook of children’s literature, *Charlotte Huck’s Children’s Literature*, Kiefer (2010) introduces an alternate, umbrella term “literature of diversity” (p. 85) as a reference to multicultural literature.

This research is based on the perception of ‘multicultural literature’ as depicted by Short, Lynch-Brown and Tomlinson (2013), in their discussion of literature for diverse society, in *Essentials of Children’s Literature*; their definition presents multicultural literature as the “literature by and about the racial, religious, and language groups in the U.S.” (p. 218). Throughout this research, I adhere to this definition because as suggested by Short, Lynch-Brown and Tomlinson (2013), the category of literature discussed above “ha[s] created a substantial body of children’s literature” (p. 218).

**Importance of Multicultural Literature**

Nieto’s (1992) definition of multicultural education advocates that multicultural education regardless of any differentiating factor, embraces all students. Based on this idea, it can be inferred that as one of many approaches to multicultural education, multicultural literature has educational significance for all students. In this context, Sims Bishop (1997) indicates that there are five educational functions of multicultural literature:
1. it can provide knowledge or information
2. it can change the way students view their world by offering varying perspectives
3. it can promote or develop an appreciation for diversity
4. it can give rise to critical inquiry, and
5. it can provide enjoyment and illuminate human experience, in both its unity and variety (pp. 4-5).

The discussion on the educational functions of multicultural literature, requires discussion on Sims Bishop’s (1990) views of functions of literature as a ‘mirror’ and a ‘window’; this view is recurrently referred to in the field of children’s literature, while discussing the benefits of multicultural children’s literature (Cai, 2002; Hall, 2008; Landt, 2011; Rochman, 1993):

Books are sometimes windows, offering views of world that may be real or imagined, familiar or strange. These windows are also sliding glass doors, and readers have only to walk through in imagination to become part of whatever world has been created or recreated by the author. When lighting conditions are just right, however, a window can also be a mirror. Literature transforms human experience and reflects it back to us, and in that reflection we can see our own lives and experiences as part of the larger human experience. Reading, then becomes a means of self-affirmation, and readers often seek their mirrors in books. (Bishop, 1990a, p. ix)

The interpretation of books as ‘mirrors’ demonstrates the idea that if books positively represent readers’ cultures and experiences, they might convey the readers a feeling of being validated, as they affirm the readers’ identities and lives (Tschida, Ryan & Ticknor, 2014). In this context, Sims Bishop (1990a) adds that a positive reading experience can also connect readers with the larger world of human experiences, suggesting that if readers fail to locate themselves in the books they read, or if they are depicted in a prejudiced or disdainful manner, the reader receives a message that “they
are devalued in society” (Sims Bishop, 1990, p. 561). Sims Bishop further indicates that negative reading experiences are with the children from marginalized groups since long.

Sims Bishop (1990a) cautions about the prospect that contrary to the marginalized groups, the children from mainstream groups, or culturally dominant groups, view only themselves in their books; in this case, “they will grow up with an exaggerated sense of their own importance and value in the world – a dangerous ethnocentrism” (p. x). This may prove detrimental not only for the current but also for the future generations, as these readers would not recognize the status quo as a problem (Bishop, 1990b). Therefore, for the children from dominant groups, the books serve as windows that require reading to view the lives beyond their own, and to realize the universality and connection between human experiences.

In Against Borders, Rochman (1993) offers an explanation of the overall purpose and need for good literature of diversity:

[a] good book can help to break down [barriers]. Books can make a difference in dispelling prejudice and building community: not with role models and literal recipes, not with noble messages about the human family, but with enthralling stories that make us imagine the lives of others. A good story lets you know people as individuals in all their particularity and conflict; and once you see someone as a person - flawed, complex, striving - then you've reached beyond stereotype. Stories, writing them, telling them, sharing them, transforming them, enrich us and connect us and help us know each other. (P. 19)

**Multicultural Literature and Canon**

The term ‘canon’, or ‘canonical works’ refer to a body of literary works that convey “cultural values and artistic excellence” (Harris & Hodges, 1995, p. 26 as cited in Moss, 2013). Instances of canonical works primarily include the classics that “have stood the test of time, represent high quality, and contain universal truths” (Moss, 2013, p. 49). Although it is undoubted that the canonical works play “a significant and vital
role in the fabric of U.S. society” (Boyd, 2012, p. 10), many researchers are apprehensive that they do not necessarily support the diversity of lifestyles, voices, and experiences of today.

Boutte, Hopkins, and Waklatsi (2008), Greenbaum (1994), and Pace (1992) examined the canonical works written for children; this included the books that recurrently appear on school reading lists, and books frequently read in classrooms. In their examinations, they focused on gender, race, and class of the characters and the writers. The three studies obtained similar findings; it was evident in all the studies that the writers were predominantly white and male. The authors presented concern over the outnumbering of literary works by white male writers, as it could convey the impression to the readers that the viewpoints of only white males are worth reading (Boutte, Hopkins, & Waklatsi, 2008; Greenbaum, 1994; Pace, 1992).

Furthermore, the representation of non-whites and non-males was significantly stereotypical; for instance, Pace (1992) observed that “[a]ll of the female characters in these stories are physically weak and passive” (p. 35). Pace stated that “[t]hese characters match culturally encoded stereotypes of women. The patterns that emerge are the passive victims of men, painfully silent characters who draw the meaning of their lives only from others” (p. 36). Pace established that the stereotypical codes evident in the textbook canon were also about people of color; it was found that the characters of color were “poor and at the mercy of white people” (p. 36). Such portrayals discovered in the textbook canon, reading lists and anthologies can convey the message that culture, tradition and lifestyle of the minorities are deficient in comparison to the dominant.
Bouitte, Hopkins, and Waklatsi (2008) examined the worldviews, perspectives and voices conveyed in 29 most frequently read children’s books in kindergarten through the third-grade classrooms. The diversity in classroom demographics and the accessibility of multicultural literature in the research of Bouitte, Hopkins, and Waklatsi, encouraged the initial assumption that the theme of diversity would be found pervasive in the books examined; however, their actual findings depicted the opposite. Similar to the studies by Greenbaum (1994), and Pace (1992), Bouitte, Hopkins, and Waklatsi (2008) found that the dominating theme in the books included color, gender and class; the individuals of color and different socio-economic backgrounds, were underrepresented. The main characters in the majority of the books were whites and males. The main characters were African American only in 17% of the books, and 60% belonged to the low and working SES class. Further, the books included one Asian character and no character of Latin or Native American ethnicity. Characters with disabilities or specific religious identities were also not found.

The most univocal claim among the similar implications discussed by these studies is that schools should integrate the literature and texts for children to be representing a variety of lifestyles, perspectives, cultures and balance between race, gender, and class into the curriculum. Greenbaum (1994) advocates that “[t]his is why the canon needs expanding; an inclusive reading list will begin to allow the growing numbers of students who are not white or male to fell the curriculum belongs to everyone” (p. 38).

Children’s Literature and Representations of Race, Gender, Disability, and Family

In this section, the body of previous research related to representations of race, gender, family and disability in a variety of children’s literature collections throughout
time, will be reviewed. The literature reviewed in this section includes studies focusing on how other collections of children’s books represent diverse races, genders, families and disabilities; for instance, all the studies reviewed here, selected the children’s book collections to examine in their studies with a different focus and criteria. The children’s book collections include best-selling lists, Caldecott lists, Scholastic books, and children’s reading list generated by former U.S. Secretary of Education, commercial reading programs and so on. However, the review suggested that regardless of the kind of children’s book collection examined, the studies were consistent in finding lack of diversity in the representations of race, gender, family and disability. Thus, to fill this gap, my focus is on how the CCSS collections of children’s books would represent such issues, since it has such a far-reaching influence on children in this country.

**Representations of Race**

In an issue of *The Saturday Review* published in 1965, Nancy Larrick reported a study called “The All-White World of Children's Books,” where 5,000 children’s trade books published in 3 years, from 1962 to 1964 were analyzed. The study revealed a stark scarcity of contemporary and positive depiction of African American characters in children’s books; the findings showed that black characters were presented in a stereotypical or unfavorable manner, and were set outside the United States. A change in the publishing industry and the field of education was necessitated, since the study by Larrick (1965); for instance, the Council on Interracial Books for Children was established to promote publication of the books reflecting the multiracial society, and Coretta Scott King Award was initiated in 1966 to recognize the African American authors and illustrators.
However, the statistics for half a century since 1966, have not changed. Every year since 1985, the Cooperative Children’s Book Center (CCBC) has documented the statistics of children’s books published in the United States, written and illustrated by African Americans. Since 1994, CCBC is also reporting the statistics of books written and illustrated by American Indians, Asian/Pacific people, Asian/Pacific Americans and Latinos, along with books authored by white authors and illustrators, focusing on American Indians, Asian/Pacific individuals, Asian/Pacific Americans and Latinos (Horning, Kruse & Schliesman, 2001). The statistics gathered by CCBC constantly state the low number of books published each year; this reflects the diversity across racial groups and their experiences, and the small proportion of authors and illustrators of color. Several studies have also discussed the low intensity of publishing; for over 50 years, the field of children’s books in the United States has witnessed a dearth in diversity of books reflecting the society’s diversity (Horning, Lindgren, & Schliesman, 2014; Lee & Low Books, 2013; Myers, 2014). The 2017 data from the CCBC further indicates that among the 3500 children’s books published in 2017 within the United States, only 14% were written by a person of color, and 24% of books were written about people of color. The statistics suggest that a vast majority of the contemporary children’s picture books are still authored by and are about white people, while the books published about people of color are also authored by white authors.

A large portion of the initial studies focused on the portrayal of racial/ethnic minority groups, and analyzing the representation of African American characters (Keith, 1995); similar studies followed in the subsequent years. Chall, Radwin, French and Hall (1975), replicated the study conducted by Larrick (1965). In their study on the
portrayal of African Americans in books for children, Chall et al. (1975) discovered an increase in the black characters in both texts and illustrations, while comparing to the data from Larrick’s study undertaken 10 years ago. However, nearly 86% of the children’s books included in Chall et al., lacked black characters in the texts or illustrations. Similarly, Rollock (1984) in the annotated bibliography titled "The Black Experience in Children’s Books," published in the years between 1979 and 1984, noticed that averagely, only 1.5% of the books published in a year, contained African American characters. Subsequently, Bishop (1991) studied the representation of African Americans in children’s books published by the mid-80s, and discovered that the representation of black characters barely accounted for 1% of the total books, whereas the representation of Asians, Hispanics and Native Americans was even lesser.

By 1990s, more researchers began examining not only the volume of racial diversity, but also the quality and types of representations, such as accuracy and authenticity; for instance, Barfield and Wilson (1985) analyzed fables for children rooted in African American sources. Barfield and Wilson discovered that some symbols used in the fables were unauthentic and to an extent, even distorted. In 1992, Reimer conducted a study on the representation of different racial groups, including African American, Mexican American, Asian American and Native American represented in the recommended children’s reading list generated by former U.S. Secretary of Education William Bennet and Jim Treslease. In this study, Reimer (1992) discovered that the books hardly featured racial minorities, especially as primary characters. Further, Reimer (1982) not only found that none of the main characters in the reading list belonged to racial minority groups, but also discovered that among the few books that
incorporated multicultural contents, the African-Americans Hispanics, and Asians were presented in a stereotypical light. Reimer’s study also observed that children’s books on the experiences of racial minorities emphasized their experiences of assimilation into the dominant ‘white culture’ in the United States.

A multitude of research studies in the last few decades have focused on the multicultural perspectives in children’s books; this includes representation of people of color and minority groups excluded or marginalized within the majority culture (CCBC, 2018; Botelho & Rudman, 2009). However, the studies revealed that the representation of the cultures and experiences of people of color are still misrepresented, under-represented, or non-represented (Hughes, Hassell, Barkley, & Koehler, 2009); the misrepresentations includes the characters of color being exoticized, or portrayed as though they existed only in historical times, and not in the present (Felsinger, 2018). For instance, Mendoza and Reese (2001) examined multicultural picture books to evaluate the positive representation of races and culture, and its accuracy. They discovered that even among award-winning multicultural picture books, different races and cultures were portrayed stereotypically. In the analysis of *Brother Eagle, Sister Sky*, attributed to Chief Seattle, the Suquamish, and the Duwamish Native American tribes, Mendoza and Reese established that the illustrations were to an extent inaccurate representations of Northwest tribal culture, which reinforced the “long-standing stereotypes about Native dress and life…the level of authenticity and first-hand knowledge is often insufficient” (p.8).

Hughes-Hassell et al. (2009) studied the books that assisted the second-grade and third-grade children in learning to read. The findings depicted a stark under-
representation of the characters of color; while 83.5% of the books included at least one white main character or secondary character, 25.8% of the books included a person of color as at least one main character or secondary character. Further, they found that if a book contained characters from more than one group, a white character inevitably appeared in the book.

The studies conducted by Martinez-Roldan’s (2013), and Braden and Rodriguez’s (2016) focus on examining the negative stereotypes about Mexicans perpetuated in children’s books. The critical content analysis of Skippityjon Jones by Martinez-Roldan (2013) discovered that the use of language is significant in perpetuating negative stereotypes about Mexicans. Braden and Rodriguez (2016) also in the critical multicultural analysis of Latinx children’s books pointed out the problematic use of illustrations and language.

Koss (2015) conducted a critical content analysis of 455 children’s picture books published after 2012, to study the representation of primary and secondary characters’ ethnicity, gender and disability in the picture books, along with the authors’ and illustrators’ gender and ethnicity. The study determines that 75% of the main human characters are accounted for by white characters; 15% by black characters, and under 6% by Asian, Latino, Middle Eastern, and Native American main characters combined. Koss (2015) further established that the books depicting culturally specific elements of characters of colors are rare; even when the books are depicting culturally neutral and generic characters, the portrayals are mostly in the background and support for the white main characters is evident. Koss (2015) concludes that

White privilege is apparent in the creation and publication of contemporary picturebooks. Results of this study show that children who interact with
current picturebooks predominantly see White faces and receive the message that, according to scholars of CRT, to be White is to be better. This lack of titles that feature ethnically diverse characters tells non-White children that they do not matter, and can inhibit them from developing a positive self-identity. (p.36-37)

In 2016, Chaudhri & Schau collected and analyzed Scholastic books about Native Americans; the analysis indicated that the books did not tend to be set in the present American society, reinforcing the images of Native Americans as ‘vanished Indians’. Chaudhri & Schau further attributed the misrepresentations of minority racial groups to the lack of authors and illustrators from these groups, because in such cases, the authors and illustrators from the racial groups with relatively less authentic knowledge and experiences would create the books about them.

**Representations of Gender and Gender Roles**

The children learn about the world within and beyond their lives through picture books. They see, hear, and acquire the actions of boys and girls in children’s books; this includes the actions of thinking, acting, and speaking. The picture books assist the children in perceiving and learning to differentiate the type of emotions and behaviors considered as masculine or feminine or what is usually expected of boys and girls (Karbon, Fabes, Carlo, & Martin, 1990; Tepper, 2005). The children’s picture books thus, serve as an important medium through which young readers adopt the awareness of gender and gender roles, role models and gender-based stereotypes. The potential roles of picture books suggest the need for the provision of books to children that are chosen carefully for the proportional, unbiased and respectful portrayal of each gender and their associated roles.

The Gender Schema Theory (Bem, 1981) elucidates that people’s socialization and self-identities, which are associated with gender, are developed and transmitted
through gender-associated members or information in society. The theory proposes that the characterization of gender roles through such medium greatly influences children’s development of identities connected to gender. As a result of such an intersecting point concerning gender and gender roles in the review of related literature on the topic of children’s literature, I emphasized the focus on the studies of children’s picture books associated only with Gender Schema Theory.

Weitzman, Eifler, Hokadada, and Ross (1972) conducted a seminal study on the gender stereotypes in children’s literature; they analyzed the Caldecott Medal and Honor books between 1938 and 1970. The findings of the study exhibited that females were almost invisible, regardless of their inclusion, in the titles, central roles, pictures, and stories of every sample of books (p. 1128). Further, it indicated that girls and women were depicted as passive, and associated with indoor activities, while boys and men were represented as active and involved in outdoor activities. Moreover, the male characters tended to the leading female characters that conformed to them (Weitzman et al., 1972).

Further, numerous studies have displayed similar focus and results that suggested disproportionate and stereotypical representations of males and females; for instance, the quantitative analyses of Schau and Scott (1984) and Barnett (1986) exhibited a striking outnumbering of male characters in the illustrations. Also, it was discovered that “females and males are usually portrayed in sex- stereotypical roles; females appear more often than do males in derogatory roles; and/or male generic language is used” (Schau & Scott, 1984, p.183). Also, two studies replicated the research undertaken by Weitzman et al. (1972) in 1987. Heintz (1987) examined the
Caldecott medal-winning books from 1971 to 1984. Heintz further discovered that male characters were pictured twice as frequently as female characters in illustrations. Williams, Vernon, Williams, and Malecha (1987) found that both male and female characters were portrayed with traditional gender roles; the results show that there was a lack of girls with any career goals, and female role models, while the male characters were associated with independent behaviors.

McDonald (1989) examined 41 children’s books published between 1976 and 1987; half of them were Caldecott medal-winning books, and the other half were selected randomly for the analysis. The findings, which were consistent with the previous studies’ results, suggested that 68% of the primary characters were male and 60% of the illustrations portrayed male characters. A range of similar studies followed in the 1990s.

The celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Caldecott Award, included Allen, Allen, and Sigler (1993) comparing Caldecott Medal and Honor books published in two different periods of time, between 1938 and 1940, and between 1986 and 1988. Though the researchers discovered an increase in the number of female characters and illustrations between 1986 and 1988, the male characters were more than the female characters in all types of representations. Crabb and Bielawski (1994) examined the same sets of Caldecott Award-winning children’s books used in the study by Williams et al. (1987); Crabb and Bielawski noted that traditional gender roles played a significant role in the representation of characters; the female characters’ portrayals were mostly associated with housework, while male characters’ with production-oriented work in non-domestic domains.
Oskamp, Kaufman and Wolterbeek (1996) looked at the representation of male and female characters, and gender stereotypes in the Caldecott Medal and Honor books published between 1986 and 1991. The researchers while depicting human characters found that the illustrations of each gender were evenly distributed. Also, among the picture books that encompassed animals and personified characters, male characters and their illustrations outnumbered the female personified characters. In the study conducted in the same year, Turner-Bowker also examined 30 Caldecott Medal and Honor books published between the decade from 1984 and 1994. Turner-Bowker’s (1996) findings also advocated that more male characters appeared in the texts and illustrations, but in addition, it was also discovered that among the central characters, the number of male and female characters was reasonably balanced. However, Narahara’s (1998) study still indicated the opposite; in the study of 20 books that kindergarten teachers randomly selected for reading aloud in the classroom, the males outnumbered females among the central and secondary characters. Further, the male illustrations were twice as many as female illustrations.

The studies conducted in the present century have not displayed much difference in male and female representations. Diekman and Murnen (2004) examined 20 children’s books that were already acknowledged as either ‘sexist’ or ‘non-sexist’ in the previous studies. The study concentrated on representations of male and female characters’ personalities, their social roles, status, etc. Diekman and Murnen discovered that the books published more recently depicted less sexist view as they comprised of more female central characters in general, and more female characters performing non-traditional roles. The findings did not include many male characters with non-traditional
roles, but were likely in higher status. Moreover, they realized that not many books in their analysis contained female characters. Hamilton, Anderson, Broaddus and Young (2006) imitating the study conducted by Allen et al. in 1993, investigated 30 Caldecott book winners, and evaluated 170 bestselling children’s picture books published between 1995 and 2001. The males still exceeded significantly in terms of the book titles, primary characters, and illustrations. Interestingly, they also discovered underrepresentation of female characters in the collection of Caldecott books in comparison to the non-awarded, bestselling books.

The recent studies, such as the study conducted by Ly Kok and Findlay (2006) on 25 Australian Picture Books published in between 1974-1978 and 2001-2003, showcase consistent underrepresentation of female characters in the two periods. In the quantitative analysis, Ly Kok and Findlay (2006) further observed that male and female characters in the 1970s and 2000s displayed stereotypical emotions; the male characters exhibited masculine emotions and the female characters, feminine emotions. In 2010, Mills, Pankake, and Schall examined 94 winners of favorite ‘Children's Choice’ book award; although the female characters possessing titles showed an inclination towards non-stereotypical portrayals, only 23 titles feature these female characters as primary characters.

The literature discussed in this section highlights that there is a tendency for children to develop bias and prejudices in their early years; thus, there is a need for sufficient books contributing to amending the stereotypes and cultivating respect for diverse individuals, backgrounds and experiences.
Representations of Disability

The framework for the analysis of disability includes ‘Critical Disability Theory’ which, “challenges the beliefs and assumptions of ableism that are present in society (Hunt, 1966, cited as Koss, 2015). The Critical Disability Theory (CDT) critiques the assumptions that people with physical, emotional, or cognitive disabilities are not competent to participate in or contribute to the mainstream activities of the society (Koss, 2015). Intrinsically, the investigation of characters with disabilities in conjunction with CDT, studies the inclusion of characters with disabilities, more specifically, the types and contexts of those representations (Koss, 2015); this deduces that children’s literature can assist young readers, with and without identified disabilities, to learn about disabilities, and cultivate a positive perspective and attitude towards the disabled (Favazza & Odom, 1997).

However, as contended by Dyches, Prater, and Jenson (2006), mere appearances of characters with disabilities is not enough; this implies that the representation of characters with diverse disabilities in children’s books, should be accompanied by non-stereotyping and authentic portrayals. Further, though there is a lack of research on the depiction of characters with disabilities, the existing studies have discovered that several characters were presented in a stereotyped manner (Hunt, 1966); for instance, the characters with disabilities are “stereotyped as a person, “needing to be fixed,” “isolated,” “angry,” “in danger,” or “unable to function in daily life” (Golos & Moses, 2013, p. 1).

Smith (2000) in the qualitative content analysis of the presence of characters with disabilities in children’s literature determined the stereotypes as both subtle and obvious of characterization of disabilities. In several books, the characters with appeared as
secondary characters, rather than primary, such as, siblings of main characters without identified disabilities. Also, when the characters suffered from an Attention Deficit Disorder, which was seldom in the collection of the books in analysis, the portrayals were negative.

Agnew and Partridge (2001) examined description of disabilities ascertained in the titles of The Cambridge Guide to Children’s Books in English (2001). Agnew and Partridge found that the use of language to define the characters with disabilities was not enough considerate or attentive to reflect the language preferred by disabled people; this includes terms such as being "imprisoned" in the wheelchairs, being "wheelchair-bound" and "crippled." Miller’s (2003) study included an examination of the representations of characters with disabilities in the Texas Bluebonnet Award titles between 1981 and 2002. In addition to most of these depictions being stereotyped, the discoveries indicated scant award-winning titles having characters with any disabilities.

More recently, Koss’ (2015) descriptive content analysis of 455 children’s picture books published since 2012, observed three types of disability, namely, physical, emotional and cognitive. Koss discovered very few main characters suffering from any disability. The results disclosed that 34 titles represented physical disability, such as, “blind, deaf, and use of wheelchair or cane” (p. 36), while 2 titles contained representations of cognitive disability, namely, learning disability and dementia. Further, no instances of characters with emotional disabilities were presented.

**Representations of Family**

The existing studies depict scarcity of studies focusing on the representation of families included in texts authored for children (Dunkerly & Serafini, 2009). However, the studies present consistent results, which depict that the representation of families
and family structures often support the families considered traditional, such as, nuclear family household households with two heterosexual parents, despite a slight increase in the portrayal of diverse family structures (Dunkerly & Serafini, 2009).

Adler (1982) analyzed the illustrations of families in a sample of best-selling and award-winning children's books. In the sample, 67 Caldecott and Newbery award winners for the years 1965-1969 and 1975-1979, were included. The content analysis depicted that the best-selling and award-winning books presented diversity in family structure to some extent. However, Adler (1982) criticized the portrayal of one-parent households; among the one-parent households, none of the families were black. Also, the depiction of one-parent households included an overwhelmingly negative tone. Further, the findings suggested that the dissection of housework and paid-work between the parents was also traditional.

Kariuki and Harris (2000) conducted a more comprehensive study in terms of period of time. They analyzed the trends in the portrayal of families in children's literature from the 1950s to the 1990s. They randomly selected 5 sample titles from each era; the selection was done from the collection of children's literature books from 1 major university, 2 colleges, and 3 public libraries. The content and illustrations in each sample was analyzed to compare each era. Although traditional families remained a major trend among family representations, this study revealed a positive increase in inclusion of families with a variety of lifestyles. Kariuki and Harris witnessed an increase not only in the different types of families, such as divorce or single parent homes, blended families, ethnic families, same-sex families, and extended families; they also discussed the issues the families might confront. The issues faced by same-sex families
included matters of acceptance, while the matters of concern for others included inner-city housing, disease of a family member, death of parents/grandparents, and the families on the move.

Dunkerly and Serafini (2009) examined illustrations of families involved in commercial reading programs. The researchers concerned for the possible impact of family illustrations in mandated texts on children, for their analysis, chose the anthologies popular in the state under study, along with collections popular nation-wide. Thus, the analysis included the commercial series including Harcourt Trophies, MacMillan-MacGraw Hill Reading, and Scott Foresman Reading. The selection of collections was followed by choosing titles for grades, first through fifth along with the genres of non-fiction, realistic fiction, and biographies; this mostly included picture books and illustrated chapter books. The researchers intended to compare the components, such as ethnicity, socio-economic status, and marital status included in the reading selections with the census data for the district and state most modern at the time. The analysis of 46 titles by Dunkerly and Serafini, suggested that “[r]ather than reflecting a variety of family constructs, nearly 90 percent (41 selections) of the basal anthology selections examined depicted families living in what could be considered traditional nuclear family households: middle-class, married couples raising their own children” (p. 7). There was only one book depicting the families comprising of divorced parents, remarriage and stepparents. Also, single-parent households were scant, as they were found only in 3 titles. Further, no title in the analysis depicted same-sex parents.
Randolph (2013) also examined the portrayal of human families in the texts and illustrations that won the title of Children’s Choices Award of the International Reading Association’s and Children’s Book Council’s Children’s Choices Books, in the categories of Early Reader and Young Reader between 2007 to 2012. A total of 14 picture books were selected, and the researcher used both quantitative and qualitative content analysis methods to analyze the selection. The analysis was directed towards familial relationships, role of family in the plot, family unit, and cultural/racial representation among exclusively human character family units. In the context of only representation of only a few types of families in the selection, Randolph (2013) concluded that, “the Children’s Choices books did not display all types of families and the prevalence of diverse family units found in real American homes was not represented in the Children's Choice Award Books” (p. iii); the classification of families depicted 57.14% of two-parent family, 35.72% of one-parent family, and 7.14% of families showed grandparents as parents. Further, although there were four other types of family units used in the analysis, including blended family, same-sex family, extended family, and cooperative family, they were absent in the titles. Randolph (2013) contents that despite the idea that school teachers, librarians and parents tend to deem the children’s choices for books as they want to the young readers to read good quality books, there is a need for reconsidering the portrayal of human families in the collection.

**Teachers’ Text Selection**

This section discusses the methods used by elementary school teachers to select children’s books for their classrooms, in relation to what has been referred to as ‘selective traditions’. Since several decades, the studies have investigated the issues of text selection and selective traditions; these studies have highlighted the process of pre-
service and in service teachers’ text selection, and their reasons for selecting and rejecting certain texts. In addition, the studies have focused not only on examining teachers’ unconscious choices, but also deliberate and mindful rationales for selecting and rejecting certain texts; these studies attempted to explore the factors that influenced teachers’ decisions about the types of books selected and rejected. The studies drew on the notion of selective tradition, which Williams (1977) defined as:

[What we have to see is not just “a tradition” but a selective tradition: an intentionally selective version of a shaping past and preshaped present, which is then powerfully operative in the process of social and cultural definition and identification. (p. 115)]

Luke et al. (1986) studied the selective traditions by examining elementary preservice teachers’ selection of children’s literature. The study was based on 54 preservice teachers, who were asked to bring a book to their Language Arts class; the book was expected to fulfill 2 criteria, firstly, it should be a book they liked and secondly, a book they thought would benefit and interest the primary school students. The motive behind such vague criteria presented to the preservice teachers, was intentional; the aim was to examine the preservice teachers’ unmediated selection, “based on their previously acquired commonsense assumptions about appropriate reading material” (p. 211). The analyses of the preservice teachers’ books, their written responses and discussions revealed that their selections were made with slight to negligible consideration of the race or gender of the characters or the authors of the books. A majority of the characters conformed to stereotypical gender roles and norms, and many preservice teachers justified their selections by commenting that they chose the “books I liked as a kid” (p. 216). Luke et al. (1986) indicated the “evidence of cross-
generational cultural reproduction” (p. 216); thus, suggesting the use of “male-authored and male-centered children’s literature” (p. 216).

Jipson and Paley (1991) based on the study conducted by Luke et al. (1986), surveyed 55 in-service teachers’ selection of children’s books to be studied in their classroom. The survey observed the similarity between the perceptibility of selective tradition in in-service teachers’ selections and Luke et al. (1986). The process included the teachers making a list of three books used during the previous year for their classroom instructions, including the records of the books’ titles, authors, and main characters. The teachers were also asked to document the reasons for selecting the books, which provided them with opportunities to “conceptualize and construct rationales for their choices, thus reflecting their personal beliefs about using children’s book” (p. 150). The findings related to the race and gender of the main characters showed that the in-service teachers’ selections were again limited to whites (94%) and males (65%). In addition, 59% of the authors were male, 95% of who belonged to Euro-American heritage. The analysis of the teachers’ reasons for selecting the books can be organized into three main categories:

1. The appropriateness of the text within a larger instructional context;
2. personal preference offered to the books because of the story, author, illustrations, or award winning status;

Jipson and Paley (1991) concluded that like the preservice teachers in Luke et al. (1986), the experienced elementary school teachers also exhibited unexamined racial and gender bias. Despite that they further established that the teachers’ literature selections were a “complicated, densely-layered activity which involves a multiplicity of
curricular, personal, aesthetic, social, as well as ideological factors” (Jipson & Paley, 1991, p. 157).

Subsequent to the studies of Luke et al. (1986), and Jipson and Paley (1991), Wollman-Bonilla (1998) examined the pre-service and in service teachers' choices of children's literature; however, in contrast to the two previous studies, her study observed the teachers' rationales for rejecting certain children's books. The study included pre-service and in service teachers from two sections of Language Arts course being taught by the researcher; each section included 20-25 students. In both sections, majority of the students were white females with European heritage. Wollman-Bonilla (1998) solicited the data from teachers' responses to the texts for children, which they read in the beginning of every class. The method assisted in collection and examination for the patterns of only negative responses and objections to the texts. The researcher discovered that the pre-service and in service teachers seemed unaccepting to the books containing gender, race, or class perspectives or experiences other than their own. In addition, similar to the study by Jipson and Paley (1991), the criteria can be divided into three main categories; however, these criteria focus on rejecting certain texts. The criteria included:

1. the belief that a text is inappropriate for children because it might frighten or corrupt them by introducing them to things they don’t or shouldn’t know about;

2. the belief that a text is inappropriate for children because it fails to represent dominant social values or myths;

3. the belief that a text is inappropriate for children because it identifies racism or sexism as a social problem (Wollman-Bonilla, 1998, p. 289)

Still, Wollman-Bonilla’s (1998) is distinctive from the previous studies as, it concluded that the teachers in her study were well-aware of their criteria for rejecting
certain texts. Wollman-Bonilla further added that in the situations where the teachers’ selections failed to represent the voices and experiences of non-mainstreams, the teachers consciously applied the criteria to achieve the best for the students.

In addition to the above studies, researchers have also constantly investigated the process of teachers’ text selection, especially focusing on the factors that influenced the process (Falter, 2015; Michna, 1999; Watkins & Ostenson, 2015). However, except the studies already discussed and a few unpublished doctoral dissertations, similar studies seldom approached the topic with concentration on the teachers’ conscious efforts or lack of consideration for integration of a variety of voices, experiences, and values in the society; the studies rather concentrated on teachers’ decision making process about the books with consideration of curricular focus, information sources, illustrations, etc. Thus, such studies are not referred to or discussed in detail in this study. In the following section, I will introduce CCSS in connection with their suggestions for children’s literature selections.

Common Core State Standards and Text Selection

In 2010, National Governors Association (NGA) and The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) launched an educational reform called the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The CCSS describes academic standards required by the students to be promoted to the next grade from kindergarten to 12th grade. Hitherto in U.S., 45 states, the District of Columbia, and four territories (Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, American Samoa, and US Virgin Islands) have adopted Mathematics and English language arts/literacy (ELA) standards, incorporated the standards into their classroom instruction (Calkins, Ehrenworth & Lehman, 2012).
The CCSS aims to offer consistent learning goals to all the states at each grade level, specifically directed towards preparing the students for college education or careers. The CCSS also emphasizes on strengthening students’ competitiveness in the global society. CCSSO draws on the national and international research and practice to reflect the objectives in the design of the standards; teachers, school chiefs, administrators, and other experts in the field of education also provided their expertise and opinions in the formation of the standards (Calkins, Ehrenworth & Lehman, 2012).

However, implementation of the CCSS has generated few concerns; the concern includes the lists of exemplar texts provided by the CCSS presented in ELA CCSS Appendix B. The list of exemplar texts include sample book sets for grade bands as defined by the standards: K–1, 2–3, 4–5, 6–8, 9–10, and 11 and College and Career Readiness (CCR). The lists for grade bands k-1 and 2-3 include 6 categories, which are stories, read-aloud stories, poetry, read-aloud poetry, informational texts, and read-aloud informational texts; the grade band 4-5 includes 4 categories, which are stories, poetry, and informational texts.

The Appendix B was created aiming to:

- exemplify the level of complexity and quality that the Standards require all students in a given grade band to engage with. They are suggestive of the breadth of texts that students should encounter in the text types required by the Standards. (p. 2)

The Appendix B includes not only the lists of exemplar texts, but also the excerpts from each text. The inclusion of lists of exemplar texts and excerpts commences an issue, which is slightly problematic; to obtain the permission to publish the excerpts and prevent the possible permission fees in the process, Appendix B eventually includes many books that are older or out of print (Short, 2013). Short (2013)
discovers and fears that except for one recent book, all the texts in the story category in the exemplar list for grade band k-1 are rather dated (published between 1957 and 1978). Similarly, Jacob-Israel (2012) examined the availability, lexile levels and publication dates of the books listed. The study indicated that most of the books were out of print; Jacob-Israel highlighted that “publishers were climbing into their attics and warehouses blowing off inches of dust from out-of-print copyright dates and seeing dollar signs” (p.16).

Moreover, many researchers (Moss, 2013; Short, 2013; Watkins & Ostenson, 2015), teachers and librarians (Burns, Kimmel & Garrison, 2013; Cesari, 2011) are concerned that these lists in Appendix B might turn into a “new canon...a kind of national reading list” (Moss, 2013, p. 38), as schools and school districts are purchasing the books on the exemplar lists (Short, 2013). Newmann (2012) also states in the similar line that “given the way illustrative examples in Standards easily become part of the canon, it seems like that the exemplars in the Common Core will quickly become fundamental to instruction, because teachers will expect them to appear on the exam” (p. 8); despite that the Appendix B states:

The choices [exemplar lists] should serve as useful guideposts in helping educators select texts of similar complexity, quality, and range for their own classrooms. They expressly do not represent a partial or complete reading list. (p. 2)

In addition to the concerns already discussed, the exemplar lists are criticized as they tend to overlook diversity of the society and discourage the multicultural focus (Burns, Kimmel & Garrison, 2013; Byod, 2012; Compton-Lily, 2013; Comton-Lily & Stewart, 2013; Cunningham, 2013; Dove & Honigsfeld, 2013; Gangi & Reilly, 2013; Landt, 2011; Moss, 2013; Springen, 2012).
The concerns about the text exemplars in Appendix B are presented in two related folds. First, Appendix B does not include enough books that reflect the social and linguistic diversity of the society (Burns, Kimmel & Garrison, 2013; Byod, 2012; Cunningham, 2013; Gangi & Reilly, 2013; Landt, 2011; 2013; Moss, 2013). Lee & Low, who are one of the publishers that highlight multicultural themes also critique the racial representation of the list as "a pretty white list" (DeForge, 2013). In the context of the CCSS exemplar list Boyd (2012), similarly contended the need for students to view themselves in the selection of books that represent “a wide range of authors from varied backgrounds, who write about extensive topics and issues” (p. 11). Second, the selection of Appendix B not only lacks in multicultural literature, but it also overly emphasizes canonical works (Boyd, 2012; Moss, 2013); for instance, in the category of story for 4th and 5th grade band, the 10 exemplar texts include 5 canonical works, such as *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (Carroll, 1962), *The Secret Garden* (Burnett, 1985), *The Black Stallion* (Farley, 2008), *The Little Prince* (de Saint-Exupery, 2000), and *Tuck Everlasting* (Babbitt, 1975; Moss, 2013). Moss (2013) also indicates that the ratio in the category of stories is similar to the texts of other categories and other grade level bands.

Calkins et al. (2012) reflects the concerns discussed in this section; thus, a closer and more critical study of the CCSS and their appendix is required:

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are a big deal… the standards represent the most sweeping reform of the k-12 curriculum that has ever occurred in this country. It is safe to say that across the entire history of American education, no single document will have played a more influential role over what is taught in our schools. The standards are already affecting what is published, mandated, and tested in schools---and also what is marginalized and neglected. (p. 1)
A Gap in the Literature

Children’s literature is a reflection of the society and the contemporary times; it is a vehicle to convey and neglect certain type of ideas and values. The previous studies on children’s literature reveal that in the process of writing, publishing, and selecting books for children, the writers, publishers and teachers portray a tendency to choose the books that perpetuate the focus on masculinity and whiteness; the selected books hardly emphasize on the socioeconomically marginalized. Further, as Harris (1999) specified, when an author of children’s book selects the topic included and excluded in a work authored for children, whether consciously or unconsciously, the work inevitably reflects their personal beliefs and assumptions. Therefore, teachers’ choice of a book for their classroom would mean selecting, “certain sets of sociocultural values, beliefs and attitudes” (Jipson & Paley, 1991, p.148), while inevitably excluding the other (Wollman-Bonilla, 1998).

A gap was identified in the review of prior studies; firstly, the previous studies on the explicit and implicit values depicted in children’s literature, examined representation and under-representation of certain racial, ethnic and gender groups. The present study in the context of exploring the values and messages conveyed about the society in children’s books; however, this study extends its focus on race and gender to include other features of children’s books such as, publication dates, settings and themes/contents of plots, various traits of characters (age, gender, race, family structure, and disability) and authors’ or illustrators’ information. The current study advocates that if children’s books reflect experiences of the society, and the values and messages about the society are examined in them, the books require a more
comprehensive look at the dimensions of society including issues of not only race and gender, but also family structure and disability.

Further, the gap is between the change in the curriculum of United States and the classroom teachers who are required to adopt and integrate the new standards into their instruction. The current study differs from the previous studies as it seeks to examine the books provided collectively in sets of selection; hitherto, the investigation of messages conveyed in children’s literature and further, the study of these messages being selected consciously and unconsciously, have focused only on the selection of books used in a relatively small scale, such as a book selection for one classroom, one district or a list of children’s favorite books. Conversely, CCSS is an educational change that intends to influence the curriculum in classrooms more extensively and intensively. Although a few studies have already been conducted on diversity representation in CCSS exemplar books listed in the Appendix B, their focus of examination however, was limited to the representation of race and gender of characters and authors (Burns, Kimmel, & Garrison, 2013; Boyd, 2012; Compton-Lily, 2013; Gangi, & Reilly, 2013; Moss, 2013; Landt, 2011).

Therefore, to fill the research gap, there is a need for a study that firstly, investigates the values and messages about our society passed on to young readers through children’s literature, by examining the representation of comprehensive facets of our society in literature for children; and secondly, a study that examines the particular selection of books provided and suggested by the CCSS as ‘exemplars’.
CHAPTER 3
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK, METHODOLOGY, AND METHODS

Theoretical Framework

This research uses critical literacy as the theoretical framework, a lens through which the exemplar picture books listed in the CCSS ELA Appendix B for K-1 and 2-3 grade bands are examined. A theory derived from critical pedagogies (Freire, 1970; 2007), ‘critical literacy’ supports this study, as it requires firstly, analyzing languages and texts to scrutinize their underlying stances regarding the power attributed to characters, representations, or perspectives; and secondly, resisting and challenging the mainstream ideas, attitudes and behaviors propagated in the languages and texts.

The theorists, educators, and linguists have defined and described the term ‘critical literacy’ in several ways (Lewison, Flint & Van Sluys, 2002). In an academic research journal, Critical Literacy: The Theories and Practices, ‘critical literacy’ is defined as “an educational practice that emphasizes the connections between language, knowledge, power and subjectivities” (De Souza & Andreotti, 2007, para. 1). Further, in the review of 30 years of literature on critical literacy and its definition, Lewison, Flint, and Van Sluys (2002) report that ‘critical literacy’ encompasses four dimensions while reading texts; this includes, disrupting the commonplace, interrogating multiple viewpoints, focusing on sociopolitical issues, and taking action and promoting social justice. However, despite the diverse definitions, various practices of critical literacy have their origin in the theory of Critical Pedagogy (1970; 2007), established by Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire. The Pedagogy of the Oppressed (Freire, 1970; 2007), is the seminal work in which, the notions of the oppressors and the oppressed, banking
model of education, the power of dialogue, and the transformation to critical consciousness position the foundation for critical literacy.

Freire’s work on ‘critical pedagogy’ has influenced many educators’ and researchers’ discussions on critical literacy and has further, served as the theoretical basis for their research since almost 5 decades; for instance, Freire’s perspectives were extended in the work of Giroux (2011) and Shor (1997), as they observed critical pedagogy in the context of politics and classrooms of the United States. Shor (1999) highlighted that critical literacy assists in understanding that words enable rethinking of the world by placing the status quo into question to reconsider how the humans have been historically and mechanically defined and formed by the words that surrounded them; it can be implied that language and the use of it constructed the society and the individuals living in it. Thus, Shor (1999) contended that language and discourse requires critical consideration, to evade the perpetuation of the inequitable power structure.

Similarly, many educators promote the application of critical literacy in engagement with texts, in reading and interpreting them. The significant research on critical literacy includes the topics of critical visual literacy (Newfield, 2011), teaching writing with critical literacy (Comber, 2001; Reid, 2011; Shor, 1997; Smith), discourse and storytelling (Enciso, 2011; Gee, 1990), and building new understandings about social issues while closely examining, deconstructing and reconstructing texts (Lazar, Edwards & McMillon, 2012). In the context of children’s literature, Morrell (2008) points out that dominant or canonical literature tends to promote the values of patriarchy, which runs parallel to Ladson-Billings’ (2009) contention that “White supremacist” (p.29)
is perpetuated in the school curriculum, especially in the literature for children (Al-Shalabi, Salameh, Thebyan & Umari, 2011). In the similar sense, Luke and Freebody (1999) established the Four Resources Model that equips learners with critical perspective in reading and writing in order to:

- Participate in understanding and composing meaningful written, visual, and spoken texts, taking into account each text’s interior meaning systems in relation to their available knowledge and their experiences of other cultural discourses, texts, and meaning systems;

- Use texts functionally by traversing and negotiating the labor and social relations around them—that is, by knowing about and acting on the different cultural and social functions that various texts perform inside and outside school, and understanding that these functions shape the way texts are structured, their tone, their degree of formality, and their sequence of components;

- Critically analyze and transform texts by acting on knowledge that texts are not ideologically natural or neutral—that they represent particular points of views while silencing others and influence people’s ideas—and that their designs and discourses can be critiqued and redesigned in novel and hybrid ways (p. 193).

Moreover, these practices with critical perspectives are directly applicable to the analysis of children’s literature because it serves as a context for the readers to contemplate about race, class, and gender and their interconnection in real life (Alsop, 2010; Botelho & Rudman, 2009; Nieto, 2009). Botelho and Rudman (2009) point out that it is crucial to critically “examine issues of diversity and social justice by problematizing children’s literature. It is a literary study for social change. Readers, young and adult alike, can grapple, inquire, and engage with issues of social transformation and justice through their reading” (p.33). Critical literacy is a way of reading texts profoundly while attempting to interpret the texts “by questioning issues such as who wrote the text, what the author wanted us to believe, and what information the author chose to include or exclude in the text” (McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004, p. 6). Therefore, it can be implied that critical literacy aids creation of a new dimension of
comprehending texts by encouraging readers to problematize the messages conveyed by the texts, and the power-relations existing between authors and readers.

McLaughlin & DeVoogd (2004) emphasize the importance of critical literacy by stating:

[w]e need critical literacy because it helps us: (1) to establish equal status in the reader-author relationship; (2) to understand the motivation the author had for writing the text (the function) and how the author uses the text to make us understand in a particular way (the form); (3) to understand that the author’s perspective is not the only perspective; and (4) to become active users of the information in texts to develop independent perspectives, as opposed to being passive reproducers of the ideas in texts. (p. 7)

Additionally, it is important to understand the “expanded notion of texts” pointed out in critical literacy by the critical theorists (McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004, p. 20); this suggests that while applying critical literacy, the concept of a text is not only restricted to the written work of language, but it is also concerned with a variety of subjects such as, daily circumstances, social phenomena, relationships, and ultimately, the entire society and the world. Van Sluys (2003) suggests, “[c]ritical literacy is about the assembly, manipulation, and constant renegotiation of practices that encourage people to become active participants that question how the world is and work toward more just images of what it might be” (p. 21).

In employing critical literacy as its theoretical framework, the study discerns the notion of texts in both restricted and prolonged ways. The study examined all the CCSS exemplar picture books included in the three selected elementary grade bands as individual texts in the restricted notion. Thereby, the questions that guided the analysis are:

1. Who or what is included in the texts?
2. Who or what is missing from the texts?
3. Who or what is under-represented/marginalized?
Simultaneously, this study also regards the sets of CCSS exemplar books as a particular phenomenon as prolonged notion of texts, reflecting upon the questions:

4. What messages do the texts seem to convey?
5. What and whose values are promoted in the selection?

Later in this chapter, the ground for methodological decisions made for this research, which includes critical literacy as the theoretical framework, and its methods have been elucidated.

**Methodology**

The initial preparation for this qualitative research included discerning the philosophical domain from which my perspective was oriented. The process included reading and reflecting on the ranges of varying epistemologies, theoretical perspectives, and methodologies, to determine the ones that appear corresponding to my own stance as a researcher and are further, appropriate to answer the research questions. The following research design introduces the structure of methodology employed:

**Epistemology**

Crotty’s (1998) deliberates that epistemology concerns “how we know what we know” (p.8). Further, it is suggested that various epistemologies explain different perspectives regarding the ways in which new knowledge is discovered or created. Examples include objectivism, constructionism, and subjectivism (Crotty, 1998). Among the varying epistemologies, my stance is consonant with constructionism. In the constructionist view, a new knowledge, truth, or meaning rather than being objective and discovered, “comes into existence in and out of our engagement with the realities in our world” (Crotty, 1998, p.8). Therefore, constructionism will assist me in acquiring a
According to Crotty (1998), epistemology is also “inherent in the theoretical perspective and therefore in the methodology” (p. 8); hence, in the section below, the basic notions of the theoretical perspective and the methodology that was adopted in this research will be presented in relation to the coherence with constructionist epistemology, along with its appropriateness for the methodological decisions made for this research.

**Theoretical Perspective**

A theoretical perspective refers to an approach directed towards explicating social reality, or alternatively, “the philosophical stance informing the methodology and thus providing a context for the process and grounding its logic and criteria” (Crotty, 1998, p.3). Consequently, a researcher’s theoretical perspective affects the way the research questions are approached, concerning the types of data to collect, ways to collect and analyze the data, and the methods to interpret the analysis.

Among many theoretical paradigms for qualitative research, this research is based on the theoretical perspective of interpretivism, and more specifically, social interactionism, which is one of approaches within interpretivism. According to Koro-Ljungberg and Douglas (2008), interpretivism is “[a] theoretical perspective that believes that truth is situational, and so it depends on the context of the environment, the background and prejudices of the observed, as well as perspectives brought to the situation by the observer” (p.175); therefore, from the interpretivist perspective, there can be multiple realities that are subjective. The studies driven by the interpretivist perspective aim to fathom and explain the human and social reality.
As briefly mentioned above, there are several approaches under the interpretivist perspective. Examples include symbolic interactionism, social constructionism, phenomenology, feminist theory, cultural theory and post-structuralist approach. This research adopts the symbolic interactionist approach, which is a “dynamic theoretical perspective that views human action as constructing self, situation, and society” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 262). An interpretivist research with the symbolic interactionist approach is directed towards discovering and describing the meaning of “a situation, experience or phenomenon” (Koro-Ljungberg & Douglas, 2008, p. 165), through the interaction between the people who are partakers in the process.

The symbolic interactionism approach is therefore, consistent with the purpose and details of this research, as the aim of this research is to firstly, explore the messages and values conveyed through the CCSS exemplar picture books by including and excluding certain features and aspects of the world (phenomenon), and secondly, examine the teachers’ experience with the books in CCSS ELA Appendix B, as persons who are participating in the phenomenon. Thus constructionism, from which the interpretivist theoretical perspective with the symbolic interactionist approach emerges, will offer an organized and consistent conceptual framework to address the research questions.

In accordance with the selected conceptual framework, the study will adopt content analysis and thematic analysis as methodologies to analyze the collected data. The following section discusses the basic notion of the selected methodologies, in relation to their association with data collection and analysis in this research.
Methodology

This study used the content analysis and thematic analysis methodologies to examine the K-3 CCSS ELA exemplar picture books and to investigate local classroom teachers’ perspectives on the books. The content analysis was conducted in two different ways, including descriptive content analysis and qualitative content analysis. The descriptive content analysis was initially conducted to answer the first research question, with an emphasis on the features of the exemplar picture books, such as publication dates, author/illustrator information, and characteristics of the primary and secondary characters.

The descriptive content analysis yielded the rudimentary and fundamental information about the data, operating as a precursor for me to attain a wider grasp on the exemplar picture books. Although this descriptive content analysis seems to be at the surface level, this step of the analysis helped me answer the first research question, which was regarding the kinds the K-3 CCSS exemplar picture books. More specifically, the descriptive content analysis enabled me to view more tangibly the detailed characteristics and types of the picture books that are included and excluded in the exemplar text sets.

Table 3-1 below presents the research questions, corresponding data source and the types of analysis to answer each research question in this study. The subsequent sections discuss these in more details.

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<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Data Sources</th>
<th>Data Analysis</th>
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<td>What kind of picture books are in the ELA CCSS</td>
<td>Descriptive content analysis</td>
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The exemplar lists for grade bands K-1 and 2-3 include 6 categories each, such as stories, read-aloud stories, poetry, read-aloud poetry, informational texts, and read-aloud informational texts. In selecting the books for examination in this study, the two specifications engaged were:

1. This study only included the texts in independent volumes, excluding the texts published in compilation with other texts out of the CCSS text exemplar lists; these texts are mostly included in the categories of poetry and read-aloud poetry, and there are a few texts in other categories as well.

2. Among the books that contain a single story, this study only examined books in the picture book format, excluding the texts in transitional or chapter book formats.

In short, this study included picture books in independent volumes, aiming to look into the characteristics evident not only in the texts, but also in the illustrations, and the interactions between them. Thus, only the books that presented, “…illustrations and text share the job of telling the story or teaching content” (Tunnell & Jacobs, 2008, p. 61) were examined.
Descriptive Content Analysis

Additionally, the descriptive content analysis was used to condense the information gathered from texts and the illustrations in the picture books, into categories and codes established prior to the analysis. Drawing on Short’s (1995) contention that “the key to content analysis is the development of specific criteria for interpretation and analysis” (p. 21), I developed the categories and subsequent codes for analyzing the characteristics of the picture books. In the development of categories and codes, a study of common characteristics of the books on United States Board on Books for Young People’s Outstanding International Book List by Liang et al. (2013) was referred to and utilized.

Further, the descriptive content analysis included noting any indications and mentioning in the texts and illustrations of these categories. In terms of publication dates, specific codes were not developed, because each book requires to be noted in separate codes for the corresponding information. Conversely, for the categories including author/illustrator information, and primary/secondary characters, specific codes were developed and noted. The human primary/secondary characters and their sex were coded as male, female, other, or unknown; while in the cases of animal characters, the cues to depict the sex were looked for in the texts and pictures.

The coding was followed by analysis of the results through descriptive statistics by calculating frequency counts. The descriptive content analysis was used to recognize the patterns across the categories and codes, and thus, provided fundamental understanding into the books’ characteristics. These patterns were then analyzed, using the lens of critical literacy, guided by the critical literacy questions mentioned earlier. These steps undertaken during the analysis revealed the
characteristics included and also missing across the books’ texts and illustrations in the CCSS exemplar sets; the analysis also provided an insight into the cultural and societal norms, and the values that were portrayed.

**Gender, race, and nationality of authors and illustrators**

In the descriptive content analysis, the information of the author and illustrators of the picture books in K-1 and 2-3 CCSS text exemplar sets, were examined based on their race, gender and nationality. The information about the authors and illustrators was coded and analyzed, focusing on who was included or excluded in the CCSS collection, and what this inclusion or exclusion of authors and illustrators would potentially mean to the young readers of contemporary times.

In the K-1 and 2-3 exemplar picture book sets, the most frequently appeared author/illustrator was Aliki, whose 4 books were included in the exemplar text sets for the two grade bands. The books authored and illustrated by Aliki include *My Five Senses* (1962), *A Weed is a Flower: The Life of George Washington Carver* (1965), *Medieval Feast* (1983), and *Ah, Music!* (2003). Gail Gibbons and Lobel Arnold also had authored and illustrated 2 books each enumerated in the exemplar list. Gail Gibbons had *Fire! Fire!* (1984) and *From Seed to Pumpkin* (2004), and Lobel Arnold had *Frog and Toad Together* (1972) and *Owl at Home* (1975). As mentioned, Aliki, Gibbons and Arnold have not only authored, but also illustrated their works; further, other than these 3 authors/illustrators, there is no other author or illustrator whose work has appeared more than once in the list. In the context of analysis, although these author/illustrators have their works listed multiple times in the sets, their information was examined only once.
As such, a total of 77 authors and illustrators in the K-1 and 2-3 CCSS text exemplar sets have been examined in the analysis. Among these, 53 were authors; 29 of these 53 authors had illustrated their work themselves. Thus, the 29 author/illustrators were counted as ‘authors’, being excused from the analysis of illustrators, resulting lesser number of illustrators in comparison to the authors included in this analysis. Consequently, there were 53 authors and 24 illustrators examined in this author/illustrator analysis.

For the analysis, I coded gender, race, and nationality of the authors and illustrators. To collect the relevant data and information, I used resources such as jacket flaps, the author’s and illustrator’s personal websites, their publishers’ websites, interview articles or video clips, which were accessible through internet search; these resources provided both textual and visual information. I estimated that gender cannot be recognized in a merely binary construction of male or female. Moreover, there was a lack of information on authors or illustrators self-identify of their genders. Thus, coding for gender only included three categories; male, female or unknown.

The data was collected primarily from sources, to which I had access without direct contact with the authors and illustrators; for instance, for gender coding, I relied on the pronouns used to refer the authors and illustrations in the textual information. In the case where there was a lack of textual information for an author or illustrator, or if the information was could not be firmly established, then visual information, such as pictures or videos of the author or the illustrator, was used to determine and code his or her gender.
The race of authors and illustrators was coded in eight categories: White, Black, Asian, Latino, Native American, Middle Eastern, Multi-racial, N/A and Unknown. The authors or illustrators with African or West Indian ancestry were coded as Black. Race coding relied on visual information, such as picture or video clips, rather than the textual information. If there was a lack of information regarding the race of an author or illustrator, it was coded as ‘unknown’. The nationality coding of authors and illustrators employed the similar information and resources that were used as a data source for gender and race. In the case where no specific information as to the nationality of an author or illustrator was available, it was coded as ‘unknown’, although only four such cases were discovered.

**The years of publication**

The specific codes were not developed for the year of publication of each picture book, because each book required to be noted in separate codes for the corresponding information. Strictly speaking, the older publication dates do not automatically indicate the books as problematic or bearing poor quality; for instance, older books, informational or not, may be decent in quality for the young readers concerning their contents, literary merits or literacy advantages. Further, the prospect that many older books can include useful information, engaging characters and plots, and also present good messages, is not deniable.

Nonetheless, the years of publication were included as a factor in the descriptive content analysis to examine the types of picture books, in the sense that the publication dates are significant while considering a book’s influence on the readers and that it can also prove problematic for many reasons. Firstly, the elements such as settings and other information in older books may include irrelevant contents to which the present-
day readers fail to relate. Secondly, the older books may include ideas, information and perspectives that are dated, inaccurate and even stereotypic, albeit unintentional; thus, the information can mislead the readers.

**Gender, gender role, race, disability, and family structure of primary and secondary characters**

The analysis of features of characters in the picture books, I classified the characters into three categories. The first category was of primary characters, who had a central or leading role with relatively more dominance in the texts and illustrations. Further, the characters that made a constant appearance in the texts or illustrations or had sufficient influence on the plot or information conveyed in the text, were coded and analyzed as secondary characters. Often, characters that are mostly in the background and who necessarily do not have sufficient role or influence in the plot are witnessed; these characters are neither coded as primary or secondary, but these characters draw attention with some significance and thus, were noted and considered in the analysis. For instance, in *My Five Senses*, a K-1 informational text, there are no distinctive characters with a specific role or impact; however, the double spread illustrations in every page of the book present a full close-up of an Asian boy’s face. I judged that such cases are noteworthy, and thus, included them in the qualitative content analysis.

Consequently, 27 primary characters and 11 secondary characters were selected and coded for analysis. Among the 27 primary characters, there were 16 human characters, 9 animal characters, and 2 imaginary creatures. The 11 secondary characters included 4 were human characters, 5 animal characters, and 2 imaginary creatures. Irrespective of the animal characters and the imaginary creatures being primary or secondary, they were coded and analyzed, if they were personified to depict
an aspect of human life and societies or present information; this was followed mostly while analyzing the categories of stories and read-aloud stories. In contrast, if animals or imaginary creatures appeared as primary characters and were not personified as portraying any human nature or activity, they were excluded while coding for gender, gender role, race, disability or family structure. The animal characters or imaginary creatures were found in the titles included in the categories of informational texts or read-aloud informational texts.

**Gender.** The analysis included noting the genders of the primary and secondary characters for each book. The gender of the characters was coded into 4 categories: Male, Female, Other, and Unknown. The data was collected from texts and illustrations in each text. In the texts, I noted for the gender pronouns, and gender-specific languages; in the case of illustrations, I searched the characteristics that are normative gender constructions. As discussed before, animal characters were included in the coding, if they appeared with distinct indications and descriptions of the gender in texts or illustrations. The previous studies were referred for the guidelines for coding the gender of primary and secondary characters (e.g., Crabb & Bielawski, 1994; Weitzman, Eifler, Hokada & Ross, 1972).

**Gender roles.** After the gender was coded, the gender roles held and represented by the primary and secondary characters were coded. In the texts and illustrations, the indications that highlighted the verbal or nonverbal behaviors of the characters were noted; for instance, the characters’ profession, and active or passive use of language and behavior were considered (Weitzman et al., 1971). These
indications were noted and then coded as traditional male, non-traditional male, traditional female, non-traditional female, gender neutral, or unknown.

**Race.** The coding of race of the 27 primary characters and 11 secondary characters primarily included the use of illustrations, although textual information was used in some cases. The characters’ race was coded into 9 categories: White, Black, Asian, Latino, Native American, Middle Eastern, Multi-racial, Unknown and Not Applicable. As mentioned above, the 27 primary characters and 11 secondary characters included personified animals and imaginary creatures; thus, there were cases where characters were coded as either not applicable or unknown. These non-human characters were coded as not applicable for race. Also, although not as often, when human characters’ race was not recognizable from texts or illustrations, these characters were coded as unknown.

**Disability.** Disability was categorized and coded into five types: Physical, Emotional, Cognitive, Other, and Unknown. The physical disability included any type of impairment in the body’s ability. The category of emotional disability included emotional disorders such as depression or anxiety. Cognitive disability meant any intellectual disability such as learning disabilities or dyslexia. Unlike some of the prior studies on the representation of disability in children’s books, characters with glasses or elderly characters using cane were not considered as disabled (McGraw, Durm, & Durnam, 1989; Hall, 2004; Koss, 2015).

**Family Structure.** The family structure was coded into nine categories. These categories were: Two-parents, One-parent, Same-sex parents, Extended family, Grandparents as parents, One-person household, Adoptive family, Others, and
Unknown. In the case of primary characters, ‘unknown’ category was most common, taking up to 29.6% of the cases; this situation arose when there was no indication of family structure in the story (*The Sign Painter*), or when there were some characters that did appear in the background seemingly as family members, but were not able to be firmly identified as family through any other available information in the text or illustrations (*Cow Girl and Cocoa*).

**Qualitative Content Analysis**

The findings from descriptive content analysis assisted me while conducting the qualitative content analysis. The qualitative content analysis was conducted to answer the second research question about the potential messages conveyed through the picture books in the CCSS exemplar sets. The process of qualitative content analysis began by sifting and sorting the information relevant as well as significant to the research questions, from the descriptive content analysis findings. The selected information was referred while conducting the qualitative content analysis, through which I was able to develop the themes that provided me with more in-depth ideas about the CCSS exemplar picture books as a collection of books.

According to White and Marsh (2003), researchers who utilize qualitative content analysis, use “analytic constructs, or rules of inference, to move from the text to the answers to the research questions” (p. 27). Further, they elaborated that the text and context exist in two different domains and are thus, independent from each other; also, it was asserted that the researchers move from one to the other in search of answers for their research questions. Qualitative content analysis is one of the most frequently used methods within the research on children’s literature (Beach et al., 2009; Galda, Ash & Cullinan, 2000); this method is appropriate “for analyzing texts and describing
and interpreting the written artifacts of a society (White & Marsh, 2006 as cite in Beach, Enciso, Harst, Jenkins, Raina, Rogers, Short, Sung, Wilson and Yenika-Agbaw, 2009, p. 129). The function of interpreting textual data to identify its patterns and themes, sometimes labels qualitative content analysis as interpretive, and positions it in line with symbolic interactionism (Beach et al., 2009; Krippendorff, 2004).

Beach et al. (2009) claim “what makes a study ‘critical’ is not the methodology but the framework used to think within, through, and beyond the text” (p. 130). Thereby, from a critical perspective, the content analysis aims to infer the text in social, cultural, and political context and explore issues of diversity including gender, gender role, racial/ethnic groups, and parallel cultures (Short, 1995; Galda, Ash, & Cullinan, 2000). Critical content analysis of children’s literature thus, involves “locating power in social practices by understanding, uncovering, and transforming conditions of inequality” (Beach, Enciso, Harste, Jenkins, Raina, Rogers, Short, Sung, Wilson, & Yenika-Agbaw, 2009, p. 129).

The role of critical literacy within the parameters of this research was to evaluate and investigate representations of various aspects of lives that are included and excluded in the CCSS exemplar picture books for K-3. By using a critical literacy stance, I aimed to “focus on locating power in social practices by understanding, uncovering, and transforming conditions of inequality” (Beach et al., 2009, p. 129), presented explicitly and embedded implicitly in the texts and illustrations of the CCSS exemplar picture books. Since the exemplar picture books are more accessible and are widely distributed in the classrooms and among students today (Moss, 2013; Short, 2013), there is a need for a systematic and rigorous approach to analyze these texts
and the collection’s possibility to act as sources of perpetuating stereotypes, prejudice, power and inequality, from a critical perspective.

**Thematic Analysis**

The thematic analysis of interviews conducted with classroom teachers were used to answer the third research question.

As a widely used method of analysis in qualitative research, thematic analysis is defined as “a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns within data,” (p.79) to explore people’s experiences, views and perceptions, representation of a topic, or construction of meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Researchers have argued that thematic analysis provides a meaningful structure to data, and insightful information to describe the essence of a study. Thematic analysis is advantageous in comparison to other methods of qualitative analysis, as it allows researchers more flexibility in their choice of theoretical framework (Boyatzis, 1998, Braun & Clarke, 2006; Guest, MacQueen & Namey, 2012); this implies that while answering research questions, thematic analysis can be used with differing frameworks such as grounded theory, phenomenology, and narrative analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006) further contended that through the flexibility with theoretical framework, thematic analysis promotes detailed and rich description of data.

Thematic analysis incorporates different ways to approach data, including inductive, deductive, semantic, latent, realist/essentialist, or constructionist way. The different approaches decide how a researcher codes the data and develops the themes; for instance, in an inductive approach of thematic analysis, the process of coding and identifying themes is driven by data, rather than pre-existing frame or pre-conceived concepts or theories (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Regardless of its theoretical framework or
approach, however, thematic analysis is conducted by following six phases of the
process; this includes 1) familiarization with the data; 2) generating initial codes; 3)
searching for themes; 4) reviewing themes; 5) defining and naming themes; and 6)
producing the report (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Guest, MacQueen &
Namey, 2012). Moreover, although the phases are linear and each phase is built based
on the previous, a researcher can move back and forth between the phases (Braun &
Clarke, 2006).

The first phase ‘familiarization with the data’, includes the researcher engaging in
reading and re-reading the data to become “familiar with the depth and breadth of the
content” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87). The next phase ‘generating initial codes’,
involves producing initial codes and building on the understanding of data from the
previous phase. The purpose of generating the codes is to identify important or
interesting segments of data, although the entire data is analyzed by the researcher.
The coding of data is followed by the phase of ‘searching for themes’; in this phase, the
researcher examines the codes to recognize potential themes, which are broad and
significant patterns of meaning. The researcher in this phase begins “thinking about the
relationship between codes, between themes, and between different levels of themes”
(Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 89). The next phase ‘reviewing themes’ includes sifting and
sorting of the themes identified in the previous phase; the researcher reviews and
refines the themes with collated data. The themes are split, combined or discarded
because, by the end of this phase, the researcher has a good grasp of what “different
themes are, how they fit together, and the overall story they tell about the data” (Braun
& Clarke, 2006, p. 92). In the next phase ‘defining and naming themes’, the researcher
develops a detailed analysis for each theme; this includes further refining the analysis of
the themes to fit them into the broader structure story, clarifying the relations between
the themes, and their relation to the research questions, while deciding informative
names for the themes. The last phase ‘producing the report’, involves writing the story
of the analysis, “in a way which convinces the reader of the merit and validity” (Braun &
Clarke, 2006, p. 93). Braun and Clarks (2006) also advise that the analysis “provides a
concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive, and interesting account of the story the data
tell – within and across themes” (p. 93).

Thematic analysis was used in this research to analyze the interviews with local
classroom teachers about their perspectives of CCSS ELA text exemplar books and
associated experiences. A total of 13 participants were recruited through network
selection, which is also referred to as snowball sampling (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984).
During the analysis, I adopted strategies of coding from grounded theory, since thematic
analysis “shares the systematic yet flexible and inductive qualities of grounded theory”
(Guest, MacQueen & Namey, 2012, p. 12); this included initial coding and focused
coding. As to consideration of its theoretical and methodological framework, Guest,
MacQueen and Namey (2012) explain:

… it comprises a bit of everything – grounded theory, positivism,
interpretivism, and phenomenology – synthesized into one methodological
framework. The approach borrows what we feel are the more useful
techniques from each theoretical and methodological camp and adapts
them to an applied research context. (p.15)

The interview guide with the interview questions is attached as Appendix A in this
study. Further, all the interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. The next step
included coding of the transcripts and identifying the meaningful and interesting patterns
and themes across the data. The back and forth movement between the phases of
analysis, helped me explore the teachers’ views of the exemplar books and their experiences with them; the aim was to construct a meaningful structure as well as a rich, insightful description of the data through the responses.

Participants. The participants were recruited through networking and snowball sampling method. A total of 13 local elementary school teachers, none of whom were known to me before I began the research, were selected as participants. At the end of the recruitment process, the 13 teachers included three kindergarten teachers, five first grade teachers, one second grade teacher, one second and third grade ESOL teacher, and three third grade teachers. The 13 participants work in eight different elementary schools in the same college town in the southeast, near a large public university. All the participants were females with their age ranging between 20 years and 60 years. The teaching experiences teachers varied from three years to more than thirty years. Except one among the eight schools at which the participants in this study were teaching, all schools consisted of students from diverse ethnic backgrounds, languages, learning styles, and mostly lower to lower middle class families.

Every interview was semi-structured and lasted from approximately 45 minutes to an hour. The questions asked during the interviews centered on the teachers’ opinions/experiences with the CCSS exemplar picture books and the process through which the teachers’ decided the picture books to be selected. The thematic analysis of the interview presented one main theme with three relevant sub-themes. The findings are organized in the next chapter, based on the main and sub themes developed in the analysis. Further, direct responses of participants are mentioned, yet pseudonyms have been used throughout the study, to protect the identity of all participants.
Trustworthiness

In the context of qualitative research, trustworthiness is a term coined by Lincoln and Guba (1985), which is used to refer the credibility of the research findings. Creswell (1998, p. 201-203) outlined 8 measures that assist a qualitative research in acquiring credibility. They are as following:

1. prolonged engagement and persistent observation
2. triangulation or use of multiple data collection methods
3. peer review and debriefing – external reflection and input on your work
4. negative case analysis
5. clarification of researcher bias
6. member checking
7. rich, thick description
8. external audit

The trustworthiness of this study was increased through application of three of the eight measures; this included 1) triangulation of multiple data collection methods; 2) member checking; and 3) rich, thick description. The research used multiple data sources for triangulation, to increase the trustworthiness of this study. The data sources included pictures and texts in the books from the CCSS ELA exemplar list, and semi-structured teacher interviews. Further, member checking was also applied. Lincoln and Guba (1985) explained that member checking is a process in which research participants investigate the researcher’s analysis to determine whether the researcher is accurately portraying their views and experiences, and to specify the missing aspects (Maykut & Morehouse, 1997). The semi-structured interviews with classroom teachers was followed by debriefing sessions with them to assure that I have truthfully described the teachers’ perspectives of the books on the exemplar list. Finally, a thick description was provided by me by documenting comprehensively the context of the study, and the process of collecting and analyzing each source of data.
CHAPTER 4
FINDINGS FROM THE CONTENT AND THEMATIC ANALYSES

In this chapter, I will be discussing the findings from CCSS exemplar picture books for the K-1 and 2-3 grade bands analyses. As discussed in the earlier chapters, I have conducted a descriptive content analysis and critical content analysis of the exemplar picture books. The descriptive content analysis was initially conducted by focusing on certain features in the exemplar picture books, such as author/illustrator information, and characteristics of the primary and secondary characters. The aforementioned step of the analysis was used as a precursor to gain a broad grasp of the exemplar picture books, because the analysis yielded rudimentary and fundamental information about the data. Consequently, although seemingly at the surface level, this analysis has helped me answer the first research question regarding the kinds of the K-3 CCSS exemplar picture books; more specifically, the characteristics of the picture books that are included and excluded in the exemplar text sets.

 Accordingly, a qualitative critical content analysis was conducted based on the findings from the descriptive content analysis. The analysis was conducted to answer the other research questions on potential messages, conveyed through the picture books in the CCSS exemplar sets. For this, I began by sifting and sorting the information from the descriptive content analysis findings relevant to the research questions. The selected information was then referred to, in order to conduct the content analysis, from the critical perspective, through which I was able to develop the themes that provided an in-depth and critical look into the CCSS exemplar picture books as a collection of books.
In the first part of the chapter, I will present the findings from the descriptive content analysis by describing the type of the exemplar picture books and by briefly reporting the descriptive and quantitative information of the characteristics of the CCSS exemplar picture books. As mentioned in the earlier chapters, the characteristics that were examined in the descriptive content analysis included:

1. Gender, Race, and Nationality of Authors and Illustrators
2. The Years of Publication
3. Gender, Gender Role, Race, Disability, and Family Structure of Primary and Secondary Characters

For each of the characteristics mentioned, I developed a chart to present the summary of the findings to better present the information. Following each chart, I will add a brief description to report the findings elaborately.

In the second part of the chapter, I will present the themes identified from the critical content analysis. Within each theme, the findings will be discussed in parallel to the messages about the society, which the picture books in the exemplar sets seem to represent and convey to the readers.

In the third part of the chapter, I will report the findings from the thematic analysis of interviews conducted with local teachers, to find out how closely the exemplar text sets align with the classroom teachers’ actual views in children’s book selection. This part of analysis allows another layer of understanding of the text sets, as this study reconsiders the messages collectively presented in the exemplar picture books, provided within the framework of the CCSS.
Findings from Descriptive Content Analysis

Gender, Race, and Nationality of Authors and Illustrators

Table 4-1. Gender, Race, and Nationality of Authors and Illustrators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Kind</th>
<th>Author number</th>
<th>Illustrator number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>White</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Multiple</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>American</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Canadian</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The findings of the descriptive analysis yielded that the gender of authors and illustrators were evenly distributed. For example, in the case of authors there were only three male authors extra than female authors. That is, of the 53 authors, 25 (47.1%) were male, and 28 (52.8%) were female. Similarly, among the 24 illustrators there were only 3 extra female illustrators than the male illustrators. More specifically, 13 illustrators (54.1%) were male, and 10 (41.6%) were female, and 1 (4.1%) was unknown.

However, there was a vast disproportion in the authors’ and illustrators’ race as well as their nationality. In terms of race, the authors and illustrators were predominantly White; forty-one (77.3%) authors and 15 (62.5%) illustrators were White. In other words, the proportions for non-White authors and non-White illustrators, even when all of the 5 non-White authors and illustrator were put together, only amounted to 22.6% and 33.3%, respectively. In addition, these non-White authors and non-White illustrators were not comprised of any Native American, Middle Eastern or Multi-racial
authors or illustrators. In more details, out of the 9 (16.9%) non-White authors, 2 (3.7%) were Latino, 1 (1.8%) was black, and there were no Asian authors. The race of the non-White illustrators broke down to 2 (8.3%) Asian, 3 (12.5%) Latino and 1 (4.1%) Black.

The nationality of the authors and illustrators posed a similar result. Sixty-six (85.7%) authors and illustrators were American. In the case of authors, 49 (92.4%) out of 53 were American, 3 (5.6%), British and 1 (1.8%) unknown. In the case of 24 illustrators, 17 (70.8%) were American, 3 (12.5%) British, 1 (4.1%) Canadian, and 3 (12.5%) unknown. Therefore, it can be accorded that among the total number of the authors and illustrators, except for the 4 (5.1%) whose nationality was unknown, 73 (94.8%) of them shared the nationality of western countries.

From the analysis, the biggest generality among the authors and illustrators are male and female White Americans. It has repeatedly been pointed out through the preceding literature that authors and illustrators who are insiders of a certain group tend to represent their own groups and stories distinctly and clearly. Therefore, it may well be argued that the K-1 and 2-3 CCSS text sets are conceivably to reflect and represent the White authors’ and illustrators’ life experiences of being White in the country and society. In the case of diversity, the exemplar text sets reflect a predominant lacking in the authors and illustrators of color, as well as authors and illustrators from other parts of the world than the United States. As can be seen, it can be concluded that the K-1 and 2-3 CCSS exemplar sets display the need for diversity in the authors and illustrators.
The Years of Publication

Table 4-2. The Years of Publication by Decades and Numbers of Titles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decade</th>
<th>K-1</th>
<th>2-3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1950s</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960s</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970s</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980s</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990s</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000s</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the descriptive analysis of publication years of the exemplar picture books, it was found that, with 2018 as the basic year of the analysis, the picture books in CCSS K-3 collection were on an average of 34.6 years old. The oldest and latest years of publication for the K-1 grade band have an exact 50-year gap ranging from 1957, in which *Little Bear* was published, to 2007, in which *How People Learned to Fly* was published. In the case of K-1 picture books, most books, 7 (23.3%) out of the total 30 were published in two different decades, 1960s and 2000s each. Following the 14 books, 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s included 5 books (16.6%) respectively. Compared to the K-1 text sets, picture books in the grade band 2-3 were published in the recent years.

The text set for the grade band 2-3 included 16 (57.1%) books, out of the total 28 picture books published in 2000s, 7 (28%) books published in 1990s, 2 (7.1%) books each published in 1980s and 1970s, and 1 (3.5%) book published in 1960s. The oldest book (*The Fire Cat*) was published in 1960, and the latest (*Where Do Polar Bears Live?*) in 2010, resulting in an exact gap of 50 years which is the same as the case of the K-1 text set.
Considering only the books in the categories of informational text, as their up-to-datedness in terms of the information and content would matter more than the those of the books in the story category, the K-1 collection showed a distribution of publication years that are not much different from those of books in all the categories.

In other words, even exclusively in the informational text categories, the most number of informational text categories published was in the 1960s and 2000s (25% and 31.2%, respectively). On the other hand, in the case of the books in the informational text categories in 2-3 grade band, 12 books out of 19 (63.1%) were published in 2000s. Following 2000s, 6 (31.5%) picture books were published in the decade of 1990s and only 1 (5.2%) book was published in 1980s.

**Gender, Gender Role, Race, Disability, and Family Structure of Primary and Secondary Characters**

Table 4-3. Primary and secondary characters by gender, gender role, race, disability, and family structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Kind</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Traditional male</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-traditional male</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Traditional female</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-traditional female</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gender neutral</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>White</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asian</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Middle Eastern</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Multi-racial</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics</td>
<td>Kind</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disability</strong></td>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Two-parent</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Primary Characters</strong></td>
<td>One-parent</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Same-sex</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Extended</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family Structure</strong></td>
<td>Grandparents as parents</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>One single-person</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adoptive</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Traditional Male</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-traditional Male</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Traditional Female</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-traditional Female</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gender Neutral</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>Race</strong></td>
<td>White</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
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**Gender of primary and secondary characters**

Among the 27 primary characters, there were 17 (62.9%) male characters, 6 (22.2%) female, none (0%) other, and 4 (14.8%) unknown. Among the 11 secondary characters, there were 7 (63.6%) male characters, 3 (27.7%) female, 0 (0%) other, and 1 (5.8%) unknown. As viewed in the analysis, unlike the gender of the authors and illustrators previously examined, the gender of primary and secondary characters was immensely disproportionate. That is, among both primary and secondary characters, the representation of male gender characters exceeded that of female characters by far. The surplus of the male characters is still twice as large, even while the analysis was limited to the human characters and not any animal characters or imaginary creatures. More specifically, among the 15 primary human characters, 10 of them were male characters, whereas only 5 were female.

**Gender roles**

For analyzing the topic of gender roles, I regarded the stereotypical gender roles as “traditional.” For example, the portrayal and descriptions disposed to the male characters such as active, dominant, and independent were interpreted as “traditional male”; for female, I noted for submissive, domestic, passive, and dependent as “traditional female.” I considered anything that belonged to the opposite genders’ description as “non-traditional.”
Among the primary characters, the most frequent case was Gender Neutral, as well as Traditional Male, each of which took up 9 (33.3%) out of 27 cases, followed by 5 (18.5%) Unknown, 3 (11.1%) Non-traditional Female, 1 (3.7%) Traditional Female. Excluding 9 Gender Neutral and 5 Unknown cases, the most frequent case was Traditional Male (33.3%), followed by Non-traditional Female (11.1%) and Traditional Female (3.7%). It was interesting to note that the examined titles did not have any characters with Non-traditional Male role. That is, if a gender role was noticeable with the male characters, it was Traditional Male role in all cases. Whereas, in the case of the female characters, the Non-traditional Female role was dominant over the Traditional Female role.

For example, the male primary characters are depicted as Traditional Male, that is, they are more likely to risk their lives for others (Treasure, and A Story, A Story), bear brave and heroic personalities (Amos & Boris, and 14 Cows for America), or had professions such as a firefighter (Fire Cat). The female Primary characters exhibited Non-traditional Female roles, when the three sisters climbed up a tree, defying a wolf who was threatening their lives (Lon Po Po: A Red-Riding Hood Story from China) and when a young black girl confronted the racial segregation and stood up for herself (The Story of Ruby Bridges).

Race

As discussed above, there was a clear quantitative White dominance among the creators of the picture books. The same applied for the characters in the K-1 and 2-3 CCSS exemplar picture books; among the characters represented in the text sets the vast majority of was White. In total, there were 21 characters (16 primary and 5 secondary) whose race was identifiable. Among the 21 characters, nearly half were
depicted as White, i.e., a total of 10 (47.6%) characters (6 primary and 4 secondary) were depicted as White. The primary characters included 3 (14.2%) black, whereas there were no black characters among the secondary characters. There were 2 (9.5%) Latino primary characters and no Latino among the secondary characters. In terms of Asian characters, there were 4 (19%) among the primary characters, and 1 secondary. There was only one (4.7%) character that was recognized as Middle Eastern among the primary characters, and none among secondary. In addition, there was not one exemplar book that had a primary or secondary character recognized as Native American or Multi-racial.

Furthermore, in the text sets there were many books that have all the characters presented as White only, such as Hi! Fly Guy, The Year at Maple Hill Farm, Henry and Mudge: The First Book of Their Adventure, Cowgirl Kate and Cocoa, and Medieval Feast, to name just a few. Even when there were no characters with a leading or central role, most of which were informational books, e.g., The Year at Maple Hill Farm, and From Seed to Plant, all the characters were white.

In addition, the plentitude of White characters in the exemplar sets is as problematic, even when the handful of female White characters was considered, exclusively among themselves. That is, there were a total of 23 male primary and secondary characters, whereas there were only 8 female characters, primary and secondary put together. Among the limited number of female characters, White characters amounted to exactly a half of them. The other half was accounted for by four different ethnicity groups, including Middle East, Asian, Latino, and Black. Else ways, even within the group of limited female characters, which is also one of the minority
groups across the exemplar sets, the disproportionate ethnic representation of White dominance was perpetuated.

**Disability**

Notably, none of the exemplar titles included a character with any type of disability, regardless of primary or secondary characters. In other words, there were no instances of any type of disabilities within all of the 26 primary and 11 secondary characters.

**Family structure**

On analyzing the representations of family structures, certain types were represented frequently in comparison to other types. In addition, many types of family structures, e.g., Adoptive Family, Same-sex Parents, or Grandparents as Parents, did not appear across the sets at any moment. However, the overall representation was not as much disproportionate when compared to the other characteristics examined in the descriptive analysis.

Except for the categories of Unknown and Other, the most common categories were Two-parent Household as well as One-parent Household, each of which took up to 18.5%. This was closely followed by Single-person Household, which took 14.8%. Following the three categories, Extended Families were portrayed in two (7.4%) titles. Within the secondary character group, the families in nine titles (33.3%) were coded as Unknown, whereas 2 titles portrayed Single-person Household (*Frog and Toad Together*, and *The Raft*). There were no instances, within the primary character group as well as secondary, of Same-Sex Parents, Grandparents as Parents or Adoptive Family.
Findings From Critical Content Analysis

The descriptive content analysis that preceded the critical content analysis centrally focused on examining the nature of the CCSS K-3 exemplar picture books. Then, the significant findings from the descriptive content analysis were referred and the opposites were excluded. For example, the finding from the descriptive content analysis pertaining to the author/illustrator’s gender was not included in the critical content analysis, because I judged that such findings were not as significant or relevant in exploring the matter of inclusion/exclusion in the exemplars and the messages conveyed in the sets accordingly. Through the critical content analysis, I was able to identify three themes. The identified three themes focused on the kinds of characters that were included/excluded, how they are portrayed, and the aspects of lives and society that are widely received as norms or otherwise.

Most books in the exemplar text sets, if read individually, were rather decent books. That is, regardless of the different categories and genres of the exemplar sets, most books were highly engaging with interesting stories and useful information. Most of the books had rich and quality illustrations. Several titles, in fact, have won or have been honored with awards for children’s literature. For example, A Story, A Story, So You Want to Be President? and Kitten’s First Full Moon are winners of Randolph Caldecott Medal in 1971, 2001, and 2005, respectively; The Treasure, Tops and Bottoms, and What Do You Do with a Tail Like This? are honor books of Randolph Caldecott Medal in 1980, 1996 and 2004. Frog and Toad Together is an honor book of John Newbery Medal; A Drop of Water: A Book of Science and Wonder is an honor book of Orbis Pictus Award for Outstanding Nonfiction for Children in 1973. Tomás and
the Library Lady, is a winner of Tomas Rivera Mexican American Children’s Book Award in 1998.

However, by collectively looking into the titles as sets of books, certain aspects of can be interpreted as considerably problematic. The following sections of the chapter will discuss the problematic aspects of the sets, in line with the themes identified. Each of the three themes concerns with gender, race, and social perspective respectively. Sub-themes under each theme are also used to describe the themes in more detail.

Below is the list of the themes and sub-themes:

1. Gender: Disproportionate and Stereotypical Representations
   a. Male Characters
      i. Ludicrous and mischievous dispositions of male characters
      ii. Brave and courageous adventures of male characters
      iii. Traditionally masculine professions of male characters
   b. Female Characters
      i. Domestic affairs and boundaries of female characters
      ii. Nurturing or weak dispositions of female characters

2. Race: White Characters are Dominating, while People of Color are Marginalized or Estranged
   a. White Dominance
   b. People of Color
      i. Black heroes
      ii. Asian and Latino in the center, but detached
      iii. Everybody or anybody

3. Individual Social Perspectives: Self-reliant Life Styles with Autonomous Goals

**Theme 1: Gender: Disproportionate and Stereotypical Representations**

**Male Characters**

In terms of characters’ gender in the pictures books of K-1 and 2-3 CCSS exemplar text sets, the representations and descriptions of male and female characters were not only disproportionate, but also stereotyped. Male characters tend to be associated with 1) ludicrous and mischievous disposition; 2) brave and courageous adventures or 3) traditionally masculine behaviors or professions.
Ludicrous and mischievous positions of male characters. Particularly, it can be ascertained that in comparison to the female characters, it was the male characters who portrayed silly, mischievous and somewhat immature nature. Examples of the titles with such characters include *Little Bear, Frog and Toad Together, Owl at Home, Hi! Fly Guy, and Poppleton in Winter*. In *Little Bear*, a young bear who is personified and designated as male appears with the name “Little Bear.” In the book, four separate anecdotes revolve around Little Bear’s silliness and playfulness. For example, on one cold day, Little Bear keeps asking his mother to give him something to put on, such as a hat, coat, and snow pants. Despite all the garments he has on, however, Little Bear keeps insisting on being cold. And finally, he asks Mother Bear for a fur coat. At Little Bear's constant urging, Mother Bear asks Little Bear to take off the hat, coat and snow pants he has had on, and then points out that he is already wearing a fur coat, his skin. Little Bear only then realizes that he has fur on his skin and understands that he will not be cold. In another anecdote, Little Bear wants to fly to the moon, so he “climbed to the top of a little hill, and climbed to the top of a little tree, a very little tree on the little hill, and shut his eyes and jumped.” Then, he explores a forest and a house, behaving as if he landed on the moon and the forest and the house are on the moon as well. To Mother Bear, whom Little Bear comes across in the house “on the moon,” as well, Little Bear keeps pretending as though he is in the moon and does not know Mother Bear. The character of Little Bear is portrayed as doing these things for fun, out of his playfulness. In the last anecdote in the title, Little Bear talks about his wishes with Mother Bear. Here, the wishes Little Bear shares again seem silly, as Little Bear wishes
to be sitting on a cloud and flying all around, finding a Viking Boat, finding a tunnel and
go all the way to China and coming back with chopsticks and having a big red car.

Frog and Toad are the only two characters in the text *Frog and Toad Together*. Again, personified and designated as males, the story is lead through the characters’ silly conversations and behaviors. For example, Toad makes a list of things to do in the morning and follows the list with Frog throughout the day. Yet, the list includes trivial things such as waking up, eating lunch and supper, and going to sleep. However, Toad becomes very baffled as he loses the list and cannot remember what to do next, which, to readers is ludicrous and funny. In the anecdote titled “Cookies,” Toad bakes and shares cookies with Frog and the two characters then decide to use their “will power,” because they cannot stop eating the cookies. However, the characters’ willpower turns out to be of no use, as they continue failing to stop eating, even after putting cookies in a box, tying some strings around the box, and putting the box up on a high shelf. Then the characters are said to take the box outside and have birds peck at the cookies and finish it. Nonetheless of this ludicrous event, the characters feel proud of themselves for their will power. Funnily again, this anecdote ends with Frog and Toad going back home to bake a cake.

*Owl at home* once more depicts a non-human character (a bird) an owl, who is of the male gender and somewhat absurd. For example, the character of owl wants to make “tear-water tea” with his own tears and tries to think of sad things to carry out the task. Collecting his tears in a kettle, the Owl feels “happy as he filled his cup.” Next, in another anecdote, “Upstairs and Downstairs,” Owl wants “to be upstairs and to be downstairs at the same time,” and so he “ran upstairs and downstairs all evening” trying
to be in both places at once. In other anecdote titled “Owl and the Moon,” Owl suspects the moon was following him and gets bewildered. Thinking that he must leave behind the moon, Owl says “it is always a little sad to say good-bye to a friend.” But as he discovers that he still can see the moon from his window, Owl feels relieved. The character’s dialogues and behaviors of such manner evoke readers’ laughter, due to the unreasonable and ludicrous nature of it.

In Hi! Fly Guy, the readers are met with a boy named Buzz who wants a fly, Fly guy, as his pet. The title includes the episodes describing how Buzz meets Fly Guy, the way Buzz gets to keep Fly Guy as a pet, and how Fly Guy wins the Smartest Pet Award in the Amazing Pet Show. Consequently, the two characters are portrayed as constantly making funny and silly scenes such as the fly looking for filthy things to eat, and the boy looking for something smart to catch for the Amazing Pet Show. As the two characters meet each other, their facetious behaviors are accentuated as they team up for the pet show and show off their tricks together at the show.

As shown in the above examples, a majority of the male characters in focus were described as being silly, playful, mischievous, and sometimes absurd and immature in terms of their language, reasoning, personality and behaviors. Such depictions probably were not intended while the authors and illustrators created the texts. The chances are that the characters are depicted in comical and silly ways, because it is a common characteristic and preference of the intended readers’ age group. In other words, it may be that the readers of such books would think, speak, and behave in similar ways as that of the characters. It may also be that, in everyday lives of the
intended readers, similar incidents happen as in the episodes in the exemplar picture books.

However, it seems to be worthy of paying attention to the fact that it was only the male characters who were repeatedly depicted in association with silly, mischievous and ludicrous mannerisms and behavior. It is also important to pay attention to the underlying reasons for such depictions of the male characters. In parallel to this, some possible explanations can be posited. That is, such playful and absurd characteristics in speech, behaviors, and personalities have conventionally and repeatedly expected and appreciated more in the realm of male characteristics and virtues, than female. As such, it may also be deemed that such characteristics are more natural and proper to be found with male characters and are rarely associated and encourages with female characters.

**Brave and courageous adventures of male characters.** In addition to the silly and childish mannerisms, another distinctive representation of the male characters was they were described and illustrated in more relations with courage and bravery, which is evident through the portrayal of the male characters’ adventures and professions. Frequently, many exemplar picture books examined in this study had the structure of home-away-home in the plots, as many of the male characters were portrayed to be having adventures.

For example, in *Are you my mother?*, a baby bird makes starts venture to find his mother. As soon as the baby bird is hatched from the egg, it learns that his mother is not around as the mother bird has gone to look for food. Although the baby bird could not fly yet, he fearlessly takes an adventure to look for his mother, barely walking.
Doing so, the baby bird is portrayed as constantly running into several different animals and objects, and he moves forward, undauntedly, asking “Are you my mother?” In the end, the baby bird is back home with no success finding his mother, despite of his brave journey. Instead, he is greeted with the mother bird who had come back with food. Through its illustrations and designation, the baby bird is personified and gendered as a male.

In *Amos and Boris*, as well, the two main characters are males. In this title, Amos, a rodent, is especially described with his brave and courageous features. First, the author created a scene in which Amos builds a boat all by himself and undauntedly embarks on a voyage, during which Amos fights against the wind and waves. Although the plot develops with a main theme of friendship between Amos and Boris, the underlying message emphasizes being brave and courageous, as the story ends with the scene where Amos rescues Boris out an extreme danger.

**Traditionally masculine professions of male characters.** As mentioned above, the association of bravery with masculinity is widely viewed in the characters’ professions as well. For example, *Fire! Fire!*, is an informational picture book with no particular characters leading or influencing the content of the book, while conveying its information. In the book throughout most of the pages, a big group of fire fighters make an appearance. And yet, the book does not include, among the group of fire fighters or related to this profession, in its texts or illustrations, one single character that can be specified as female while explaining “how fire fighters fight fires in the city, in the country, in the forest, and on the waterfront,” as stated in its own summary on the title page.
The similar is viewed in another book in the story category with fire fighter characters, with even more stereotypical representations of the male characters. In the beginning of the plot in *Fire Cat*, Pickles would enjoy getting into mischief and meddle with other cats in the neighborhood. And yet, Pickles dreams of achieving a “big thing” with his life, with his big paws. He gets to join a group of fire fighters and to assist those fighting fires. Many aspects in this story conform to the stereotypical representations of male characters. Examples include Pickles’ mischievous and naughty behavior as a personified male character, and his dream and realization of a brave accomplishment a “Fire Cat.” In addition, all the fire fighters in the group in which Pickles joins are depicted in the illustrations and described in the texts as males.

Stereotypical representations of male characters in association with characters’ professions in male dominated fields are also found in *Boy, Were We Wrong about Dinosaurs*, a picture book from the informational category for 2-3 grade band. The book “examines what is known about dinosaur bones, behaviors and other characteristics and how different the facts often are from what scientists, to the ancient China and recent past believed to be true,” as stated in its summary on the title page. Except one female in this book, all the characters depicted as researchers or scientists are illustrated as male both in the past and present. And yet, on the contrary, a teacher character in the book, who learns about the new facts about dinosaurs with the students in the present time, is depicted as a female.

The dominance of male characters in certain and specific fields are also found in other exemplar picture books. *Moonshot: The Flight of Apollo 11* introduces a true story
of Apollo 11. Even after accounting for its factuality, all the characters depicted as working as engineers are male, and did not include any female engineer or researcher.

**Female characters**

The three types of depictions of male characters discussed above are definite reflections of gender stereotyping. In other words, the CCSS exemplar text sets are perpetuating the stereotypical male traits in its portrayal of ludicrous male characters and of characters with professions that demands bravery or of science. Compared to the male characters, the female characters not only had a remarkably low proportion in the sets, whether as a main character or a background character. The representation of the female characters seems to have opposite traits to that of the male characters. That is, while many male characters tend to be portrayed as being brave and bold, the female characters were largely described as domestic in terms of their clothing, language, and behavior. In terms of disposition, the female characters were commonly nurturing and caring for others, or timid and passive.

**Domestic affairs and boundaries of female characters.** In *Little Bear*, the mother of Little Bear in all of her appearances is depicted as being domestic, and exclusively involved in housework throughout all the anecdotes in the book. To begin with, in every scene the Mother Bear appears in the four anecdotes, her outfit is always a long and wide skirt with an apron. When Little Bear interacts with Mother Bear, she is engaged in domestic activities such as tailoring, sewing, and cleaning.

A similar depiction of a female character can be found in *Pancakes for Breakfast*. One of very few titles with a female protagonist in the K-1 and 2-3 CCSS exemplar sets, the female protagonist in this book is still engaged in a domestic activity, cooking. The female character is also dressed in very similar way to the character of Mother Bear in
Little Bear, with a wide, long skirt as well as an apron. While most of the male characters are found in home-away-home structured plots, the female characters rarely deviate from their domestic boundaries. Such a depiction can create the impression that females, especially mothers, stay home, attending to the tasks and chores relating housework and child-caring.

**Nurturing or weak dispositions of female characters.** As mentioned above, the dispositions of the female characters were commonly twofold. First, female characters were sympathetic, loving and understanding, as many of their roles in the stories were to nurture and give care for the other characters present in the story. In *Fire Cat*, it is a female character, Mrs. Goodkinds who nurtures and cares for Pickles. Mrs. Goodkinds constantly gives him care and encouragement, despite his frequent wrongdoings. Finally, Mrs. Goodkinds recognizes Pickles’ potential and his hopes to accomplish a “big thing,” and suggests that “[m]y home is too little for Pickles. Pickles is a cat who wishes to do big things. And someday he will to them. Look at his big paws.”

Similar depiction is found in *Tomás and Library Lady*, as well. Tomás, a boy who is deprived of his joy of reading as his family is migrant workers in poverty, walks far away from home to get to a library. There he is welcomed by the Library Lady who nurtures Tomás by kindly welcoming and relieving his thirst with both water and books. Interestingly, such aspects of her are contrasted with Tomás’ masculine tastes for books, as he prefers to read about tigers and dinosaurs.

Another characteristic of female dispositions is being weak, passive, or timid. In *Put Me in the Zoo*, a boy and a girl interact with an imaginary creature, who wants to be in a zoo, to show off his ability to change his own color at his own will. Throughout the
illustrations, the boy is wearing blue shorts and blue T-shirt, while the girl is wearing a yellow short skirt and a big bow on her long hair. As they witness the imaginary creature changes its colors, the boy and girl respond in quite contrary ways to each other. That is, the boy, being greatly astonished, actively directs the girl’s attention to the imaginary creature’s color, by pointing to it. On the other hand, the girl although surprised as well is illustrated with her hands gently together on her chest to express her astonishment.

In *Fire Cat*, the beginning of the story when Pickles is depicted with his mischievous and aggressive behaviors, he often torments a female cat by chasing her up a tree and not letting her climb down. As the plot develops and Pickles becomes a fire cat, he again encounters the female cat who is caught in a dangerous situation. This time, Pickle is the one who rescues the female cat from her predicament. In the above two episodes, Pickle is both naughty and brave, while the female cat is described as little, timid and passive. In such depictions discussed above, the female characters seem to perpetuate female stereotypes suggesting the female gender to be passive and more vulnerable when compared to the male characters.

**Theme 2: Race: White Characters Are Dominating, While People of Color Are Marginalized or Estranged**

The qualitative critical content analysis allows a deeper grasp of the racial aspects of the text sets. Specifically, by juxtaposing between the books with characters of White and books with characters of color, I was able to examine critically in more depth into the qualitative nature and pattern of the racial representations across the picture books in the set. In what follows, I will report the distinctive features of the books with the White characters, in terms of the formats and contents. Then, I will
discuss the books with non-White characters in greater detail. This way, it will allow for a better discussion of the nature and patterns of racial representations of the K-1 and 2-3 exemplar sets.

**White dominance**

To begin with, in the CCSS exemplar text sets, the Whiteness encompasses a variety of formats and contents. More specifically, the White characters make their appearances with a wider variety of settings, topics, and themes and atmosphere within the stories, while it seems that the characters of color seem to appear with certain limitation on characterization, topics, and themes. For example, *Hi, Fly Guy!* and *Henry the Mudge* deal with fun and humorous events taken place, as White boys build their friendship with their pets every day. *The Treasure* and *Medieval Feast* are both set in the past, but not necessarily at a historical point of time. In *The Treasure*, a White male main character sets forth on a treasure hunting journey, as predicted in his dream. *Medieval Feast*, an informational text describes how a feast for a king and a queen is prepared and enjoyed in great details in terms of clothing, housing, food and customs in its texts and illustrations. Another book, *Cowgirl Kate and Cocoa* tells of friendship between Kate, a White female character, and her horse Cocoa. Although there are no dramatic incidents or climaxes in its four episodes, the book depicts trivial and pleasant happenings between the two friends, Kate and Cocoa. In *The Raft*, a White boy has to unwillingly spend his summer with his grandmother, who lives in obscurity in nature. With so much time to spare, and not much to do in the nature, he develops a deep appreciation of the nature and animals, and builds a true relationship with his grandmother with whom he shares the experiences in the summer.
Briefly viewed, the exemplar picture books with the White characters include various settings in their times, as well as places. Topics of the books with the White characters also vary, spanning from friendship, family, and adventure and so on. One of the other prominent points to be considered about the books are the genres to which they belong. Many of the books with the White characters are in the categories of stories or read aloud stories. In other words, most of them are literary works in which the White characters tend to make their appearances to tell their stories, while many of books with characters of colors belong to the informational or read aloud informational categories with the purpose of explaining and conveying information. In short, the White characters seem to appear everywhere: across various topics, times, and spaces, while telling their own stories and experiences.

**People of color**

On the contrary, the books with characters of color show different patterns in comparison to that of the characters in the above discussed books. First of all, while the books with the White characters tend to range over various topics, themes, genres, and settings, the exemplar picture books with non-White characters tend to be categorized in several certain and distinctive types. It is also noticeable that these types are categorized based on the racial groups, such as Black, Latino, and Asian. In other words, it can be argued that each racial group has been somewhat fixed, limited and thus stereotypical images represented across the exemplar sets. For example, Asian characters tend to present a sense of emotional distance and exoticness. Latino characters tend to be associated with poverty and isolation. Black characters were portrayed as figures of heroes and heroines, rather than as every day, familiar characters. Furthermore, there are two other tendencies that, when picture books
included characters of various racial groups presented at the same time, these characters did not influence the development of the stories or conveyance of information while merely serving as background illustrations.

**Black heroes.** Such books as *A Weed is A Weed is a Flower: The Life of George Washington Carver*, *The Story of Ruby Bridges*, *A story, a Story: An African Tale*, and *14 Cow for America* feature Black characters as their main characters. In terms of their genres, *A story, a Story: An African Tale is an African folktale* is the only narrative, while the other three, *A Weed is a Flower: The Life of George Washington Carver*, *The Story of Ruby Bridges*, and *14 Cow for America* are informational books. Regardless of the genre, however, in each of these 4 books, a Black protagonist who is a great hero is found.

*A Weed is a Flower: The Life of George Washington Carver* is a biography of George Washington Carver, set during the time of African American slavery in the United States. As described in an excerpt from the text itself, “George Washington Carver was no ordinary man”, the book focuses on George Washington’s endeavor for the tireless endeavors to contribute to his community as a researcher, scientist, and a professor. *The Story of Ruby Bridges* is set in recent times after the prohibition of segregation in schools in the United States. In spite of the prohibition Ruby Bridges is confronted with harsh objection, restricting her to attend the same school with White students. The story of Ruby Bridges describes how bravely and maturely she faced the hatred and protest of the White people every morning on her way to school. The book highlights Ruby’s courage and determination, ending with a description of her showing herself to be magnanimous, praying for the White people who protested against her.
A story, a Story: An African Tale, explains how mankind came to gather stories from Nyame, the Sky God, who owned all the stories in the world. The plot highlights how an African spider man used his wit to satisfy Nyame’s demands to allow him to obtain the stories and how stories came to travel and are enjoyed around the world. 14 Cow for America is a true story about a Masai tribe’s gift to the United States. Kimeli, a Maasai student who experienced 911 while studying in the States, spoke about the tragedy of 911 while visiting home with his tribe. Upon hearing about the tragedy, the Maasai tribe feels the loss and sorrow of the country deeply as it is their own and decides to send 14 cows to America with a grand and noble ceremony. Although “to the Maasai, cow is life,” they carry this through, to show their consolation and support to the United States.

The above mentioned books are the only four books that had characters of Black origin as central characters. In fact, these four books do not share much in common; in terms of the settings, time and place are quite different. Details about the main characters, such as their gender, age and situations also varied accordingly. Each of the book had a different theme, but had two things in common. First, the main characters in all four books are black; and secondly, they are all portrayed as heroes, with historically, socially or even legendarily great and noble deeds that left great influence on society and people.

All the books in this group focus on detailed descriptions of the main character’s positive nature, and on highlighting their deeds and contributions in relation to the character’s significance and benefits to others. For example, A Weed is a Flower: The Life of George Washington Carver includes such descriptions as “He was a man who
turned evil into good, despair into hope and hatred into love. He was a man who devoted his whole life to helping his people and the world around him. The baby born with no hope for the future grew into one of the great scientist of his country. George Washington Carver, with his goodness and devotion, helped not only his own people, but all peoples of the world.” *14 Cows for America*, rather than spotlighting one hero and his heroic deeds, emphasizes how the Maasai tribe showed their humanity and compassion by sending cows that are both symbolically and practically valued to their tribe. The theme is also dramatically shown in the illustrations by the intense color contrast and close-up illustrations that provoke powerful emotions.

For the readers, especially the black readers, such books seem to carry two different kinds of messages. First, the heroic black characters serve as a positive role model. Reading and learning about the characters sharing similar appearances, backgrounds or cultural roots doing virtuous deeds and leaving their names in the history can promote the readers’ pride and self-esteem. However, such depictions that are limited to the heroic aspects could also send a problematic message. The message could translate to the idea that, if one is to have a story worthy to be heard and shared, it is inherent to be a hero with great accomplishments and influences on the society as well as history. Such Black characters are admirable, as Black children can see the people in the books as their leaders. At the same time, to the children, these characters are not as relevant as the people in their everyday lives, such as their parents, relatives, brother and sisters, etc. In terms of the genres as well, three of the four books are informational books, which has elevated focus on conveying information about
historically important figures, rather than on pleasure of literary or aesthetic reading (Rosenblatt, 1978) daily stories of everyday people.

**Asian and Latino in the center, but detached.** Unlike the black heroes, some characters of colors, even when featured as the primary characters in the picture books, the portrayal seemed a bit disconnected from the rest of the world. First of all, the Asian characters tend to be depicted as being distant and exotic. The Asian characters in *The Sign Painter* and *Lon Po Po: A Red-Riding Hood Story from China* are the examples.

In *The Sign Painter*, an Asian primary character makes an appearance as a young male. In the beginning of the plot, the Asian character arrives at a bus terminal on one sudden day. An initial appearance of this character of such nature adds an impression to readers of him as a distant stranger. The story moves on to show the character finding a job as a sign painter despite of his dream to become a real artist, and being partnered with an older White male sign painter. As the story develops, the Asian character seems to work hard in quite good teamwork with his partner. However, readers are not provided with much of other indications about the Asian characters, as he is very silent, hardly making any comments or showing his emotions through both texts and illustrations. And yet, in one scene where the sign painters mention that they cannot add or remove anything in their requested paintings, readers are shown the Asian character struggles with his reality between his dreams. From this scene, the readers are again shown that such struggles and feelings the character experiences are universal, as we, regardless of race, nationality, or culture, all undergo the similar struggles. However, despite having such a universally common element in the story, it
still takes much effort from the readers to relate to and interpret the character due to the distant and mystifying tone accorded to the depiction of the character.

*Lon Po Po: A Red-Riding Hood Story from China* is in collusion with the western Little Red Riding Hood story, as the characters of the young girls in both the stories outwit the wolves who disguise themselves as the girls’ grandmother and prey on the girls. Like the Western version, *Lon Po Po: A Red-Riding Hood Story from China* is a fable in which a personified animal appears as one of the main characters to convey teachable morality through the plot, whose author is unknown. In this story, the three girls in China lead the plot as main characters. While the mother of the three girls left the house to attend on the girls’ grandmother in a different town, the girls are visited by the wolf who insists that he is their grandmother. The story goes on to reveal that the girls outflanked the wolf by tricking him with false advices of help.

Although many elements of the story are similar to the western version of Red-Riding Hood, this book still carries the remote feeling of the Asian characters. The story is set too far in place and time; and the characters are foreigners with foreign names. In addition, apart from that this story does contain teaching of a lesson that one should be wisely on his/her guard against a stranger, the examples of this lesson are not at all practical for the readers in this period of time. In addition, to use this story for a comparison with the western version for a cultural comparison or analysis, this story does not include much details or variations from the western version. That is, there is scarce factors that are relevant for the readers to relate themselves to the story. Such aspect is probably due to the distinctive quality of this story as a fable; as opposed to realist fictions, fables rarely deal with ordinary, everyday life experiences of the
contemporary, it can suffer from lack of relatability. Furthermore, the illustrations accompanying the texts are not necessarily pleasant, as they are very dark and somewhat grotesque, they seem to fail to add a positive and pleasing impression to the readers.

_The Paper Crane_ is another example of Asian characters depicted distant and extraordinary. The story is set in contemporary America, unlike _Lon Po Po: A Red-Riding Hood Story from China_. In this story, the Asian primary characters run a restaurant. Another Asian secondary character with a great influence to the plot, “a mysterious man,” as the summary of this book states, makes his appearance. The author portrayed this secondary character with very unusual and even philosophical behaviors describing, “his clothes were old and worn, but he had an unusual, gentle manner.”

Although the gentleman could not pay for his food, he ate at the primary character’s restaurant; the owner treated the gentleman courteously, despite that the restaurant itself is in a slump. Then, out of gratitude for the restaurant owner’s kindness, the gentleman folded a paper napkin into a crane, played the flute, and clapped his hands; by his unusual ability, the paper napkin became a “magic bird,” alive and dancing. For a while, because of the magic bird’s great renown, the restaurant again had a constant stream of visitors. And yet, the story does not end here as expected on a happy note. Instead, the mysterious man came back to the restaurant, took back and rode the bird and flew away, although the restaurant managed to stay in good business. Then the story somewhat abruptly ends in the scene where the restaurant owner’s child learns to play the flute. And from this ending, the readers are
left with the rather perplexing feeling. This is probably because of the mysterious man’s arriving and leaving, and his unusual action in the story. For such reasons, the described unfamiliarity around the character seems to blur the actual theme of the story. That is, while the intended theme would have been bestowing and repaying kindness among people, the mysteriousness of the man and his crane seems to unexpectedly stand out throughout the plot.

The above three titles, which are the only three titles with Asian main characters, the authors and the illustrators have portrayed the characters as being distant, unusual, strangely different, foreign or even mythical. In other words, these Asian characters are not portrayed as realistic, relatable and like everyday people, but as elements to teach some type of lessons in life to the readers: not to give up on a dream, to act wisely and bravely, or to be good and kind.

Similarly, some Latino characters in the CCSS text sets did have a spot in the center of the stories but still was somewhat detached and distant, as the Asian characters were. The way they were detached, however, is somewhat different from the Asian characters discussed above. *Tomás and the Library Lady* and *Family Pictures* are the two titles that had Latino characters as their primary characters. *Tomás* and the Library Lady is a read-aloud story in exemplar set for K-1 grade band. In *Tomas and the Library Lady*, Tomás’ family is immigrant workers in poverty. They travel from Texas and Iowa, picking up trashes and pieces of old metal for a living. In the beginning, the book describes the exhaustion of the farm worker family as they travel for places where there is work. As to the aspects of their everyday lives and work, the author uses such expressions as “rusty old car,” and “small house”; and the
farm workers are illustrated as sharing a small house with many other workers and trying to obtain the sleep that wouldn't come. Similar descriptions include, “[A]ll day they worked in the hot sun” and “a ball is sewn from an old teddy bear.” In the meantime, Tomás seeks books to read to forget about Iowa and Texas and to avoid his tiring reality. Finally, he gets to a library and gets along with the librarian, the “Library Lady.” As he comes to have much access to books in the library, building his friendship with an American library lady, he seems to find his peace in reading stories. At a glance, such progress in the story, in which the readings bring pleasure in the main character’s hard days, seems to bear positive and admirable messages to readers. However, descriptions of this Latino boy Tomás as looking for irons to sell or toys in hot, smelly town dump, and descriptions like, “[h]e would put the books in the sun to bake away the smell” if he does find books, it solidifies the image of Mexican immigrant family as poor in straitened circumstances and hardly educated.

*Family Pictures* extensively describe Mexican American culture, including celebrating birthdays, food, special events, and so on. This book is very rich in its illustrations and narratives, as the author/illustrator of this book, Carmen Lomas Garza, created this book comprehensively based on her own life experiences as an insider. Such features of the title do contribute to promoting a clearer understanding of the culture. However, the family and the community in the book are depicted distant from any other culture with the impression that their own community is rather exclusive and isolated among themselves, as readers are not able to find any characters who are not depicted as Latino or Mexican. The “American” side of the Mexican American culture is
hard to locate in this book, as it does not distinctively depict any description of the fusion or blend of American and Mexican cultures.

The examples discussed above show that, even when the characters of colors did manage to become leading and central characters in the CCSS text sets, due to their distant, foreign, and isolating depictions, the characters still bore the impression of being detached from the rest of the society being just disparate, not diverse.

**Everybody or anybody.** On the other hand, some of the titles in the K-1 and 2-3 CCSS text exemplar sets were encompassed of diverse representations of diverse people simultaneously. Such titles mostly had a tendency to belong to informational categories and to explore various types and kinds in a variety of topics, including food, arts, tooth throwing tradition, and music. In these titles, the focuses were mostly on introducing diversity in its topics and the themes were developed to promote respect for such differences and variety.

In doing so, the illustrations in these titles have a wide variety, in terms of representing races, genders, age groups, regions, origins, customs, and even physical appearances. It seems rather obvious that the authors and illustrators of these books paid close attention to featuring people of colors, the young and old, people living different countries, people in various clothing eating diverse food, and people in different shapes and sizes. However, these books seem to simply include pictures of children belonging to diverse culture participating in whatever activity is being depicted without any specific purpose. In such cases, these diverse characters are flat, and featureless without any noticeable leading or central roles. In other words, although these
characters were included in the picture books to promote the awareness of diversity, they were hardly presented as anything more than the tokenism of such diversity.

Examples of such titles include *Art Around the World, Throw your Teeth on the Roof: Tooth Traditions Around, Ah, Music!, and What the World Eats*. *Paper Crane* is another example of such book that belongs to the story category. In these titles, characters of different races are apparently given a space to be presented. Especially, characters belonging to certain races that did not appear as primary or secondary characters frequently became visible in this case. Latino, Asian, and Middle Eastern characters often appeared in this case, while their appearances as primary and secondary characters were very rare. In addition, even Native American and Multi-racial characters came into sight, while characters in these cases were invisible as central characters in other exemplar picture books. However, these characters, in fact, have little or no role in leading the content of the books, story or informational. It seems as if the characters are included in the CCSS picture books when the books aim to represent everybody, although these characters can be replaced with anybody.

![Image of Paper Crane](image)

Figure 4-1. First example of the theme of everybody or anybody in Paper Crane
Figure 4-2. Second example of the theme of everybody or anybody in Paper Crane

Figure 4-3. First example of the theme of everybody or anybody in Ah! Music
Figure 4-4. Second example of the theme of everybody or anybody in Ah! Music

Figure 4-5. First example of the theme of everybody or anybody in Throw your Teeth on the Roof: Tooth Traditions Around
Figure 4-6. Second example of the theme of everybody or anybody in Throw your Teeth on the Roof: Tooth Traditions Around

Theme 3: Individualistic Social Perspective: Self-reliant Life Styles with Autonomous Goals

The third theme developed from the analysis is concerned with social perspectives underlying in the exemplar picture books, as to the relationships among individuals and the relationships between the individuals and society. The most pervasive type found in the examined picture books was individualism. The individualistic perspective appeared in various aspects in the picture books, such as setting, plot, theme and characterization. Across such aspects, the individualistic perspective was explicitly presented at times, and was also implicitly contained.

The most explicit and straightforward examples of the individualist perspective were through the characters’ family structures and lifestyles. In these cases, the characters carry on their independent lives with a clear boundary with other characters or society. The characters prioritize themselves over others, being in charge of their
own selves and lives. Below are some examples of the individualistic social perspectives through the family structure and lifestyles.

First of all, the analysis of the characters’ family structure showed that an unexpectedly large number of exemplar picture books contain the characters managing their independent, autonomous living by themselves without any family members or friends, in single-person households. Among the exemplar picture books for the grade band K-1, *Frog and Toad, Owl at Home*, and *Pancakes for Breakfast* fall under such titles. The 2-3 grade band includes *The Treasure, The Raft*, and *Poppleton in Winter*. In the above books, the characters carry on with their own daily lives independently and uniquely with rigid boundaries with others.

However, rather than a number of characters in a household, the more comprehensive, yet, somewhat latent and implicit individualistic perspective seems to underlie within the characterization. And more specifically the characters’ languages, attitudes and behaviors that focused on their autonomous identities, personal goals, and self-achievement were also relevant to the characterization. In such cases, the characters are concerned with, for example, their personal goals and the emotions they carry; the matters of concern of the characters tend not to reach the boundaries of communities or society.

For example, in *Little Bear*, all the four anecdotes illustrate the incidents that the central character Little Bear has been subjected to, which include the changes of Little Bear’s personal emotions and the development he makes throughout the anecdotes. In one anecdote titled as “Birthday Soup,” Little Bear placates himself, who is disappointed that Mother Bear has disappeared, seemingly unaware of his birthday. Thinking of his
friends who would visit him soon for his birthday party, he tries to resolve the problem by getting ready for the party by himself. After due consideration, he cooks his own “birthday soup” with the ingredients available at his kitchen at the moment. As he cooks his own birthday soup, he greets and welcomes his own guests. And when he thinks of Mother Bear’s whereabouts, as the time gets closer to the party, he makes up his mind and says, “The Birthday Soup is hot, so we must eat it now. We cannot wait for Mother Bear. I do not know where she is,” and carries on with his own birthday party without Mother Bear. In the anecdote titled, “Little Bear’s Wish,” Little Bear shares his wishes with Mother Bear, including “sitting on a cloud and fly all around,” “finding a Viking boat,” and “finding a tunnel going all the way to China.” In this anecdote, rather than carrying out any of his wishes mentioned above, Little Bear simply goes through the list of them. However, a closer look into the list reveals that all of his wishes on this list include solitary adventures, as well as individual accomplishment, any of which does not seem to involve a sense of cooperation or sense of community.

In Are You My Mother? the perspective of individualism is highlighted in two different aspects. At a glance, Are You My Mother? is a simple story of a baby bird taking upon a venture to look for his mother and running into a variety of unexpected animals and objects. Such an interpretation is true to some extent; and yet, the story deals with the baby bird realizing and establishing his identity as a bird, as all the animals and objects the baby bird runs into negate being the baby’s mother. From such experiences, the baby bird learns who he is not, and finally, who he is. When the baby bird is met with its mother, at last, its awareness of itself is revealed, as the baby bird recognizes who its mother is. In addition, the main character of the book, the baby bird
is depicted as being very young, as it just hatched out of its egg but, is alone without its mother or anyone else around him. This is not likely to happen in reality, as young children are usually with someone older to look after them. Nevertheless, as the book highlights the young character’s own, solitary journey without help from anyone, and as this unaccompanied struggle to find its mother ends on a successful note at the end, the story seems to celebrate individualism, rather than a community’s pursue or effort.

*Kitten’s First Full Moon* and *Pancakes for Breakfast* both belong to the story category for the grade band K-1. At the surface level, it appears that these two books possess contrasting nature and themes, partly because the protagonist in *Kitten’s First Full Moon* is a personified cat and *Pancake for Breakfast* a mid-aged female. It is not limited to that but also because of the two books’ dissimilar topics and plots. However, if considering the aspects of the social perspective of individualism, the two books have similar tones and underlying messages. That is, the protagonists in both stories set up their goals, and, although both go through a series of unpleasant troubles in the process of achieving their goals, they finally attain the goals at the end. In addition, both books keep a humorous tone to describe the troubles the primary characters go through.

In *Kitten’s First Full Moon*, the protagonist is a young kitten who encounters a full moon for the first time. At sight, the young cat thinks that the full moon is a “little bowl of milk in the sky,” and tries as many things as she can in order to have the milk. Her trials and errors are described as “[s]o she chased- Down the sidewalk, through the garden, past the field, and by the pond.” “[s]o she ran to the tallest tree she could find, and he climbed and climbed and climbed to the very top.” “[s]o she raced down the tree and raced through the grass and raced to the edge of the pond. She leapt with all her...
might-” Meanwhile, the kitten finds herself in many troubles such as swallowing a bug, falling off from stairs, and plunging into the water. However, finally, “there was a great big bowl of milk on the porch, just waiting for her” upon her coming home disappointed and exhausted. That is, even though not through her own trials and efforts, the story ended with her goal being achieved.

The same is viewed in the case of *Pancakes for Breakfast*. In this wordless picture book, the mid-aged female protagonist decides to have pancakes for her breakfast and rushes into the task. However, soon her problems begin, as she realizes that there is no egg, milk and then maple syrup, one after another. The protagonist overcomes the problems as she goes out to get eggs from a coop, milk a cow in a barn, and to buy maple syrup from a neighbor. And yet, coming back home with the syrup, full of expectations, she this time discovers that her dog and cat has eaten up all the ingredients for the pancakes at home. She becomes very disappointed at the scene, but soon she learns that her neighbors are having pancakes for breakfast as well, and self-invites her to join their breakfast.

As can be seen, both protagonists in *Pancakes for Breakfast* and *Kitten’s First Full Moon* achieve their goals in the end somehow, although not necessarily through their own endeavors. No matter how the stories end, however, both the books focus on unfolding the protagonists’ struggles for achieving their goals. Furthermore, no matter how these goals become achieved, the ending of both stories show the characters’ satisfaction at the fulfilment of their wishes that is solely concerned on their own selves. In that sense, it may well be safe to say that these titles connote individualism in their characterizations, plots and themes.
*Fire Cat* includes the individualist perspective in a more earnest and clear manner, as the stories emphasize Pickles' self-development and self-realization. As discussed earlier, at the beginning of the story Pickles is described as being mischievous and naughty but hope to achieve big things with his life one day. After he joins the firefighters, he becomes more responsible and mature with his thoughts and behavior, growing into a professional “Fire Cat.” After playing an active role in rescuing the little cat that he used to pick on, Pickles “rode home to the firehouse- a proud and happy cat.” The ending of the story emphasizes the development and realization of its central character, who overcomes his own negative self-feelings from the past.

*The Treasure* in the story category in Grade band 2-3 also illustrates how the main character attains his wish at the end of a long and arduous journey. Isaac, who makes a scanty living by himself in a country has a dream about finding “a treasure under the bridge by the Royal Palace,” and “set[s] out on his journey” to look for the treasure. In the following 20 pages, the author describes in detail how tough and laborious the journey is, as “[h]e walked through forests, He crossed over mountains.” Upon reaching the Royal Palace, Isaac hears about the dream that the Palace Captain has had. The Captain, mentioning Isaac’s name correctly even without knowing him at all, tells that the treasure would be under Isaac’s own bed if the dream is true. At his comment, Isaac comes back home repeating “his long way home,” as “[h]e crossed over mountains. He walked through forests, now and then, someone gave him a ride, but most of the way he walked.” Arriving home, he finally discovers the very treasure the Captain has mentioned. In the end, it is the last two pages that tell of Isaac’s action after his finding that he builds a house of prayer, and that shares the ruby with the
captain at the palace. As shown, the most part of the story was allotted to describing Isaac' own journey to reach his fortune that had a huge impact in changing his life.

**Findings From Thematic Analysis**

Part of the research questions explored how closely the exemplar text sets align with classroom teachers’ actual children’s book selection. So I aimed to look at how representable the exemplar sets are of classroom teachers' views and values in selecting picture books for the students.

To answer the above mentioned research question, I interviewed 13 local elementary school teachers from kindergarten to third grade. In the interviews, I shared the lists of CCSS text exemplar sets, showed the teachers a few of the exemplar texts, and inquired into the teachers’ opinions about the picture books in the CCSS exemplar text sets. I also asked about the process through which the teachers decide the selection of the picture books. Upon thematically analyzing the interviews with 13 K-3 classroom teachers, a major theme and three subthemes have emerged. Below are the theme and the subthemes identified through the thematic analysis;

1. I Like the Them, but They Don’t Fit My Children
   a. Too Old and Irrelevant
   b. Too Wordy and Difficult
   c. No Related Activities

**I Like the Them, but They Don’t Fit My Children**

Every teacher I interviewed was centrally focused on helping the students in experiencing books with diverse contents and formats, and to take pleasure in reading, so that, in the long run, they become life-long readers. In order to achieve this, the teachers considered a wide variety of aspects while selecting the picture books to be shared with their students; whether for read aloud for whole groups, or for their
classroom libraries for students' independent reading, the points of the teachers’ consideration ranged from the books’ contents/topics, stories, messages, illustrations, retatable activities, and relevant standards, to students' backgrounds and life situations.

In terms of Common Core State Standards, all of the teachers who had participated in the interviews seemed to be well-versed in the standards for their grades. This would have been because, although the state in which the study was conducted had not signed on to the Common Core State Standards initiative, and the state had created a set of standards, entitled, Language Arts Florida Standards (LAFS), for the subject of Language Arts, which are much similar to the CCSS with a little modification, which have been substituted the set for the CCSS. Despite the teachers' knowledge on the Common Core standards, it was only 2 out of the 13 teachers who were aware of the appendices attached at the end of the Common Core standards, and that appendix B included the list of exemplar texts for each grade band. And yet, these two teachers, who had known about the Appendix B, had never referred to the list when selecting picture books for their classroom use.

Nevertheless, on being presented with the actual list of CCSS exemplar picture books for the grade bands, every teacher showed familiarity with the exemplars. That is, as they were going through the exemplar list for their grade band, none of the teachers posed any problem in recognizing the exemplar titles, mentioning that they have known, read, or heard of quite a few of them. In addition, many of the teachers asserted that they were familiar with a few of the authors and illustrators of the exemplar picture books, as well as their other works that are not listed in Appendix B. Many teachers not only identified many of the exemplar texts as known but also expressed
their personal fondness for some of the exemplar texts, as their personal favorites as well. The quotes below indicate such familiarity and fondness of the teachers with the titles and authors/illustrators:

[1] Debra: I know *Owl At Home* for sure and, you know, all of his-- Arnold Lobel, all his are good.

[2] Shannon: I think I know almost all of these- Definitely, I mean, I know *Green Eggs and Ham*, and *Frog and Toad*. *Pancakes for Breakfast*, I know, *Fly Guy* I have read… I think I read the *Kitten’s First Full Moon* last year. Anything Kevin Henkes- has been great.

[3] Dee: Oh, I definitely know *Are you my Mother?*, *Frog and Toad*, *Owl at Home* and— I think I’ve used, *From Seed to Plant*, and *My Five Senses*. I’ve definitely not used most of them, but I've heard of most of them. And I was going to say, books by Aliki have been around for a really long time and that's not a surprise.

As can be seen, as readers, many teachers tend to have positive responses toward the CCSS exemplar picture books, as none of the teachers have any problem recognizing various titles, also with their personal fondness, as well as with much appreciation of the authors and illustrators. However, such positive familiarity and fondness of teachers as individual readers becomes quite the opposite, on applying their perspectives as teachers, keeping the classroom use of the CCSS exemplar picture books in mind.

**Too old and irrelevant**

First of all, the fact that the exemplar picture books have been around for a long period of time and the familiarity it had with the teachers seemed to bring about the teachers’ contradicting responses to the books. That is, the teachers mentioned that
their students, as readers in modern days, would feel distant from the picture books unlike the teachers themselves, because, as the books tend to be old, the settings and lives represented in the books could be irrelevant these days, thus making it difficult for the students to relate themselves to the books. For such reasons, the teachers mentioned that they would not necessarily choose the old CCSS books for the students, because there is a prominent chance that the students will not be able to engage with the books and lose their interest in books and reading. Some of the teachers even mentioned their actual experiences of sharing a few CCSS exemplar picture books with their students and of hardly having the students’ positive reaction to them. Below are some examples of the teachers’ responses about the CCSS exemplar picture books’ being old and irrelevant for students:

[1]
Debra: Oh, my God. *Little Bear* is older than-- I mean, oh my God, these are old. I mean *Little Bear* is probably 50 years old. But now, you know that *Are You My Mother?* is my all-time favorite book in the world. That's-- That is 50. I mean, *Green Eggs and Ham*? There's not a book here that is less than 30, 40 years old. Well, that's ridiculous, very ridiculous. So, they're limiting themselves immediately. Wow- I'm very shocked. You know, as I say, I don't know that-- I don't know the kids don't like *Frog and Toad* to get. I probably wouldn't use that. They're not really into it because it's old. And I think it's hysterical. I love *Little Bear* but it's really not engaging enough, for modern children. Yeah, it's, that's funny. I personally like it but my children weren’t engaged when I read it. They it didn't love it.

[2]
Penny: I can tell you, um, I've read this book, the entire *Little Bear* series, and I know what this book is. *Are You My Mother?* is a fantastic story. How could you not love that story? Um, *Green Eggs and Ham*, I only read for Dr. Seuss’ birthday. Um, children of 2016 are not interested in these stories. These are not stories they're connected to. And-- And not a grabber.
Dianna, one of the five first-grade teachers whom I interviewed, particularly seemed to think that older books are hard for her students to relate to, in her searching for and selecting books for her students. Furthermore, she was not just worried about the settings and lives depicted in the CCSS picture books; she was more concerned about using older books in general, as older books could transmit the perspectives that are outdated or even stereotypical. Below is her comment:

Dianna: I like to read books to my kids so they can engage in some of the stories. It just all depends on the student engagement. And I like, I like *Little Bear*, for example. but then, you know, those stories, words like, some of the, some of the students won't be able to relate to the little cottage or in the woods. And, um, when you look at school libraries, most of them have a lot of really old books in them, to begin with, so, you know, we are really limited, a lot of times, you know, I'll come up with something that I really want to do and then I look and we don't own the books, you know. Especially when I'm looking for, you know, more recent literature that is maybe more relevant to my kids then, you know, but I think that when I come across something, because you do come across things in books that are antiquated beliefs, somethings like that, that I would-- it -- it prompts discussion. So, you know, I -- I mean it's unfortunate a lot of the books that we have are old. So when you see something that is very-- whether it's sexist and only a man can do this or whatever, then, you know, I might interject my own-- Okay, but, like, "Oh, but girls can do this too," you know, and stuff like that. So I think that, um, it's the message that I give, even though I might be reading something that doesn't share exactly what I wanted them to get from it, but I think that it helps them to promote the thought that they can have their own beliefs and they can -- they can, integrate what they believe into other things that they are reading and kind of take things from it and even give things back to it into each other.

Gabby also pointed out that her students need to feel interested in and relatable to the books that they read.

Gabby: For me, it's really important that they're interested in them. So making sure that they have something that they want to look at and not something that I'm making them look at. a lot of the books I have, is just books that my kids have read or enjoyed... I like to look at the pictures and make sure that everyone in the class is represented in some way. That way, that way- they can have, like, a connection with the book and not just feel like this only happens to this kind of person.
Similarly, many of the teachers were very mindful about making connections between the books students read, and their lives. The teachers shared a strong belief that the things students encountered in pictures and texts in the books would greatly matter. They believed that the teachers themselves need to strive to help their students seeing and hearing what is relevant and meaningful to their lives, from the books they provide to their students. These teachers commonly mentioned that they make an effort to search for the books with good, positive messages and went on to state that the good, positive messages, in that sense, are the ones authentically relevant to their students’ everyday lives now, and also to their future.

Below are some remarks from a teacher about choosing books that reflect their students’ backgrounds and life situations. As to selecting books by and about people that authentically reflect her students’ lives, Megan made an endeavor to help her students to have a better future, by searching for books that closely depict the students’ everyday lives:

Megan: You look at my low group, my low achieving group, and they're all African-American. And so, I can see that there is a desperate need within this culture to provide them with the things that are gonna be necessary for them to be successful. So, that's why there's such a big push for me to make sure that I'm picking materials meticulously that are not only gonna work for them academically but are gonna improve their want for reading and also are gonna improve their text-to-self connections. Because that's a connection that is gonna help them meta-cognitively whenever they're reading. If they can start connecting to these characters on a real level, then that's gonna help them achieve all these other standards that I want.

So I want to make sure that their experience with me is “I now have a love for reading and learning, and a lot of great strategies, I know what I can do.” I'm trying to give them things that are going to benefit them throughout life, because these kids are going to struggle and they're not always going to have someone in their corner that is going to back them up and really strive to make them as successful as they possibly can be.
Especially my students, um, especially my Block A, are all African-American descent, whether they're mixed race or just African-American. I try to do a lot of stuff that’s focused on, um, African-American culture, because, it matters to them, a little bit more than it would, um, in a school that was not so predominantly African-American. And I wanna make sure that they know more about their culture than just Martin Luther King Jr. Because they all know who Martin Luther King Jr. is, and not to downplay his role in civil rights and just their culture, but there’s so much more that they don’t know about… And also especially for my African-American girls, because where I see a big gap is stories about African-American girls. With them as like the center stage. I try to model it as best I can and like a really good positive life for them, and let them know the seriousness of the nature.

The above excerpts illustrate the teachers’ concern on the use of older books and their consequent unwillingness to adopt the CCSS exemplar books. In summary, the teachers’ issues with older books were that the contexts, characterizations and lifestyles represented in the older books and underlying perspectives and ideas in them might not be most appropriate for contemporary students, as they are hard to connect with, not interesting, and thus possible to pass on inapt ideas to their students.

Too long and difficult

During the interviews, all the teachers were given time to look through and to read the exemplar books included in their grade bands and then to comment on them. The teachers looked into the ones that they had previously known, as well as the ones that were new to them. While going through the books, one of the common issues pointed out by every teacher was regarding the texts themselves. This aspect seemed to draw the attention of the teachers, and the teachers expressed obvious disapproval in selecting the CCSS exemplar picture books.

The teachers’ concern about the texts includes a few reasons. One of them was that the texts in the picture books were too wordy and the entire text is too lengthy. Some teachers were disturbed that, despite the good contents and information in the
books, when some of the exemplar “read-aloud” picture books were shared with a classroom full of students, the lengthiness of the texts could cause the loss of the students’ attention and interest in comprehending the stories. Below is an excerpt from the interviews in which the teachers had shown their concerns about the lengthiness of some exemplars, and consequently losing the students’ interest and attention while sharing the books:

[1]
Penny: \emph{Tomás and the Library Lady}, I feel like I've seen that book. And this is for kindergartners?

Interviewer: Yes. And first grade.

Penny: Are you crazy? I have to read this in three sittings. My kids would never-No. It's too-- There's too many words. I can tell you already I like the pictures. Um, but, it's too-- There's too many words. There's too many words. No, I would not read that to my kids. I would open it just like that and say, “I'm not reading that to my kids.”

[2]
Anna: They're not gonna be interested in this [Family Pictures]. So, as wonderful as it is and the idea of it is fantastic-I don't-- I just-- I don't see it happening, you know. You know, this is wonderful, but I just-- I don't know how much my kids will enjoy it. They won't get it. I don't know that I would read this whole thing to them. I mean-- And then-- and then what happens is you have a wonderful story but it makes it too long and then it goes and it's just-- Like I haven't read this one yet, but it goes and it talks about money to buy beans and tortillas. It gets off-and starts kind of trying to explain the culture too much that you lose sight. This is long, this is very long.

Other teachers also commented about the difficulty of the texts’ level and of the layout in which some texts are written. They think that some of the exemplar books, especially the ones in the story categories, should have been suggested for older grades because the texts and vocabulary in those books seem to be in the reading levels higher for their students to comprehend. Examples of the exemplar texts often
mentioned by a few teachers for the difficulty in the texts were, *Lon Po Po*, and *Moon Shot*.

[1]

Jessica: I mean, how will I do *Lon Po Po* to K through one? That is not an appropriate book for K through one. It might be a great story, but no way, that's not a K through one book at all. I can—it's too difficult, it'd be more with two, three, or even four book.

[2]

Diana: What genre is this [Moon Shot]? What category?

Interviewer: It's informational, and independent reading.

Diana: I wonder what kind of instruction they expect with it. Independent reading 2nd and 3rd grade? I mean, I could picture some students-- like I said, every group is different. Like, I could picture my-- My-- My above-grade level readers, reading this. And, it looks like a good book, but I don't know. You just have to have a diversity in your room, you can't just have those books and that was not gonna be effective, cause, two to three, they can't read this. And, they're not ESOL, they're just-- They can't. They're not there yet... And *Tops and Bottoms*, we always have a really good time with- Cause it's just, um, I would say, the reading level, I think it's more of a high third-grade level, as far as the actual words-

One of the other significant concerns raised by the teachers about the texts was related to the formats. That is, the formats of some books, especially the ones in the informational category, was pointed out for their complexity. The teachers who paid attention to the format of the texts commonly pointed out that the contents or information in the text might be useful for the students in the grade band, but the format did not support their comprehension, because it was too complicated and challenging for them. Below is an example about *What the World Eats*, an encyclopedia typed, read-aloud informational text for grade band 2-3:

Penny: And is this [*What the World Eats*] for two to three?

Interviewer: Yes.
Penny: No, just the layout of this book is an adult. This is an adult book layout. It's for older-- You'll have to know where to look. And these children at that age, they're just learning the elements of non-fiction, at this grade, at this age, second and third, no way. I mean, it's every informative. I could see using it, at a fifth-grade class.

No related activities

Still another reason that the teachers gave for declining the use of CCSS exemplar books was in regard to lack of related activities of the books and the books being exclusive. For example, commenting on high stakes standardized testing, many teachers expressed their frustrations towards meeting the standards. Their worry was that “everything has to each something” to help their students get ready for the testing. Likewise, many teachers had a common negative opinion about coming up with activities related to the exemplar titles that would help the students prepare for the standardized tests. A few teachers repeatedly stressed their preoccupation to make sure that they connect the standards while using different types of books. Below are some examples:

[1] Jessica: And these don't-- These are not, um, child-engaging stories. You know, *Put Me in the Zoo*, like, what am I going to do with that book to engage my kids in the Common Core standards? What-- What-- standard is that supposed to meet? Because that’s the big thing, to connect these books to standards. Because you’re not supposed to teach skills. You’re supposed to teach standards. So I’m not sure how *Put Me in the Zoo* meets any of the standards. I—I couldn't tell you a standard that I can think of.

[2] Anna: I think what I see overall in these books is I don't feel like I can do more with them. Where I took, you know, the-- *If You Give a Cat a Cupcake* book was able to do four things off of them, um, I-- I—I don't feel-- I just don't know what I would do with *Little Bear* beside read the story and try to ask some comprehension questions. What am-- How am I gonna connect it to a writing activity or an art activity or a-- a sequencing or compare and
contrast. I just-- And like *Green Eggs and Ham*. I mean, I love the story *Green Eggs and Ham*. I guess I can connect it to rhyming words and I can cook green eggs and ham, but what else am I gonna do it with it? There's nothing else I can do with it. So, I feel like these books don’t give me enough extension, you know. And I don’t have time to just read one random story.

**Summary**

From the findings identified through both content analysis and thematic analysis, it can be asserted that the CCSS text exemplar sets are not inclusive or realistic in terms of equitably reflecting the multifaceted lives of today and practically reflecting classroom teachers’ actual choices for picture book selection. First of all, the picture books in the CCSS text exemplar sets for the grade bands K-1 and 2-3 are found to be exclusive of certain types of characters, their specific qualities, as well as the ways to perceive relationships among individuals and between individuals and the society. More specifically, the books are overly inclusive of White males with traditionally masculine qualities, as well as their individualistic perspectives, with insufficiency in featuring and focusing on the ordinary people of color, especially female characters of color, and people with non-traditional or atypical gender traits.

The chances are that such depictions in these exemplar text sets simply reflect the depictions that have been widely available and easily accessible in the books outside of CCSS as well. The chances are, in other words, that such over- and under-representations, misrepresentations, or even no representations of certain aspects of our lives in children’s pictures books are not at all intentional, but just following widespread tendency in the publishing industry. Be that as it may, the findings of the study also allow an inference that the CCSS text exemplar sets are not only exclusive but also unrealistic or impractical. Considering that the local teachers shared sceptical
opinions about the actual exemplar picture books for their oldness, lengthiness and irrelevance, the CCSS text exemplar sets do not seem to be very helpful for teachers’ classroom use, nor the CCSS text exemplar sets do not seem to be representing the classroom teachers’ realistic view of book selection.

In fact, CCSSO (2010) states that the exemplar books are meant to “exemplify the level of complexity and quality that the Standards require all students in a given grade band to engage with,” and to “serve as useful guideposts in helping educators select texts of similar complexity, quality and range for their own classrooms (2010, p. 2).” Among the three criterion, CCSSO explains the criterion of quality as “[w]hile it is possible to have high-complexity texts of low inherent quality, the workgroup (CCSSO) solicited only texts of recognized value. From the pool of submissions gathered from outside contributors, the workgroup selected classic or historically significant texts as well as contemporary works of comparable literary merit, cultural significance, and rich content (2010, p. 2).”

And yet, the findings of this study calls for questioning to see if the CCSS text exemplars are indeed “useful guideposts in helping educators select texts.” The findings of the study also call for a rethinking of the definition of the “literary merit, cultural significance and rich content (CCSSO, 2010, p. 2).”
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Discussion of the Findings

In the earlier chapter, I presented the findings from the content and thematic analyses. In the discussion section of the current chapter, the findings for the research questions that guided the study will be elaborated initially, outlining them in the context of its relation to the previous studies. Accordingly, this chapter will provide conclusions, implications, as well as suggestions for future research.

The current study has examined the picture books listed as text exemplars in Appendix B of the Common Core State Standards English Language Arts for two grade bands, K-1 and 2-3. Using the content and thematic analyses, I examined each title’s characteristics, such as its publication dates, author/illustrator gender, racial and nationality information, and certain traits of the characters in the picture books, so as to recognize the pattern in the CCSS picture books that have been included or excluded, through which the messages to the readers would be created and conveyed. I also interviewed the teachers in K-3 classrooms regarding their views on the actual CCSS exemplar picture books, along with the views of the teachers in selecting the children’s books, to understand whether and how much the CCSS exemplar picture books represent the teachers’ values in their picture book selection. In essence, these analyses were to recognize the kinds of picture books that they are provided with or deprived of in the selection suggested within the frame of educational and administrative reform, Common Core State Standards.

Unfortunately, the findings of this study are similar, to a great extent, with those of many related earlier studies on the representations of different aspects of lives in the
texts and illustrations in picture books for children. Although the categories and patterns examined in this study are somewhat different among the different groups, the conclusive findings pose similarity in various expenses.

**Representations of Races**

First of all, considering the CCSS exemplar collection as a whole, White dominance is apparent in their creation as well as representations. In terms of the creation of the CCSS exemplar picture books, White authors and White illustrators far outnumbered all the other groups and categories in the analysis, as the clear majority of them is White American males and females. This, in other words, means that authors and illustrators of colors, and authors and illustrators from another part of the world are severely underrepresented across the CCSS text exemplars. Such findings of this study relating to the lack of diversity among authors and illustrators of children’s literature are also clearly congruent with the extent statistics documented by the Cooperative Children’s Book Center (CCBC), every year since 1985. CCBC has consistently reported the starkly low numbers of the books published each year, created by authors and illustrators of American Indians, Asian/Pacific, Asian/Pacific Americans and Latinos, reflecting their culture and experiences (Horning, Kruse & Schliesman, 2001). The latest statistics revealed that out of the 3,500 children’s books received at CCBS from the publishers in the United States in 2017, less than 500 books are created by authors and illustrators of color: 116 African/African Americans, 17 American Indians/First Nations, 256 Asian Pacifics/Asian Pacific Americans and 108 Latinx.

To this matter, in fact, there has been much controversy as to who can write whose story, as a significant number of researchers have discussed the issues. The aforementioned debate has swirled around the issues of “imagination and experience”
(Cai, 2002, p. 38) in creating a story with cultural authenticity. Some insist that the authors and illustrators who are outsiders of a culture are perfectly capable of authentically presenting an inside story. And it is believed that the authors and illustrators can use their imagination in crossing the cultural gaps and truthfully reflect the reality outside the realm of their own experiences and backgrounds. On the other hand, others contend that only the authors and illustrators who have the experiences as insiders of their own culture can create a culturally authentic work.

Silvey (1993) stated that “[w]riters create the best landscape that they know – in their minds or in their hearts” (p. 133). That is, if one is to appreciate and learn about a culture, he/she needs to go to the works of the inside members of that culture. According to Cai (2002), as well, “so-called insiders” (p.30) are the ones who can create an authentic literature of their own culture. And yet, Cai (2002) went on to contend that “[b]y extensively reading literature by insiders; we can construct a frame of reference to check the authenticity of cross-cultural literature written by outsiders” (p.30). Many researchers are in agreement with the similar view. For example, in Bishop’s (2003) words, authors are required to do in-depth research to broaden their understanding of lives, emotions and perspectives of a culture and its people, if they intend to create their works with cultural authenticity.

A renowned African American author, Jacqulin Woodson (2003) also asserted that “no one but me can tell my story” (p. 43), and “it is easy to tell who has and who has not been inside my house” (p.45). Woodson went on to explicate that, for her, it is more of a problem that people of color do not have enough chance to tell their own story than white people write her story without having been “inside her house.” In short,
according to Woodson, it is the authenticity and accuracy that approves a person to write a story that “speak[s] the truth” (p.45) of a group that has been marginalized and misrepresented in children’s literature.

As mentioned above, the findings of the study conclude that the CCSS exemplar text sets examined in the research do not include the adequate numbers of the authors and illustrators of color, or people from around the world to tell their own stories from the inside. Nevertheless, as one of the central purposes, NGA Center and CCSSO (2010) set out that the students will “come to understand other perspectives and cultures” (p.7).

And yet, in the CCSS text exemplar sets, White Americans are accorded to be the overwhelming superiority among the authors and illustrators, whereas there are only a handful of titles written and illustrated by authors and illustrators of colors, or from different parts of the world. This in turn, deprives the readers of the access to such cultural insiders’ chances to tell their authentic and accurate stories from the honest perspectives and experiences from inside. In other words, the Common Core text sets are limited in portraying the insider's experiences as people of colors, or people from another part of the world in more sophisticated, and authentic manner.

Relating to White dominance, in terms of the characters depicted across the CCSS exemplar picture books, similar was discovered, as the findings of the study suggest that the readers would predominantly see White faces in the picture books. That is to say, the CCSS collection was packed with the White characters. These characters were, for the most part, leading stories or taking the important parts in the stories in the sets. The aforementioned finding conversely indicates that the characters of colors are severely underrepresented across the collection. Such findings of the
study regarding the over- and under-representation of certain racial groups are not unprecedented. In a long line of extant research on children’s literature with various ranges of scope, the overrepresentation of white characters and the under-representation of characters of colors are, in fact, not at all new.

The pioneering study (Larrick, 1965) was on the depiction of African American characters in more than 5,000 children’s picture books. As the title, “The All-White World of Children’s Books,” indicated, the study revealed an overall and severe scarcity of depiction of African American characters, especially in contemporary and positive manners. The Black characters in her study tended to set outside the United States and were portrayed unfavorably or stereotypically. For this reason, Larrick (1965) showed a worry in the adverse effect it possibly has on the young readers of the children’s books, as children would continuously encounter such lacking and/or negative depictions of Black characters.

However, despite the researcher’s concern, there have since been numerous research that ascertained the consistent findings with Larrick’s (1965) for more than half a century. Another seminal study, by Rudine Sims Bishop in 1982, for example, examined the African American representations in children’s literature. The researcher reported an increase in the number of titles, whose characters are depicted as African American, and yet the characters were still in relatively lacking, and negative and/or stereotypical portrayals. The research thereafter has also had a wider and specific focus on the representation in children’s literature, such as race and ethnicity (e.g., Naidoo, 2008; Roberts, Dean, & Holland, 2005), gender (e.g., Hamilton, Anderson, Broaddus, & Young, 2006), and disability (e.g., Dyches, Prater, & Jenson. 2006). And most studies
have all recognized the prominent as well as archetypal over-, under- and mis-representations, depending on the types of characters, perpetuated in the children’s books.

It may even be accorded that the White dominance in the characters merely reflects the population of the United States. However, this is not true, because the United State public school has been facing a dramatic shift in its student demographics. That is, the percentage of non-Hispanic White students had started to fall under 50 % in public schools from fall 2014. Instead, Non-white students, who used to be the minority, namely, African- American, Latino, and Asian students, has taken the share of total 50.3 %, making themselves “the new majority” (Chiles, 2014; Enright, 2011; Greenhalgh, 2014; Maxwell, 2014), indicating that the white students are no longer a majority in the US public school history. Therefore, the proportion of ethnicity of the characters, especially the dominance of White characters, found across the picture books in K-1 and 2-3 CCSS exemplar text sets, is not reflective of the population of today’s classrooms.

On the contrary to the White characters in the CCSS exemplar picture books, there are a significant number of characters that have been not only marginalized and underrepresented across the CCSS sets, but also type-casted with stereotypical and limited representations, being repeatedly assigned to the same type of roles and persona that might also be unauthentic. In fact, the characters of colors in the K-1 and 2-3 CCSS exemplar picture books appeared in the picture books to a degree; but many of its representations were stereotyped to a level and even distorted at some points. As such, it seems that readers of colors would hardly find themselves in the reflections that
are authentic, adequate and also current in the CCSS picture books. Such misrepresentations may result in the “powerful lesson about how they are devalued in society” (Sims Bishop, 1990, p. x). In fact, the misrepresentations of characters from marginalized people of color and the consequent concerns are again congruous with many preceding studies of children’s picturebooks (CCBC, 2018; Crisp et al., 2016; Hamilton et al., 2006; Taylor, 2003; Weitzman et al., 1972; Thomas & Stornaiuolo, 2016).

In Bank’s (2007) description of the four levels of integrating multicultural issues across the curriculum, for example, such representations fall into the lower levels. Banks (2007) describe the four levels to integrate multicultural issues across the curriculum. Level one is the contributions approach, in which festivals, heroes, holidays and food of different cultures are introduced. Multicultural integration at this level tends to be the most prevailing and the easiest. Level two is the “additive” approach, where more multicultural content and stories are integrated into the curriculum, with a shortcoming suggesting that “it usually results in the viewing of ethnic content from the perspective of mainstream historians, writers, artists, and scientists” (Banks, 2007, p. 35). Level three is referred to as the “transformation” approach, in which the integration of multicultural themes into curriculum aims to encourage the students to acknowledge various perspectives of racial, ethnic and cultural groups. It also accords to the issues related to cultural conflicts and distress. Level four is the “social action” approach, which promotes the students’ new awareness to go beyond the school curriculum and, in turn, to take proactive actions to bring about changes where it becomes practical for
the students to recognize the problems of injustice and power imbalance, not only in the school settings but also in their lives.

In the CCSS text sets, it is not difficult to find the stereotypical representations of certain characters. For example, the black protagonists portrayed only as heroes, and the Asian and Latino characters depicted merely as distant and exotic, all of which seem to belong to Bank’s first and/or second level, where the inclusion is limited to the discrete cultural elements. For example, in *Sign Painter*, the Asian character is described in the texts and illustrations, as being hard-working, exotic, and wandering. According to Scroggins and Gangi (2004), such a description of Asian characters in children’s literature is stereotypical as the characters are portrayed as being "forever foreign," that is, “[n]o matter how many generations their families have lived in the United States, others assume they have just arrived and will probably soon go back” (p. 35). In *Tomas and the Library Lady*, Tomas and his family suffer from poverty, intense labor and hard life. The Mexican immigrant families need a connection with a seemingly more enlightened and merciful being, a White American, who, in this story, generously offers cold water to drink and a shelfful of books to read, both of which Tomas hopes for in many scenes in the story. Through a critical perspective, such an unfolding of the story is in a way condescending and seems to be situated in White supremacy, in the sense that it is the white savior who saves the poor Mexican immigrant child who is nuanced as inferior and lower in status.

In cases of the above mentioned nature, it is crucial to recognize that the children’s books need to be not only merely inclusive of diverse races but also free of stereotypes and misrepresentations. Such stereotypical and assumptive portrayals
must be pointed out. It should also be recognized that there are insufficient numbers of, and thus, special and urgent need for children’s book collections that characters of colors are being featured with accurate, authentic and contemporary lives. In other words, at this point of the time, the Non-White readers, as well as the White readers need to have easily accessible picture books provided to them in which ethnically diverse characters are being depicted as experiencing an assortment of specific, dynamic, active, and also out-of-bound ways of lives, as though White characters are often portrayed in the picture books.

**Representations of Gender and Gender Roles**

Children obtain knowledge and information about many different topics through picture books, which in turn affects their ideas about themselves and identities, either positively or negatively (Crawford & Bhattacharya, 2014; Fitzpatrick & Kostina-Ritchey, 2013; Kelly, 2012; Chaudhri & Teale, 2013; Anderson & Hamilton, 2005; Cloughessy & Waniganayake, 2013; Ziv, Smadja, & Aram, 2014; Lin & Bates, 2010; Boutte, Hopkins, & Waklatsi, 2008; McNair & Brooks, 2012; Sun, 2014). A significant number of previous studies on children’s literature focus on the topics of gender, i. e., inclusion or proportion of male and female characters, the qualitative representations, and the types of gender roles accorded to each character. Among these, many studies have found that primary male characters make more frequent and influential appearance in the picture books for children (Britton & Lumpkin, 1993; Engle, 1981; Kolbe & LaVoie, 1981; Kortenhaus & Demarest, 1993). Regarding representations of each gender and gender roles, the preceding literature has drawn attention to relatively few numbers of female characters and absolute outnumbering of male characters with leading role in the stories (Davis, Brown, Liedel-Rice, and Soeder, 2005; Pipher, 1994; Sadker and Sadker, 1994). For
example, Pipher (1994) made a clear indication, while comparing numbers of male and female characters that children are to see three times as many books with male leading characters when compared to the ones with female leading characters. In the research on Caldecott Medal winners and 20 other books for stereotypes of sexist, racist, and ageist, Hurst (1981) also concluded that women were depicted negatively or in a weak manner, and some books in the research could not be used to convey positive images of diverse characters.

The findings of this study are not in contrast with the body of research mentioned above. The Common Core exemplar picture books for the grade bands K-1 and 2-3 also showed an immense disproportion between the numbers of male characters and female characters. Among the 27 primary characters available for gender coding, there are almost three times as many male primary characters (62.9%) as female primary characters (22.2%). Limiting to the 15 primary characters that are human, 10 of them were male characters, whereas only 5 were female. Female characters remain to be the minority and uninvolved in many picture books when it comes to leading the stories.

A closer look at the proportions of male and female characters also reveals that female characters not only had a remarkably scarce inclusion, not just as primary characters but also as secondary or background characters. As to the gender roles the characters held, female characters were more likely to be confined in the description as domestic, in terms of their clothing, languages, or behaviors. Regarding the dispositions of the characters, the female characters were commonly nurturing and caring for others, or timid, emotional and passive. On the contrary, the male characters
tend to be working outside of the home with traditionally masculine professions, with their disposition being brave and courageous, or ludicrous and mischievous.

Such portrayals of male and female gender roles are both stereotypical. In the generations of the CCSS exemplar readers, such a bisection of gender roles will be mostly rare and less frequent. However, the children of the CCSS generation would learn and internalize depiction of such stereotypical and bisectional gender roles and follow the roles now or later in life as adults, in the case of consistent exposure to such portrayals. In addition, as Sadker and Sadker (1994) asserted, insufficient numbers of female characters can also imply to the readers of the CCSS exemplar picture books that female persona, experiences, and perspectives are not significant, or even adequate enough to be represented in children’s books. Conversely, if the surplus of male characters perpetuates, in terms of numbers and leading roles, the readers will understand the surplus as male superiority and entitlement, as the way characters are portrayed in texts and illustrations would definitely affect the readers' identities and worldviews.

Likewise, it would not be an exaggeration to assert that the picture books have a central and critical impact on establishing the readers’ perspectives of and attitudes toward gender identities, differences and roles, through repeated exposures to certain representations and descriptions. Trepanier-Street and Romatoski (1999) conducted a study on gender stereotyping in occupations in children’s books and children’s according to perceptions toward gender roles. They found that the preschooler participants in their study showed a decline in their stereotypic attitudes regarding gender and gender roles, as they were exposed to the books selected with careful
consideration of gender role representations. As such, the researchers concluded that children’s books could be considered as influential tools to develop and influence a child’s gender attitudes and that there is a strong need for a careful selection of children’s books and related activities to positively impact the readers. In the similar line, it is crucial that the CCSS exemplar picture book sets and their readers are provided with a more attentive selection of books that will introduce the non-stereotypic role models of both male and female to children, and thus, promote more gender-equitable perspectives and attitudes within the children.

**Representations of Individualistic Perspective**

In regards to the social perspectives, Hofstede (1980) asserted that the cultural concept of individualism or collectivism pertains to individuals’ relationships with groups. In individualistic cultures, the importance of each individual is most emphasized, especially in his/her personal interests, needs, and decisions. As such, the individualistic perspective, independence and self-supporting nature is premised as well as valued (Hofstede & Bond, 1984).

Similar to Shannon’s (1986) finding in the long-lasting study on the social perspectives presented in children’s picture books, most characters examined in the research are portrayed as to be thinking, acting and being associated with others based on individualistic perspective. That is, the stories revolve around the characters focusing on their own self-development, personal emotions and satisfaction with the self, and yet are not much concerned with any form of communal achievement and community experience.

Individualistic perspectives, rather than collectivism, prevail in the shape of personal goals and achievements, competitions and self-reliance in the children’s
literature. And this is most likely due to the subconscious judgment of the writers, illustrators and publishers that individualism are most appropriate and ideal to the mainstream U.S. culture. Shannon (1987) refers to this, as “unconscious censorship,” that there is hidden censorship agreed upon that individualism is more acceptable for social arrangement than other perspectives. It is also pointed out that this unconscious censorship seems ardent and natural, thus there are few children’s books that hold a balanced or collectivist perspective.

Similarly, Banks and Banks (1993) assert that individualism underlies in the United States culture. Banks and Banks (1993) go on to explain the notion that individual ability and accomplishment are highly valued and promoted is at the core of American cultural identities, which are shaped along with the issues of gender, race, ethnicity or values and beliefs. To this statement, Warren (2003) adds, "individualism directly appeals to the rhetoric of whiteness, for only white subjects, socially (and individually) conceived of as normal, can position themselves outside the forces of racial politics" (p. 90). Likewise, the ideas and practices of individualism become an underlying ethos of American society as well as of children's books.

Nevertheless, what would be the messages and consequences, if there are very few children’s books with alternative perspectives that emphasize the importance of balancing between individuals’ community and cooperation? If young readers are not provided with various perspectives to view individuals and community, if there is not enough literature to invite them to question and deconstruct “dominant ideologies of U.S. society (e.g., race, class, gender and individualism) which privilege those whose interests, values, and beliefs are represented by these worldviews”
(Botelho & Rudman, 2009, p. xiv) the readers would be deprived of their opportunities to confront and to change the present circumstances. In order for the young readers to build a well-balanced perspective of their own selves and society while questioning the status quo, there is a need to recognize and to become concerned with the implicit messages given to them through the selection of literature, chosen in the frame of educational and administrative decisions.

**No Representations, a Silent or Hidden Agenda**

**Characters with disability**

The CCSS Appendix B does include different types in the race, gender, and gender roles, and portray their diversity to some extent, even if their roles are to support the primarily White, male characters in the background. For example, *The Story of Ruby Bridges* portrays a character who struggled with racial integration; *Lon Po Po: A Red-Riding Hood Story from China* includes characters with some-what non-traditional gender roles; and in *Paper Crane*, the readers are encountered people in different colors, shapes and ages. Unfortunately, in attempting to integrate the various aspects of students’ lives, disability in any kind was not at all reflected in the CCSS selection.

The characters with any indication of physical, mental or learning disability, was entirely omitted, never making an appearance at all in the texts or illustrations, in any single book to analyze and discuss the patterns of the representations in the current research. In other words, the readers are made to exclusively see “able-bodied people” in the CCSS text sets.

Children’s literature about characters with disabilities can provide authentic as well as entertaining and inexpensive opportunities to children to discuss disabilities in daily lives (Baskin & Harris 2984; Cuddigan & Hanson, 1988; Supper, 1994). However,
in the CCSS collection, there is a possible danger of discrimination of disability in the form of negligence or missing portrayal. As Carithers (1998) states, the invisibility of disability representation prevents children from recognizing and learning about disability and suggests a lack of celebration of it. The possible message of omission of characters with disability in the collection of CCSS exemplar picture books suggests could be that having any kind of disability in this society belongs to behind the scene, if not considered as taboo or stigma. Such messages are detrimental to children, as these readers would not recognize the status quo as a problem (Bishop, 1990b). According to Creany et al. (1993), for children with disability, such none- or lacking-representations could suggest to a child that she is not important enough to appear in books, and can inhibit them from building positive images and identities of children with disability. And for the children without recognized disability, it can result in disability to be despised and seen as inferior.

As mentioned before, the message sent by the selection of CCSS exemplar picture books seems to be as though the lives and stories of characters with disability are not worthy to be recognized and appreciated, as they are completely omitted from the readers’ sight of the sets. In other words, the students who read the CCSS picture books only see the abled-bodies in the selection, which may convey that to be able-bodied is the one and only way to be, if not normal. It can also convey that only able-bodied people and their ways of living are worthy to be made into stories, and to be heard and depicted.

Diverse family structures

According to Qiu, Schvaneveldt and Sahin (2013), families in the United States have shown dramatic changes in their formations, as there has been a rampant
increase in single parents, divorces and remarriages, and adoptions. In the period between the 1930s and 1960s, about 90% of children under 18 lived in a household of two parents (Ruggles & Brower, 2003), whereas in 2016, 69% of children under 18 lived with two parents, 27% with a single parent, 23% mother only and 4% father only. Today’s children also live with grandparents, foster parents, and parents who are gay and lesbian couples. There are 4% of children, about 2.83 million children, who lives without their parents in their households. Among them, 1.56 million children live with their grandparents (Pearce, Hayward, Chassin & Curran, 2018) and about 1.28 million children were in their foster families or live with householders who are not related to them. Almost 1.5 million children in 2016 were adopted in the United States, which is equivalent to one adopted child out of 50 children (Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute. 2009). According to Vespa, Lewis, and Kreider (2013), in 2012, about 16% of same-sex couples in the U.S., either co-habiting or married have biological, step, or adopted child (ren) under age 18 living with them.

The social climate in the United States has also shown more acceptance and embracement toward these less-traditional families (Despain, Tunnell, Wilcox, & Morrison, 2015). However, the CCSS collection of exemplar picture books does not seem to reflect such changes in the types of families in the United States. In the analysis of the family structures in the CCSS picture books, the families were portrayed only in four types of formations, while the analysis aimed to look for nine different formations. The four family types represented in the CCSS picture books included one-parent household, two-parent household, one single person, and extended family. The first three structures were portrayed with a fairly equally distributed proportion
throughout the sets. The portrayal of the extended families was present, although rare, found only in two titles.

However, across the whole sets of 58 picture books, there were no instances, within the groups of primary as well as secondary characters, of same-sex parents, grandparents rearing children, foster families, and adoptive families and so on. In other words, there are not adequate representations that include the prevalence of diversity in US families. The problem involved to this matter is that, while many, including schools, districts, especially NGA and CCSSO, may consider the CCSS text exemplar sets as collections of quality literature for today’s young readers, the representations of family structures should be in due consideration.

In terms of the portrayal of the family structures in children’s literature, many researchers believe that benefit the child derives from reading literature involving diverse families is crucial. Yet, it is essential to recognize and distinguish the benefits young readers gain from seeing the lives of their own families, and the families different from their own. It has been pointed out throughout the large body of literature, as well as in the current study, that for readers it is essential to see themselves and their own families in the books (Bracken, Wigoutoff & Baker, 1981; Powell, Gillespie, Swearingen & Clements, 1993).

For the children who belong to the less traditional families, including families of same-sex parents, grandparents rearing children, foster families and adoptive families, viewing themselves portrayed in the books can help them identify with and relate to the characters in the books. For those children, whose families have been considered not just less-traditional, but even "not normal," although similar types of families do exist in
society, the portrayals of their families will have a direct and definite impact on them feeling validated and find comfort (Gilmore & Bell, 2006; Bracken, Wigutoff & Baker, 1981). This corresponds with Gillespie, Powell, Swearingen and Clements (1994)’s findings that the readers need to be provided with stories about the families and circumstances they can relate to, because such stories help them feel accepted and appreciated. That is, the books help the readers to build positive identities, to feel more appreciated and to realize that they are not alone, when they are presented with the characters and families like their own. Cloughessy and Waniganayake (2013) also warn about the different cases. They stress that if children do not see their own families through the literature they read, it can harm the children’s development of positive self-images, self-esteem, and self-confidence.

Many researchers also believe that exposure to diverse families different from their own through literature can benefit the readers (Allen, Allen & Sigler, 1993; Kelly, 2012; Lowery & Sabis-Burns, 2007). Books can positively influence the readers who are from traditional families because such experiences will help them in learning that other families have different lifestyles, values and beliefs and become engaged in discussions about the issues (Leland & Harste, 1999).

Fitzpatrick and Kostina-Ritchey (2013) state, many young readers depend on the books they read as a source of information, as they lack in knowledge and experiences. The aforementioned explains the influence books that portray diverse types of families have on the children and their lives, because it emphasizes the message that all families are unique and valuable (Hampton, Rak & Mumford, 1997). Conversely, it would send a message that children’s lives and situations are less important than the
ones represented, if the children’s families and their home lives are ignored in the texts they encounter. Turner-Vorbeck (2005) describes that “[students] are asked to deconstruct narrow societal definitions of what constitutes a family, they begin a journey that often leads to discomfort, resistance, and challenges to what is defined as a normal and valued family in our society” (p. 6). In addition, children’s understanding of diverse family structures is also related to their learning of other educational topics such as adoption, homosexuals, divorce, death or absence of parents, and single parenting (Ferfolja & Robinson, 2004; Pohan & Bailey, 1998).

For these reasons, it is essential to consider the books and the types of representations in them with which children are provided. As mentioned above, however, across the exemplar picture books provided in the frame of Common Core State Standards, diverse types and formation of family structures are, if not invisible, nearly unrecognizable. In other words, the CCSS sets do not offer the readers the positive experiences to shape their attitudes and views toward diverse families and their values.

**CCSS and Teacher Selection**

The Common Core State Standards are “America’s first nationally agreed-upon curriculum standards” (Chaucer, 2012, p. 12), generated in order to secure the academic consistency and student performance across the United States. As Calkins et al. (2012) states, “[t]he Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are a big deal. Adopted by forty-five states so far, the standards represent the most sweeping reform of the K-12 curriculum that has ever occurred in this country” (Calkins et al., 2012, p. 1). For English Language Arts and Literacy, the CCSSO provided sets of exemplar text created for classroom teachers to refer to as a basis for choosing quality materials
(CCSSO, 2010). As such, there are increasing school districts that are adjusting and reorganizing their curriculum, as “[t]he standards are already affecting what is published, mandated, and tested in schools – and also what is marginalized and neglected” (Calkins et al., 2012, p. 1). This could mean that classroom teachers’ influence and choices on what kind of texts are shared in the classroom, and thus what are represented and conveyed, as well as what are not, can now be limited, as districts mandate to adopt the CCSS exemplar sets “as a core reading list rather than just as examples of complexity” (McCaffrey, 2014).

However, it is worrisome that the findings from the interviews with the local elementary school teachers on their perspectives on the CCSS exemplar picture books indicate that the CCSS text exemplar sets are not inclusive or realistic. In terms of equitably reflecting the multifaceted lives of today’s students, the teachers shared sceptical opinions about the exemplar lists; they pointed out the lists’ oldness and thus irrelevance with the students’ contemporary lives. Many teachers also mention that they would struggle with the insufficient representations of diverse lives portrayed in the exemplars texts in trying to help their students related themselves to the characters and the stories.

Regarding the students’ literacy level as well, there were skeptical views of the exemplar texts shared among the local teachers. Many teachers were doubtful whether the exemplars truly “exemplify level of complexity and quality that the Standards require all students in a given grade band to engage with,” (Common Core State Standards, n.d., p. 2) because, for their own students, the exemplar texts were too wordy, lengthy and complicated. They even commented that some of the exemplar books should have
been suggested for older grade bands because some texts, vocabulary and formats are too difficult and complex to support the students’ comprehension of the contents and information. For such reasons, teachers were sceptical as to the exemplar text sets and mentioned that they would not necessarily choose and adopt the CCSS exemplars, if they were to have options.

The CCSSO states that the standards were “designed to prepare students for both higher education and the workplace,” (Chaucer, 2012, p. 13), and that the exemplar sets were to “serve as useful guideposts in helping educators select texts of similar complexity, quality and range” (Common Core State Standards, n.d., p. 2). However, the local teachers’ perspectives of the CCSS text exemplar sets indicates that the sets hardly represent the classroom teachers’ realistic view of book selections and their opinions of the “literary merit, cultural significance and rich content” (CCSSO, 2010, p. 2) in the materials they would choose for their English Language Arts and Literacy Instruction.

**Conclusion**

The current study indicates that the collection of CCSS exemplar picture books does not include diverse representations of the different facets of our lives. Especially, the CCSS collection needs diverse representations that are not just for symbolic effects but in the concrete and authentic contexts, as though we see a majority of White and/or male characters represented across the sets. For example, the CCSS exemplar collection needs ordinary Asian, Black, Latino, Middle East, Native American and Multi-raced children, preferably girls who experience every-day trifling activities, not having to make any great achievements in the society or history, and not encumbered to introduce her culture or custom that distinguishes her from others, while having her own
personality that is fully developed in all aspects, not just flat, featureless or biased in the background. It is also critical to have the portrayals of characters from various types of families, such as divorced parents, step families, same-sex parents, adoptive families, foster families and grandparents rearing their grandchildren. The CCSS exemplar collection also needs to include characters with various types of disabilities portrayed as participating in and contributing to the society in various ways, as any other characters do in the picture books. Based on the classroom teachers’ opinion, the CCSS collection is in the certain need to have more recent picture books which the teachers can better derive instructional activities that are relatable and relevant to the students’ lives.

The questions into whose lives are being truthfully represented, distorted, or omitted in the children’s literature selections must continue to be brought up and addressed. If the texts and illustrations of the children’s picture books mirror the society and its values, a close and critical look into the kinds representations, e.g., over-, under-, mis-, and non-, should be directed into the books which will be provided to the students. Although students’ engagement is another distinct consideration, the picture books that over-, under-, or misrepresent, or even omit diverse backgrounds and experiences of students’ lives may prevent the students’ engagement in reading and transaction with the books. Therefore, in order to promote equity, inclusive selections of books from range of divers authors, illustrators, backgrounds, cultures and ways of lives are called for than ever before. Teachers, librarians, policy makers, researchers and anyone devoted to children’s literature and to children’s reading experiences, must reflect on the children’s attitude, their backgrounds, life style, and what they bring into
classrooms, by selecting diverse, balanced, integrative and inclusive literature collections.

**Implications**

The findings of the study suggest that the picture books in the sets have 1) overrepresentation of White characters; 2) under- and misrepresentation of characters of colors, and female characters; and 3) no representations of characters with disability and diverse family formations. The findings also indicate that the sets do not necessarily reflect classroom teachers’ views in text selections. These findings have implications for classroom teachers, teacher educators, and policy makers.

**Implications for Teachers**

Many implications for classroom teachers have been developed from the study. To begin with, the teachers themselves need to become open-minded with their multicultural perspectives so that they become responsive to their students’ diverse backgrounds, experiences and life styles. In that sense, the teachers need to seek out a broad array of genres and characteristics of children’s literature as a means to achieve and maintain multicultural focus in their materials, and must also focus on integrating these diverse texts into the instruction.

In order for this, the classroom teachers need to have sufficient knowledge about the children’s literature to appreciate and, more importantly, to select and determine multicultural literature in good quality. More specifically, teachers need to realize that a collection of books, such as the CCSS exemplar text sets, can be limited in presenting diverse points of views and information, and need to be mindful of representations in books that they have available to the students. And, for this reason, classroom teachers also need to realize that they must select and secure high quality literature to
pair with the collection, to present well-rounded and diverse experiences, culture, and aspects of lives. The selection of high quality literature should present more proportionate, current, accurate and multifaceted representations of wider ranges of lives in today’s society.

In Short et al. (2011) words, pairing books has power to resolve “problematic issues such as the domination of western views or assumptions about race, class, or gender,” (para. 8), which was lacking in the picture books in the CCSS exemplar sets examined in the current study. Multicultural and international literature has been a curricula tool to invite young readers to experience a range of cultures as they explore differences among people of the world. In this manner, the incorporation of multicultural and international literature, young readers can understand the different facets that create the society such as the different people and their ways of thinking and living and, in turn, learn to see the diverse cultures with receptive and respectful insights.

The classroom teachers need to have access to the sources and information relating to such quality literature. However, when not familiar, evaluating and selecting literature with cultural themes is a challenging task for the teachers (Landt, 2011). In that case, it is helpful to locate reliable resources for selecting outstanding multicultural books. The resources that teachers can use to search for authentic and beneficial multicultural literature include (1) awards and (2) publishers that feature multicultural topics, themes, and writers. Teachers can also use (3) criteria for evaluating quality of multicultural literature. Referring to the above-mentioned resources provides the teachers with the lists of authentic and unprejudiced multicultural texts from which they can adopt the relevant and necessary materials for the classrooms. The teachers can
also make use of one of the many facets within the framework of the CCSS that highlights diversity in perspectives and culture. For example, in the teachers’ description of students successfully meeting the standards, NGA Center and CCSSO (2010) specify “[t]hey come to understand other perspectives and cultures” (p. 7), explaining:

[s]tudents appreciate that the twenty-first century classroom and workplace are settings in which people from often widely divergent cultures and who represent diverse experiences and perspectives must learn and work together. Students actively seek to understand other perspectives and culture through reading and listening, and they are able to communicate effectively with people of varied backgrounds. They evaluate other points of view critically and constructively. Through reading great classic and contemporary works of literature representative of a variety of periods, cultures, and worldviews, students can vicariously inhabit worlds and have experiences much different than their own.

In fact, the ELA Reading Standards for Literature include several specific standards that align with the above description. These standards specifically address the strategy of compare and contrast in order for students to realize the differences and similarities in the diversity. As to access to the sources and information relating to quality literature making connection with the standards, both pre-service and in-service teachers need to be provided with continuing opportunities to learn and develop their multicultural, as well as critical perspectives toward literature.

The last approach the teachers can adopt is in line with Fishman’s (1995) and Shannon’s (1994) view that, all literature can be multicultural and thus should be read multiculturally. In Shannon’s (1994) view, all books have the potential to be used for serious discussions of the injustices, in terms of race, class, and gender. Similarly, Jones’s (2006) contended that "all texts are embedded with multiple meanings and one way to examine some of those meanings is to peel away the layers through the
consideration of perspective, positioning, and power” (p. 79). With the adoption of this approach, the teachers can share various types of materials with students while engaging the students in “making issues of culture problematic” (Shannon, 1994, p. 2) and discussing such issues of prejudice, discrimination, bias, and inequality. Likewise, the approach provides the students with opportunities that help them to recognize the cultural aspects of any texts across curriculum, as they engage in interpreting “the signs of race, gender, class, and other cultural differences” (Cai, 2002, p.145). Yet, a condition that should be preceded before this approach is that classroom teachers need to become critical readers themselves with an appreciation for multicultural perspectives.

And yet, it is imperative that all the aforementioned approaches should be used to help students in becoming well-rounded, mature readers. Multicultural children’s literature help the readers develop awareness of the range of heritages, beliefs, and values that define differences across specific cultures. The students need to be guided to understand that the differences are not for labeling others who possess different characteristics but that, those differences dwell in each of us, because no individual is the same as someone else and each family and community is different from one and the other.

The students should be able to discover commonalities among humanity as well as appreciate cultural difference. Difference is not a tool to classify other cultures as 'foreign,' but a way to understand the connections of humanity that run across all cultures as well as the unique characteristics of each culture. In other words, although surface level discussions of cultural difference can provide an interest in
multiculturalism, the deeper level of discussion is to also discover how humans are similar and what connects all of us as human beings.

**Implications for Teacher Educators**

The findings from the current study provides two implications for teacher educators that will better prepare pre-service teachers to help today’s students with ever-more diverse backgrounds. First implication is that, in teacher preparation programs, there is a need for coursework or trainings that provides an ample variety of current and high-quality multicultural/international literature available along with information and resources to locate such literature. Pre-service teachers will better benefit from the coursework or trainings, if they include the opportunities to discuss and apply criteria evaluating quality of books, as to the multiple perspectives and representations in the books.

Second, not only trainings about multicultural and international literature, pre-service teachers should be provided with knowledge and skills in critical literacy. Pre-service teachers need to understand, as Harste (2003) contended, that “social practices that keep a particular (and often older) definition of literacy in place have to change” (p. 8), and to become aware of the risks that texts they use can include antiquated, incorrect, and even offensive representations and messages. Therefore, in reading and introducing texts for children, pre-service teachers need to be able to encompass the following four dimensions: 1) disrupting the commonplace; 2) interrogating multiple viewpoints; 3) focusing on sociopolitical issues; and 4) taking action and promoting social justice.
**Implications for Policy Makers**

The last implication of this study applies to policy makers, especially to the authors of Common Core State Standards and Appendix B. First of all, they need to become aware that, although the purpose of the Appendix B, were to exemplify the level of text complexity for each grade band, it misled many teachers, schools, and districts, which resulted in more publishing and sales of the exemplar books and the prevail, if not mandated, use of the books in classrooms (McCaffrey & Corapi, 2017). The predicament is that, as the findings of this study suggest, these text sets do not include adequate ideas and experiences that represent today’s diverse society but perpetuate White dominance.

They need to also understand that this is problematic, because when such inaccurate or inadequate representations are repeatedly appeared throughout the collection of exemplar sets, it can eventually construct and send messages of distorted images of people and their lives. This is detrimental both to the readers of mainstream and marginalized groups.

For this reason, policy makers need to be more careful and discreet when it comes to considering today’s student demographic and their backgrounds in development and suggestion of the reading list. They should especially reconsider the influence of the CCSS exemplar lists, because they have largely been purchased and adapted in classrooms nationally. Finally, those who make policy also need to understand that there is a need for more funding to provide multicultural/international literature as well as literature with authentic representations of those who are marginalized in the curriculum.
Limitation and Future Research

In what follows in this chapter, I will discuss the limitation of this research and explain the directions for future research that is needed as a result of the findings in the current study, as well as how and by whom this study was conducted.

The main limitation of this research is that the researcher’s background and perspective as a foreigner with a relatively short duration of stay in the United States lack in the consideration of the complexity behind the CCSS relating to its political, economic and social aspects. For example, this research tends to be limited in the attention and reflection on the power relations and tensions embedded in the production, interrogation, validation and dissemination of the first and almost “national” curriculum restructuring in the United States. The current research would have become more comprehensive and critical, if the researcher had an insightful perspective into the political, economic and social venues and their dynamics associated with the establishment and enforcement of the CCSS.

More specifically, while this research focused and critiqued on the characteristics of the K-3 CCSS picture books, the underlying messages in the books to the students, and the actual opinions of the classroom teachers of the picture books, this research did not consider or investigate the complex intricacy behind and beyond the explanation provided by CCSSO on the process of the selection and validation of the exemplar texts in the Appendix B. Examinations of such aspects would have benefited this research with more in-depth understanding and discussions into how certain books managed to be selected, put into print (resumed to be published in a few cases), purchased and read nation-wide in the frame of the CCSS. And more importantly, the study would have been undergirded with more critical stance into the “gates” and “gate keepers”
existent and influential, but seldom recognized in the process that allows and denies certain books as exemplar texts.

The feasibility that future research can be improved based on this study is threefold. To begin with, future study can explore responses of the actual readers of the exemplar text sets to examine the messages created and conveyed by the sets. The intended audience of the exemplar picture books in this study is students in the grades K-3. If the responses from the intended audience are used as one of the data sources aligning with the researcher’s interpretation of the sets, it will contribute to a more insightful analysis.

Additionally, if future research is conducted in the states in which the Common Core State Standards initiative has actually been signed and adapted in their curriculum, the teacher interviews conducted in such states will provide a more useful and sensible data in assessing how representable the CCSS text exemplar sets are of classroom teachers text selections. This way, the participating teachers will have more to provide, relating to their opinions and experiences alongside of their own text selection criteria and processes.

Lastly, there still are many questions regarding the CCSS exemplar text lists that call for further investigation. Examples include research questions relating to the actual percentages of school districts and teachers adopted the set, how teachers accordingly use the text sets in their instructions, the nature or issues of any addition or supplementation to the sets, and comparison of multicultural focus between the CCSS exemplar sets and teachers own list of books for instructions.
APPENDIX A
CONTENT ANALYSIS CODING CHART

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<thead>
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<th>Title:</th>
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<tr>
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<table>
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<th>Female</th>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Traditional Male</td>
<td>Traditional Female</td>
<td>Non-Traditional Male</td>
<td>Non-Traditional Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>Latino</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability</td>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>One-parent</td>
<td>Same-sex</td>
<td>Extended</td>
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<td><strong>Secondary Character</strong></td>
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APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW GUIDE

• Can you tell me about yourself as a teacher? Who do you teach? How long have you been teaching? What experiences led you to teaching?

• Can you tell me about your students? Your classroom/school demographics? Do you have much diversity among your students?

• What do you know about the text exemplar list in CCSS ELA Appendix B? How did you get to know about it?

• Here is the list of CCSS exemplar books and some sample books for your grade level. Are you familiar with the ones listed here? Do/would you use/refer to the CCSS exemplar list at all? To what extent? Why or why not?

• If not these exemplar books, what kind of picture books do you use with your students? Do you have certain lists, other than CCSS Appendix B, that you refer to when selecting picture books? What are they? How similar are they to the CCSS list?

• If you are to devise your own list for your class, how representable or different is the CCSS list, from your own preferences?

• When you select children’s picture books for your classroom, what are some factors/elements that you consider most important? What kind of books do you use, considering the demographics of your students?

• Any thoughts about CCSS exemplar books, considering the demographics of your students? What values do you think Common Core Text Exemplars include, as well as omit? How much diversity do you think the exemplar list reflects?
APPENDIX C
LIST OF K-3 CCSS EXEMPLAR PICTUE BOOKS

K–1 (30 picture books)

Stories
2. Eastman, P. D. *Are You My Mother?*
3. Seuss, Dr. *Green Eggs and Ham*.
5. Lobel, Arnold. *Frog and Toad Together*.

Read-aloud stories
6. Henkes, Kevin. *Kitten’s First Full Moon*.

Informational texts
1. Bulla, Clyde Robert. *A Tree Is a Plant*.
5. Crews, Donald. *Truck*.
6. Hoban, Tana. *I Read Signs*.
7. Reid, Mary Ebeltoft. *Let’s Find Out About Ice Cream*.

Read-aloud Informational texts
1. Provensen, Alice and Martin. *The Year at Maple Hill Farm*.
2. Gibbons, Gail. *Fire! Fire!*
3. Dorros, Arthur. *Follow the Water from Brook to Ocean*.
5. Llewellyn, Claire. *Earthworms*.
6. Jenkins, Steve, and Robin Page. *What Do You Do with a Tail Like This?*.
7. Pfeffer, Wendy. *From Seed to Pumpkin*.
8. Thomson, Sarah L. *Amazing Whales!*
2–3 (28 Picture books)

Stories
5. Stevens, Janet. *Tops and Bottoms.*
6. LaMarche, Jim. *The Raft*
7. Rylant, Cynthia. *Poppleton in Winter*
8. Silverman, Erica. *Cowgirl Kate and Cocoa*

Read-aloud stories

Informational texts
1. Aliki. *A Medieval Feast*
2. Gibbons, Gail. *From Seed to Plant.*
3. Milton, Joyce. *Bats: Creatures of the Night*
5. Leonard, Heather. *Art Around the World*
6. St. George, Judith. *So You Want to Be President?*
7. Einspruch, Andrew. *Crittercam*
8. Kudlinski, Kathleen V. *Boy, Were We Wrong About Dinosaurs*
9. Davies, Nicola. *Bat Loves the Night*

Read-aloud Informational texts
1. Coles, Robert. *The Story of Ruby Bridges*
2. Wick, Walter. *A Drop of Water: A Book of Science and Wonder*
3. Smith, David J. *If the World Were a Village: A Book about the World’s People*
4. Aliki. *Ah, Music!*
8. Deedy, Carmen Agra. *14 Cows for America*
# APPENDIX D

## INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

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### UFIRB 02 - Social & Behavioral Research

**Protocol Submission Form**

**Title of Protocol:** A Study of 2-3 Grade Common Core English Language Arts Text Exemplars and Text Selection for Classrooms

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Jo Soowon</th>
<th>UFID #: 4900-6482</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Degree / Title:</strong></td>
<td>Ph. D. student</td>
<td><strong>Mailing Address:</strong> (If on campus provide PO Box address): PO Box 117048 Gainesville, FL. 32611-7048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Department:</strong></td>
<td>School of Teaching and Learning</td>
<td><strong>Email:</strong> <a href="mailto:soowonjo@ufl.edu">soowonjo@ufl.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Telephone #:</strong></td>
<td>352-215-2915</td>
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| Co-Investigator(s): | | |
| Coordinator: | | |
| Research Asst.: | | |
| **(Last Name)** | **(First Name)** | |
| **Degree / Title** | **Mailing Address:** (If on campus provide PO Box address): | |
| **Department** | | |
| **Telephone #:** | | |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supervisor (If PI is student):</th>
<th>Fu Danling</th>
<th>UFID#: 15879490</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>(Last Name)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Degree / Title:</strong></td>
<td>Ph.D./Professor</td>
<td><strong>Mailing Address:</strong> (If on campus provide PO Box address): PO Box 117048 Gainesville, FL. 32611-7048</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Department:</strong></td>
<td>School of Teaching and Learning</td>
<td><strong>Email:</strong> <a href="mailto:danlingfu@coe.ufl.edu">danlingfu@coe.ufl.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Telephone #:</strong></td>
<td>352-273-4193</td>
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| Dates of Proposed Research: | 01/15/2016 – 01/15/2017 |

Source of Funding (A copy of the grant proposal must be submitted with this protocol if funding is involved): NOTE: If your study has current or pending funding, AND your research involves comparison of different kinds of treatment or interventions for behavior, cognition or mental health, you must submit the Clinical Trial Assessment Form.

None

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Revised January 2015
### Scientific Purpose of the Study:

This study aims to explore classrooms teachers' text selection and their perception of reading list for their classrooms, including the exemplar texts in Common Core State Standards English Language Arts.

### Describe the Research Methodology in Non-Technical Language: (Explain what will be done with or to the research participant.)

This study will have semi-structured interviews. Maximum 5 of elementary teachers in northern Florida will be asked to participate in semi-structured interviews by principal investigator, Soowon Jo. Interviews will last up to 60 minutes and will be audio recorded and transcribed. See interview guide attached. This study will also have observations of classrooms of the interviewee teachers in which the principal investigator will take field notes.

Data or findings from this research might be presented at research conferences. All materials and data will not be linked to identifiers. All identifiers will be removed from interview transcripts and field notes. Each participant will be assigned a pseudonym.

### Describe the Data You Will Collect: (What are you collecting, where will it be stored, how will it be stored)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview transcripts</th>
<th>Public elementary schools in northern Florida</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Field notes</td>
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### Describe Potential Benefits:

This study aims to inform teachers and teacher educators as to how children’s books are selected for classroom use while integrating Common Core Standards into curriculum and to rethink about the values that certain selections of literature for young readers can transfer as well as omit.

### Describe Potential Risks: (If risk of physical, psychological or economic harm may be involved, describe the steps taken to protect participant.)

No more than minimum risks are anticipated.

### Describe How Participant(s) Will Be Recruited: (flyers, email solicitation, social media websites, etc.)

Initially, the principal investigator will contact with elementary teachers and invite them to participate in semi-structured interviews. Then additional participants will be recruited through network selection, which is also referred to as snowball sampling.

### Describe the Informed Consent Process. (How will informed consent be obtained? Attach a copy of the Informed Consent Document)

An informed consent form will be provided to participants prior to the interviews, and participation is completely voluntary.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal Investigator</th>
<th>Date: 10/31/2015</th>
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<tr>
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<th>Department Chair</th>
<th>Date: 1/13/2015</th>
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<td>Signature</td>
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**What to include in your protocol submission packet**

1. Three copies of the signed protocol [containing signatures of all investigators, supervisor (if PI is graduate student), and department chair]
2. Three copies of the informed consent, flyers, or advertisements, interview questions, surveys)
3. If the protocol is funded by NIH provide one copy of the grant proposal.

The review process usually takes 7 to 21 business days. You will receive an email notification about revisions needed to the protocol. If your study is approved, the approval packet will be mailed to you at the address you indicated on the protocol submission form.

You may check the status of your protocol submission at [http://irb.ufl.edu/webtrack.html](http://irb.ufl.edu/webtrack.html)
Informed Consent

Protocol Title:
A Study of 2-3 Grade Common Core English Language Arts Text Exemplar Set and Text Selection for Classrooms

Please read this consent document carefully before you decide to participate in this study.

Purpose of the research study:
This study aims to explore classrooms teachers’ text selection and their perception of reading list for their classrooms, including the exemplar texts in Common Core State Standards English Language Arts.

What you will be asked to do in the study:
To participate in a semi-structured interview and classroom observations

Time required:
Up to 1 hour per each interview

Risks and Benefits:
No more than minimal risk. There is no direct benefit to the participant in this research.

Compensation:
There is no compensation for participating in the study.

Confidentiality:
Your identity will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law. The names of the participants will not be used in any research reports or presentations. Your name will not be connected to your responses once survey and interview is over. Once data analysis has been completed, findings might also be presented at research conferences. Research findings might also be sent to education journals and magazines for possible publication.

Voluntary participation:
Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. There is no penalty for not participating.

Right to withdraw from the study:
You have the right to withdraw from the study at anytime without consequence. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

Whom to contact if you have questions about the study:
Soo won Jo, 352-215-2915, PO Box 117048 Gainesville, FL 32611-7048

Whom to contact about your rights as a research participant in the study:
UFIRB Office, Box 112250, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611-2250; ph 392-0433.

I have read the procedure outlined above. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study and have received a copy of this description.

Participant’s signature and date

Principle investigator’s signature and date

Revised January 2015
1. Tell us what you know and think about Common Core Text Exemplars.
2. What values do you think Common Core Text Exemplars include and omit?
3. To what extent do you use or refer to Common Core Text Exemplars?
4. If you have other reading lists for your classroom, what are they?
5. To what extent do you use or refer to the lists?
6. How do you select children’s books for your classroom?
7. What elements of children’s books do you consider most important?

Is there anything else you would like to add?

Thank you for your time.
December 18, 2015

TO: Soowon Jo  
PO Box 117048  
Campus

FROM: Ira S. Fischler, PhD; Chair  
University of Florida  
Institutional Review Board 02

SUBJECT: Exemption of Protocol #2015-U-1450  
A Study of 2-3 Grade Common Core English Language Arts Text Exemplars

SPONSOR: None

Your protocol submission was reviewed by the IRB. The Board determined that your protocol is exempt based on the following category:

45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior

Should the nature of your study change or if you need to revise this protocol in any manner, please contact this office before implementing the changes.

IF: dl
Informed Consent

Protocol Title:
A Study of 2-3 Grade Common Core English Language Arts Text Exemplar Set and Text Selection

Please read this consent document carefully before you decide to participate in this study.

Purpose of the research study:
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Right to withdraw from the study:
You have the right to withdraw from the study at anytime without consequence. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

Whom to contact if you have questions about the study:
Soowon Jo, Doctoral Student, School of Teaching and Learning, PO Box 117048 Gainesville, FL. 32611-7048, soowonjo@ufl.edu, (352) 215-2945

Danling Fu, Professor, School of Teaching and Learning, PO Box 117048 Gainesville, FL. 32611-7048, danlingfu@coe.ufl.edu, (352) 273-4193

Whom to contact about your rights as a research participant in the study:
UFIRB Office, Box 112250, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611-2250; (352) 392-0433.

I have read the procedure outlined above. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study and have received a copy of this description.

Participant’s signature and date__________________________

Principle investigator’s signature and date__________________________

Reviewed by
University of Florida
Institutional Review Board 02
Protocol # 2016-U-1450
Reviewed on: 12/08/2016
LIST OF REFERENCES


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Soowon Jo was born on December 19, 1985. She grew up in South Korea and entered Catholic University of Korea in 2004. She completed her bachelor’s degree in English Language and Literature in 2008. Jo received her master’s degree in Drama, Language Arts, Literature and Reading Education at Ohio State University in 2010. While and after completing the degrees, Jo taught in preschools and kindergartens in South Korea and the United States. As a doctorate student from 2012 to 2018 in Curriculum and Instruction in the College of Education at the University of Florida, Jo taught Children’s Literature, Language Arts for Diverse Learners in Early Childhood, Language Arts for Diverse Learners in Middle Childhood, and Reading in the Intermediate Grade.