PRESENTATION AND REPRESENTATION OF CHARACTERS WITH DISABILITIES IN FICTIONAL CHILDREN'S BOOKS FOR INTERMEDIATE GRADES

Abbey Urban

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate College of Bowling Green State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Education

May 2014

Committee:

Cindy Hendricks, Advisor

Trinka Messenheimer

William Morrison
ABSTRACT

Cindy Hendricks, Advisor

Students with disabilities are now being integrated within inclusion classrooms, causing classroom teachers and students to learn more about students with disabilities. Classroom teachers, teacher educators, parents, librarians, and publishers are faced with many challenges when selecting books that portray children who have disabilities. Fictional children’s books for intermediate grades that do not correctly portray characters with disabilities in a positive light may impact the way others see them and their disability. To overcome these challenges, this study purposefully selected 30 fictional children’s books for intermediate grades, and randomly selected every other book until 10 books were identified. Of the 10 books read, 50% included autism, 20% addressed deafness, 10% focused on dyslexia, 10% focused on cerebral palsy, and 10% explored ADHD.

Throughout this investigation, three questions were addressed: (1) Are the characters with disabilities major, minor, or mentioned characters in the books? (2) What is the relationship between the characters with disabilities and the plot of each story? (3) How diverse are the characters with disabilities in each book? Specific categories (main, minor, mentioned characters, gender, race, disability, disability specific, generic, neutral, and portrayal) were selected to answer the three questions before, during, and after reading each book.

Based on this study, a total of 16 characters appearing in the selected books had a disability. Of the 16 characters, 12 characters were main characters; three characters played minor roles in the stories, and one character was simply mentioned. Eight of the books analyzed were described as disability specific (80%); one book was disability generic, and one book was disability neutral. The authors were able to appropriately and realistically portray each disability
with accuracy. Lastly, although diversity was noted according to gender (10 characters males, 6 females), there was no racial diversity apparent, as all characters appeared to be Caucasian.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would not have been able to complete my thesis without the guidance, encouragement, and advice from my advisor, committee members, colleagues, and support from family and friends. First of all, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my advisor, Cindy Hendricks, for her guidance, encouragement, patience while correcting my writing, and sense of humor during the research process. I would also like to recognize one of my committee members, Trinka Messenheimer, for her support, ideas, and guidance through the process of my thesis. I cannot thank her enough for setting aside time from her busy schedule to meet with me and discuss specific research questions, possible fictional children’s books, and guidance through the entire process. A thanks is also owed to another committee member, William Morrison, for his support, guidance, and encouragement. I cannot thank him enough for setting aside time from his busy schedule to read each chapter, provide helpful feedback, and be readily available for questions and concerns. In addition, I would like to thank my colleagues and friends for their encouragement, reassurance, and guidance through the process of my thesis. I cannot thank them enough for being available when I had specific questions or concerns regarding any part of my thesis. Lastly, I would like to thank my parents, without their support, encouragement, and reassurance; I could not have completed this process alone. I especially want to thank my mother and my boyfriend who had great patience throughout the process and motivated me to keep moving forward. Without anyone mentioned above, none of this would have been possible.
## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter I. INTRODUCTION</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Statement of the Problem</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationale</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of Terms</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Orientation for the Study</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliotherapy</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation: Extrinsic and Intrinsic</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significant Historical Research</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s Literature and Disability</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Descriptions of Characters with Disabilities</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main, Minor, Mentioned Characters</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter III. METHODS AND PROCEDURES</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Methods</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Design</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Instrumentation**.................................................................................................................. 32

Procedures ..................................................................................................................................... 33

*Character Role in Story* .............................................................................................................. 34

*Relationship Between Characters and Plot* ................................................................................ 34

*Diversity*....................................................................................................................................... 34

Data Collection ............................................................................................................................. 35

Data Analysis ............................................................................................................................... 36

Summary .......................................................................................................................................... 37

**CHAPTER IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS** ........................................ 38

Data Analysis .................................................................................................................................... 38

*Character Role in the Story* ......................................................................................................... 38

*Main Characters* .......................................................................................................................... 39

*Minor Characters* ........................................................................................................................ 41

*Mentioned Character* .................................................................................................................. 41

*Relationship Between Characters and Plot* ................................................................................ 42

*Disability Specific* ...................................................................................................................... 42

*Disability Generic* ...................................................................................................................... 46

*Disability Neutral* ....................................................................................................................... 47

*Diversity of Characters* .............................................................................................................. 48

*Gender* .......................................................................................................................................... 48

*Race* .............................................................................................................................................. 48

*Disability* ..................................................................................................................................... 48

Discussion of Results .................................................................................................................... 48

*Character Role in the Story* ......................................................................................................... 49
Relationship Between Character and Plot ........................................ 49

Diversity of Characters ................................................................. 50

Summary .......................................................................................... 50

CHAPTER V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS ............. 52

Summary .......................................................................................... 52

Conclusions ...................................................................................... 53

Recommendations ........................................................................... 55

Recommendations for Classroom Educators ....................................... 55

Recommendations for Parents ............................................................ 56

Recommendations for Librarians ........................................................ 57

Recommendations for Teacher Educators ............................................ 57

Recommendations for Publishers ....................................................... 58

Summary .......................................................................................... 59

REFERENCES .................................................................................... 61

APPENDIX A. FICTIONAL CHILDREN’S BOOKS FOR INTERMEDIATE GRADES 65

APPENDIX B. FICTIONAL CHILDREN’S BOOKS FOR INTERMEDIATE GRADES 66

APPENDIX C. DATA CHART .................................................................. 67

APPENDIX D. SAMPLE COMPLETED DATA CHART .............................. 68

APPENDIX E. BOOK SUMMARIES ......................................................... 69
CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

There are a variety of children’s books at the intermediate grade levels portraying characters who have disabilities. However, some pictures and stories about these individuals may misrepresent reality. According to Smith-D’Arezzo and Moore-Thomas (2010), “A student’s prior knowledge or attitude toward peers with disabilities could cause him/her to either misinterpret or deny the validity of text that went against the child’s previous level of understanding” (p. 5). Children’s books that do not correctly portray individuals with disabilities may impact the way the reader, as well as the general population, views disabilities. If children’s books do not portray characters with disabilities in an accurate light, readers might react differently and/or approach people with disabilities inappropriately. Readers may also be unsure as to how to respectfully treat those with disabilities because of the images they saw or read in a book.

It is important for educators and parents to discuss the importance of learning about individuals with disabilities by providing them with books that portray characters with disabilities accurately and favorably. Exposure to such books will help children understand their peers. Additionally, books that are able to accurately portray characters who have disabilities will influence readers because they are able to understand those with disabilities.

Statement of the Problem

Parents, educators, administrators, intermediate students, and authors who are interested in children’s books that portray characters with disabilities at the intermediate grade levels face many challenges. According to Prater, Dyches and Johnstun (2006), authors face many challenges because the quality of a particular book is judged by both text and illustrations. Authors must ensure they connect with readers in ways that are exciting and new and expand
personal perspective. Prater, et al. claim selecting children’s literature featuring characters with learning disabilities may be complicated. Teachers must consider the purpose for using the book and then consider the portrayal of the character with disabilities. Other challenges include whether or not intermediate books focus on the characters with disabilities as main, minor, or mentioned characters in the story, along with examining diverse backgrounds.

Many people read books about characters with disabilities for pleasure, for meaningful purpose, and/or for information about a specific disability. However, teachers should focus on the types of books that accurately portray characters with disabilities. Whether examining non-fiction or fiction, books should portray characters with disabilities in an appropriate manner.

Research Questions

The purpose of this investigation was to explore the presentation and representation of children with disabilities in children’s intermediate books. This study examined the portrayal of characters with disabilities in a randomly selected list of fictional children’s books for intermediate grades. More specifically, this investigation focused on three questions: (1) Are the characters with disabilities main, minor, or mentioned characters in the books? (2) What is the relationship between the characters with disabilities and the plot of each story? (3) How diverse are the characters with disabilities in each book?

Rationale

Students with disabilities are now being integrated with inclusion classrooms. Throughout the late 1990s and early 21st century, many general education teachers have taken on an important role and included individuals who have disabilities in their general education classrooms. Inclusion occurs frequently in today’s educational system. Searching for books that accurately portray characters with disabilities can help familiarize general education teachers and
their students, in understanding and accepting those who have disabilities. Likewise, it may provide an opportunity to help all students better understand those who have disabilities. Exploring the content of books with characters who have disabilities will provide a better understanding of those individuals.

In addition, reading books about characters with disabilities provides readers with a simple story line in understanding what and how their disability affects their daily routines and basic life activities. Books that describe individuals with disabilities, and that focus on their feelings and beliefs about their disability, can help others better understand the impact of disabilities on children. Understanding and accepting those who have disabilities is essential in today’s society and educational system.

Not only can typical students read trade books about students with disabilities, it would be an advantage to have students who have a disability, read about their own disability or other disabilities, to help them familiarize themselves with their disability and with others who may have different needs. Wopperer (2011) stated:

Literature portraying characters with disabilities can help children and young adults develop the habit of reading for pleasure about characters like themselves, and it can support the development of personal power by portraying these characters as strong and believable. This literature can also assist children and young adults with disabilities in developing self-esteem and sense of purpose. (p. 28)

Children with disabilities should know about their disability to inform others as well as understand others with disabilities.
Definition of Terms

The following definitions are provided to understand this study.

1. Disability- a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities; a person who has a history or record of such an impairment, or a person who is perceived by others as having such an impairment (Civil Rights Division, 2009).

2. Disability Generic- selections contain few, if any, details that define characters with disabilities. The text could be about anybody, regardless of disability (Hollie, 2012).

3. Disability Neutral- features characters and themes that are about individuals with disabilities but fundamentally are about something else (Hollie, 2012).

4. Disability Specific- texts authentically illuminate the experience of the disability. The text realistically taps into the disability (Hollie, 2012).

5. Inclusion- services that place students with disabilities in general education classrooms with appropriate support services (Hancock, 2009).

6. Intermediate school/grade levels- a school for grades fourth through sixth.

7. Main Character- a main character is the focus of the story (Gillespie, Powell, Clements, & Swearingen, 1994), and who is clearly critical to story content (Hunter & Chick, 2005).

8. Minor Character- a character who appeared in the story and contributed to the storyline (Gillespie, et al., 1994).

9. Mentioned Character- a character referenced in the story, but who did not contribute to the storyline (Gillespie, et al., 1994).
Limitations

One limitation of this investigation was the books selected for several reasons. Choosing non-fiction books, rather than fictional books, selecting only books on special needs, rather than disabilities, or using a different data collection method, might yield different results. The level of books might also yield different results because books designed for younger readers or older readers may treat disabilities in a very different way.

Summary

Parents, educators, administrators, intermediate students, and authors face many challenges selecting books that portray children who have disabilities. Characters in stories that portray children with disabilities can sometimes be misrepresented. In other words, trade books that do not appropriately portray characters with disabilities may impact the way others see them and their disability. To overcome these challenges, in a randomly selected list of 30 fictional children’s books for intermediate grades, research was conducted to determine how characters with disabilities were portrayed. The three questions addressed in this study were: (1) Are the characters with disabilities major, minor, or mentioned characters in the books? (2) What is the relationship between the characters with disabilities and the plot of each story? (3) How diverse are the characters with disabilities in each book?
CHAPTER II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Children’s books that portray characters with disabilities have been around for a number of years. However, in the past, children’s books that portrayed characters with disabilities were very different in how they are portrayed in today’s children’s books. The three questions addressed in this study were: (1) Are the characters with disabilities main, minor, or a mentioned character in the book? (2) What is the relationship to the characters with disabilities and the plot? and (3) How diverse are the characters with disabilities in each book? The question of whether or not fictional children’s books for intermediate grades portray disabilities in an appropriate manner is not a new research question. This type of research has been studied over the past few years.

Chapter II will contain a review of literature relative to the present investigation. First, the theoretical orientation to the study will be provided. Two theoretical perspectives identified in this study involve the idea of bibliotherapy and motivation. Then, significant historical research will be presented, identifying historical studies in which how characters with disabilities were portrayed, along with the historical perspective of content analysis will be included. After, an in-depth discussion of contemporary research related to the research study will be identified, followed by a summary at the end of the chapter.

Theoretical Orientation for the Study

For this particular study, two major theories were explored when analyzing specific children’s books about characters with disabilities. The two theoretical perspectives are bibliotherapy and motivation.
**Bibliotherapy**

The first theory discussed is called bibliotherapy. Lindeman and Kling (1968-69) defined bibliotherapy as an interaction between reader and literature useful for aiding personal adjustment. Haeseler’s (2009) definition is more child focused explaining that bibliotherapy provides opportunities for children to (a) learn how to cope with situations that occur daily in their lives, and (b) show them that other children face the same struggles. Cook, Earles-Vollrath, and Ganz (2006) believe that bibliotherapy’s functional purpose is to help educators and school librarians find ways to target individual learners.

Herbert and Furner (1997) suggest there are two main types of bibliotherapy: clinical bibliotherapy and developmental bibliotherapy. Clinical bibliotherapy uses guided reading strategies with those who are experiencing serious emotional or behavioral problems, while developmental bibliotherapy uses guided reading with students as an interaction between a reader’s personality and literature. Herbert and Furner explain, students who are assigned to clinical bibliotherapy work with individuals such as counselors and therapists; however, students assigned to developmental bibliotherapy work with their teachers in the classrooms. Cook et al. (2006) believe bibliotherapy may allow students to feel more comfortable sharing their understandings or reflections of their behavior from a safe distance, which could be through third person such as the literary character, cartoon, or animal.

**Motivation: Extrinsic and Intrinsic**

The second theory discussed is motivation. Ryan and Deci (2000) stated motivation, “…to be moved to do something or someone who is energized or activated toward an end” (p. 54). Park (2011) argues that learning not only contains cognitive and metacognitive issues, but also motivational and emotional issues.
There are two different types of motivation identified as extrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation. Santrock (2008) describes extrinsic motivation as the motivation to do something in order to achieve something else, whereas, intrinsic motivation is to do something for yourself. Many researchers have argued which motivation is better. Park asserts intrinsic motivation is more beneficial:

Intrinsically motivated students spend more time reading in their everyday life and also read more broadly by choosing more challenging text than extrinsically motivated readers. In addition, readers with higher intrinsic motivation are more likely to be deeply engaged in their reading and make use of various effective strategies for better reading performance. (p. 348)

Santrock (2008) expanded the discussion further by suggesting there were four types of intrinsic motivation: “(1) self-determination and personal choice, (2) optimal experience and flow, (3) interest, and (4) cognitive engagement and self-responsibility” (p. 454). All students can relate to these types of intrinsic motivational factors when choosing a book to read for pleasure or choosing a book to learn about a specific topic. For example, many people read books about characters with disabilities for pleasure, for meaningful purpose, and/or information. When students are given choices to explore new topics or students with disabilities are able to choose books that relate to their disability, this process affects the way students read. Students are more likely to pick up a book of interest and be given that choice rather than the teacher choosing books for them. Rossow and Hess (2001) believe ownership allows students to acquire freedom of choice. Throughout their study, children selected their own books for reading. Rossow and Hess concluded, “Authentic literature has allowed my students to talk about some of their own challenges while allowing them to feel good about themselves as readers” (p. 20).
Overall, current and past research findings for both bibliotherapy and motivational theories show children enjoy reading books about characters who face similar situations to their own, and that these types of books may be motivational for students. Davis and Wilson (1992) explains the effectiveness of using bibliotherapy in the school settings and believes bibliotherapy is one way to reach out to children who are confused or depressed by focusing on other life skills which may turn their motivation into something positive. Bibliotherapy recognizes teachers, librarians, and counselors to understand their student’s needs. Park (2011) agrees learning also involves motivational and emotional processes. These two statements support the belief that both bibliotherapy and motivational theories, both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, impact the performance of students in the classroom.

Significant Historical Research

Books in the past that portrayed characters with disabilities were very different than how they are portrayed today. Smith-D’Arezzo and Moore-Thomas (2010) found that children’s literature in the past did not portray their characters with disabilities in a positive manner, but rather portrayed their characters with disabilities negatively. Moving into the nineteenth century, characters with disabilities were portrayed as pale, puny, or deformed and often times, characters with disabilities were cured or dead by the end of the book (Wopperer, 2011). However, researchers have tried to help portray children’s books with characters who have disabilities as a more positive experience, for not only the authors, but also the readers.

Since the 1980s, authors who have written children’s books for intermediate grades have looked at and changed the way they view their characters with disabilities; however, it was a difficult task. Prater (2003) stated, “Today, authors include characters with disabilities to focus on the life of an individual with a disability, tell a story that happens to include an individual
with a disability, or teach about a disability” (p. 47). Many authors in the past and authors today who have written children’s books that portray characters with disabilities are changing from stereotypical presentation to realistic and meaningful stories of human beings (Gervay, 2004).

In addition, Prater, Dyches and Johnston (2006) recommend books that have realistic situations and settings. Readers are able to relate with the characters in the stories with their own lives. Children’s literature should portray the illustrations of characters with disabilities in picture books and chapter books as positive portrayals. Characters with disabilities should not look any different from other characters in the book. Children’s books that portrayed characters with disabilities have risen to a more powerful and positive experience for authors, readers, and those who have a disability.

An examination of older studies of children’s books that portray characters with disabilities, a research method, identified as content analysis, has played and still plays an important role in the design of research. According to Prasad (2008), the use of the term content analysis is 75 years old and has been listed since 1961 in Webster’s Dictionary of English Language. However, Krippendorff (2010) argues, “the phrase content analysis first mentioned in a 1941 paper by Douglas Waples and Bernard Berelson and was defined in 1948 by Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Berelson” (p. 233). A major advocate for content analysis was Bernard Berelson who published Content Analysis in Communication Research (Prasad, 2008). Many researchers, such as media, social science, political science, and historical science used content analysis in their studies. However, Prasad explains, “the development of content analysis as a full-fledged scientific method took place during World War II when the U.S. government sponsored a project under a directorship of Harold Lasswell to evaluate enemy propaganda” (p. 1). In contrast, Krippendorff (2010) stated:
Content analysis became of interest to the church, worried about the effects of the written word other than God’s; to governments, trying to settle political legal, and religious disputes; to journalists, hoping to document the changes in newspaper publishing due to its commercialization and popularizations; to corporations interested in surveying their symbolic environments for opportunities and threats; and to social scientists, originally drawn into the competition between the press and newly emerging media, then radio and television. (p. 233)

Content analysis has been around since people began to write and has been used in a number of different ways.

Content analysis does not have one specific definition; however, there are a number of definitions that researchers have written in the past. Two definitions are tied to the research questions and subheading questions for this particular study on fictional children’s books for intermediate grades. The two definitions are different, but they are congruent to one another. According to Nachmias and Nachmias (as cited by Prasad, 2008, p. 2) “content analysis may be seen as a method where the content of the message forms the basis for drawing inferences and conclusions about the content.” In addition, Krippendorff (2013) suggests content analysis as a research method to make inferences from text to contexts.

Not only must a person understand and define what content analysis is, he/she must also understand how to begin the research. Krippendorff (2010) states that content analysis can be teachable and used as a scientific tool. In addition, Prasad (2008) stated the following steps:

Content analysis begins with specific statement of the objectives or research questions to be studied. The researcher asks the questions, what do I want to find out from this communication content and frames the objectives for study. The researcher must
therefore locate a source of communication relevant to the research question and ask
questions that can be solved by content analysis. (p. 9)

Content analysis is not a typical method used during research; however, Krippendorff (2010)
looked at content analysis as a way to answer research questions from texts.

Children’s Literature and Disability

There are a number of authors who have written books about characters with disabilities.
In the past, the author’s portrayals of characters with disabilities were very different than how
they are portrayed in today’s books. Since the 1980s, authors who have written books for
intermediate grades have studied and changed the way they view their characters with
disabilities is an effective instructional tool for helping students develop empathy and
understanding of diversity but also to inform their own professional practices as they prepare to
meet the individual educational needs of children in their classrooms as well as in practice” (p.
23). Children’s literature and bibliotherapy are both powerful teaching tools. Educators and
librarians who teach their students about disabilities and diversity through literature must take
notice of the effectiveness of each book taught and read and how they can utilize bibliotherapy to
accomplish their goals. Prater (2003) indicated realistic characters who deliver positive
messages, allows characters to serve as role models. Such characters can be used for individuals
with disabilities in a bibliotherapeutic fashion.

Using children’s literature about individuals with disabilities opens the mind of other
students and promotes accepting, understanding, and embracing the differences amongst their
peers and teachers. Kurtts and Gavigan (2008) agree that children and young adult books that
portray characters with disabilities can embrace understanding, accepting, and the importance of
being sympathetic to those individuals with disabilities. In conclusion, special education teachers, general education teachers, and librarians who choose appropriate books are not only helping students with disabilities understand that they are not alone, but also guides students without disabilities to understand and accept their peers with disabilities.

In one study conducted by Prater (1999), 68 children and adolescent books that portrayed characters with disabilities were examined. Her study focused on books published between 1965 through 1996. To select her books, Prater applied specific criteria for selection, which included (a) the main or supporting characters had to have a disability and (b) the genre had to be fictional. The study by Prater was designed to analyze individuals in each book in terms of the level of the character (main or supporting), the type of development (dynamic or static), and the point of view (Prater). Prater also focused on a few themes, exploring the relationship between characters with and without disabilities, changes in the characters without disabilities associated with characters who had a disability, and character changes with disabilities (Prater).

Based on the findings, Prater (1999) concluded most of the characters in the books were supportive characters, rather than main characters. Few books were told from the point of view of the individual who had a disability. Some authors of the books clearly identified the individual with a disability, while other authors left it for the readers to decide which disability was being portrayed. Prater concluded, for teaching purposes, juvenile books provided numerous examples and non-examples of portrayals of characters with disabilities. However, educators must differentiate between books that accurately portray characters with disabilities verses books that do not accurately portray characters with disabilities.

A second study was completed by Dyches, Prater, and Cramer in 2001. This investigation examined 12 children and adolescent books that included characters with
disabilities, specifically focusing on autism. Their study focused on books published between 1997 through 1998. The book selection process was guided by selecting text that had included main or supporting characters with a disability and genre must be fictional. They analyzed each book by exploring the characteristics of the individual with a disability, level of character (main or supporting characters), realistic, how accurate the books portrayed the individual with a disability, development (static or dynamic), and point of view (Dyches, Prater, & Cramer). Four themes also emerged from this investigation: characterization of the individual with a disability, relationship between the character with a disability and others, changes in the characters without disabilities, and changes in characters with disabilities (Dyches et al.).

The authors (Dyches, et al., 2001) concluded that 14 characters were portrayed in all 12 books; however, seven individuals were identified as main characters and seven individuals were identified as supporting characters. Taking a closer look at each individual character, Dyches et al. included the main character’s age, ranged from preschool to age 16, where 11 were boys and one was a girl, however, all characters were Caucasian. After reading and analyzing 12 books, Dyches et al. concluded, nine books addressed characteristics with mental retardation and three books addressed characteristics with autism. Out of the 12 books, most of the books that portrayed characters with disabilities generally were portrayed in a positive aspect. Lastly, the individual with a disability did not tell the story, but rather another character(s) without a disability told the story. Dyches et al. (2001) stated that the 12 books that were analyzed in their investigation became the books considered for the Dolly Gray Children’s Literature Award.

Landrum (2001) examined 46 intermediate books, preferable for grades fourth through seventh, which portrayed characters with disabilities. Her study focused on books published between 1990 through 1999. The purpose of her study was to summarize specific criteria to use
when selecting accurate intermediate chapter books that portray characters who have disabilities. Landrum analyzed her books into three separate categories; plot, characters, and tone. Landrum identified three specific criteria for analyzing the plot: (a) whether the events in the story were realistic, (b) whether the characters with disabilities faced similar conflicts to those without disabilities, and (c) whether there were no cures used as a solution to give the individual with a disability a normal life.

Landrum (2001) also used three specific criteria for analyzing the books for character development: (a) whether the characters were strong and independent, rather than passive and dependent, (b) whether the characters with disabilities showed what they could do, rather than focusing on what they could not do, and (c) whether the characters portrayed emotions. Three specific criteria were also identified to analyze the book for tone: (a) whether the books used words such as retarded, handicapped, crippled, or special, (b) whether the tone fit with the theme(s), and (c) whether the story ended in tragedy, it was because of general human conditions, not the individual with a disability. Landrum study focused on certain intermediate chapter books that accurately portray characters with disabilities; however, she did not include books that inaccurately met her criteria of the genre. Landrum concluded, using these specific criteria and the genre of chapter books will increase student awareness and acceptance of others.

Prater, Dyches, and Johnstun (2006) argue that children books portraying characters and/or individuals with disabilities are used to promote awareness, understanding, and acceptance of those individuals with disabilities. In most books, it is common to see physical, sensory, and cognitive disabilities the characters portray. When parents and/or educators choose books that portray characters with a disability, they must have a purpose for choosing such books to present to their children and students.
In their study, Prater et al. (2006) identified three different categories for specific criteria when determining quality literature. The first criterion the investigators examined was portrayal of learning disabilities. According to Prater et al., the portrayal of learning disabilities included examining the children’s books to (a) determine whether the characters with disabilities were portrayed in a realistic manner, (b) whether the terminology used was accurate, and (c) whether the book could be used to raise awareness, understanding, and acceptance of an individual with a disability. Literary quality was the second criterion assessed during this investigation. Prater et al. identified three specific criteria associated with literary quality: (a) whether cultural aspects were accurately portrayed, (b) whether the story looked at similarities more than differences between characters, and (c) whether the point of views were realistic. The three specific criteria for illustrations included (a) whether the illustrations added to the overall story, (b) whether the individuals were artistic and stylish, and (c) whether the illustrations portrayed the characters with learning disabilities appropriately.

The authors selected 30 books that accurately portrayed characters with disabilities based on their criteria. Using such books that portray characters with disabilities allows readers to accept, understand, and promote awareness on certain disabilities that are read throughout each book. Prater et al. (2006) believes that children’s books provide readers with an understanding and acceptance of diversity. They argued that people are aware of differences amongst individuals; however, they never fully accept them. Prater et al. believe readers must have a better understanding of others and themselves, through social issues.
Descriptions of Characters with Disabilities

*Main, Minor, Mentioned Characters*

Authors who are interested in writing a book that portrays individuals with disabilities face many challenges. Their books are judged not only by their readers without disabilities, but also the caregivers and individuals with disabilities. They must create illustrations and write text that is accurate in portraying the disability of the individual in their story as well as connect the story to their readers. In doing so, this helps expand the readers learning and understanding aspects of the disability.

General education teachers have taken on an important role to accept those who have disabilities in their classrooms. Searching for books that accurately portray individuals with disabilities familiarizes teachers and their students in understanding and accepting peers different from themselves. Stelle (1999) believes children’s books can be used to develop and encourage positive relationships among children with disabilities. Throughout her research, she focused on specific fiction books where the main character in the story had a disability. Books that accurately portray individuals with disabilities will allow teachers to use them as a resource to teach throughout their curriculum and provide in their classroom libraries.

In addition, using books that appropriately portray individuals with disabilities can be an effective teaching method and can be utilized throughout the school year. Sotto and Ball (2006) believe characters with disabilities are positive role models and encourage understanding. They examined 18 children’s books on three specific criteria: (a) published between 1994 through 2001, (b) appropriate for preschool through eighth grade, and (c) the main characters had to have speech, language, and/or a hearing disorder (p. 40). The authors first started with a list of 30 books for review; however, those books portrayed the characters with communication
impairments in an inaccurate light. According to Sotto and Ball (2006), “The character with communication problems was often depicted as weak, timid, withdrawn, and spineless. The main character without the disability was the one to save or protect the individual with a disability” (p. 42). Books that misinterpret the individual with a disability not only impact the typical readers who do not have a disability, but also impact someone who has a disability. Individuals, who see themselves portrayed in children’s books, identify themselves with the behaviors of the characters in the stories.

In conclusion, of the 30 books read, only 18 books were chosen to display accurate portrayal of individuals with communication impairments (Sotto & Ball, 2006). The books that were chosen are books that can be used throughout the curriculum, where teachers can use certain characters with communication disorders as role models for their students and peers in the classroom. Using certain children’s books to portray a student and classmate’s disability can help teachers and peers understand and accept them as an individual.

A second study conducted by Altieri (2008), 72 books that portrayed characters with dyslexia were examined. Her study focused on books published between 1993 through 2003. She read each book several times to analyze how the disability was being portrayed, the instructional strategies used, and the types of characteristics portrayed by the individual with dyslexia and their teacher. After reading the books, Altieri concluded that 35% of the books mentioned testing and diagnosing the child; however, the teacher in the story was not the first to notice the problem, but rather a family friend or someone close to the child. The most popular instructional method used was home instruction; however, few characters received technology assistance, tape recorders, family involvement, and multisensory methods. Altieri noticed that even though the books talked about different instructional strategies used, the authors did not
provide much detail; readers were on their own to decide how those strategies worked.

Similar to Prater’s (2003) study, Altieri’s (2008) study also focused on the characters’ level of self-esteem. She found that in 70% of the books read, the characters with dyslexia experienced low self-esteem. In addition, teachers impacted the way they helped students with dyslexia. Altieri believes, when teachers are positive and supportive, a child who has dyslexia has difficulty acquiring their actions. The books that were studied portrayed the general education teachers as uncaring and ignorant. Based on the findings, Altieri concluded in books that portrayed individuals with disabilities, it was rare to find teachers portrayed in a positive way. Similar to Prater’s (2003) study, general education teachers were portrayed negatively and special education teachers were portrayed as positive role models. This study was designed to provide awareness and understanding in the signs and diagnosis of individuals who may have dyslexia. The characters studied hid their dyslexia from family, friends, and the school. Altieri believes providing early intervention for those who are diagnose with dyslexia are very important, otherwise students will fail. However, the most frequently used intervention throughout this study was tutoring. Altieri explains that there are many other interventions that can be used and educators must provide those individuals with an opportunity to learn those other interventions.

Not only did Altieri’s (2008) study include her analysis of each book studied and read about an individual with dyslexia, she concluded her study with ways in which educators could learn from those books. Choosing books that portray characters with dyslexia or another disability must be carefully selected. Portrayal must be positive, realistic, and valuable for children (Altieri, 2008). Altieri’s main purpose of the study was to select appropriate books that portrayed characters and individuals with dyslexia. Altieri believes children who struggle with
literacy issues need to see themselves portrayed in a positive, realistic manner. Not only is it important for individuals with dyslexia to see themselves being portrayed in books, it is also important for their peers to accept and understand that everyone is different.

Another study conducted by Prater (2003) involved examining 90 fictional children and adolescent books that portrayed characters with learning disabilities. To select her books, Prater applied specific criteria for selection, which included (a) the main or supporting characters had to have a learning disability, (b) the genre had to be fictional, and (c) the books had to be published before 2001. She read and analyzed each book based on specific criteria: the role of the character, character development (dynamic or static), and point of view. In addition, Prater focused on specific themes throughout each book: (a) portrayal of the learning disability, (b) types and characteristics of learning disabilities, and (c) the role of identification and diagnosis of the learning disability through the plot of the story.

Based on the findings, Prater (2003) reported a total of 97 characters who appeared in the books had learning disabilities. Most of the 97 characters were considered main characters and dynamic. Most of the stories were told from their point of view, and nearly all of the characters changed or grew throughout the story. Prater found nearly 75% of the characters portrayed in all 90 books had a reading disability, followed by approximately 33% with written language; however, disabilities with math, social skills, oral language and motor skills were not as common. In addition, Prater’s study showed that more than 50% of the stories were told from the point of view of the character with a learning disability and 25% of the books were written from the point of view of a character without a learning disability. According to the study, in 50% of the books examined, characters with learning disabilities played a major role; however, in 33% of the books, the characters with learning disabilities had a slight impact.
Similar to Altieri (2008) study, Prater’s (2003) study found that characters with a reading disability generally were said to have dyslexia. In each story, where the character had dyslexia, the disability was defined and identified to readers in a clear manner. Not only did she determine the type of learning disability each character had, but she also analyzed common characteristics of each character displayed in the books, which included learning strengths, behaviors, self-esteem and confidence. Based on her findings, Prater concluded, many characters portrayed strengths in math, motor skills, social skills, and artistic skills. However, characters with learning disabilities often misbehaved mainly in the classrooms and at school. In today’s educational system, this type of behavior is portrayed frequently because students are either trying to avoid assignments or covering up their poor academic performances for risk of being teased by their peers. Lastly, Prater’s study showed that characters with learning disabilities also lacked self-esteem and self-confidence.

A major theme that was analyzed throughout the collection of books was diagnosing the characters with learning disabilities. During Prater’s (2003) study, she noticed several books portrayed parents in a negative light when they discovered their child’s learning problem and refused their child to be evaluated. In other books, she reported parents switched schools to avoid having the school diagnose their child with a learning disability. Throughout the books studied, the setting took place in resource rooms where some characters attended pullout programs and some received modifications in general education classrooms, which was embarrassing for them.

In conclusion, Prater’s (2003) study found that majority of the books that were read, reviewed, and analyzed contained characters with a learning disability who played an important part in the story. As mentioned before, the authors of the books analyzed, used characters with
disabilities to focus on the life of that individual and portray diversity. Using books that accurately portray characters with disabilities allows the characters to be used as role models by helping those individuals who are experiencing the same thing. Prater concluded her study by informing classroom teachers, teacher educators, parents, and librarians to locate specific books about characters with learning disabilities and include those books within their personal library collections.

Dyches and Prater (2005) examined 34 books written for children and adolescents, including characters with developmental disabilities (DD). Eleven books used were picture books and 23 books used were chapter books. To select their books, three specific criteria were set for this study which included (a) the main or supporting character had to have developmental disabilities (DD), (b) the genre must be fictional, and (c) the books must be published from 1999 through 2003. Not only were the criterions set for each book used in the study, the authors analyzed the books based on four themes: “…characterization of the individual with DD, relationship among characters with and without DD, changes in characters without DD, and special topics related to the field of DD” (p. 204). The authors categorized each theme throughout their study and first started off with characterizations of individuals with developmental disabilities. Throughout this theme, they analyzed the individual on characterizations as main or supporting characters, personal characteristics, realistic, positive portrayal, character development, and point of view.

Based on their findings, Dyches and Prater (2005) identified 16 main characters with developmental disabilities and 20 supporting characters with developmental disabilities. Of the 34 books used in this study, one character was a preschooler, five characters were adults, and the remaining characters were school-aged. The characters portrayed in the stories were either
autistic or identified with mental retardation. In the majority of children’s books used in the study, the main characters were most often portrayed as males, while the female characters were briefly mentioned. Dyches and Prater showed the majority of the books used for this study displayed more males than females. Of the characters who were identified with mental retardation, 16 characters were males and 5 were females. Characters who were identified with autism were mostly males (N = 16) with three females. Out of the 36 characters with developmental disabilities, the authors concluded only 26 of those characters were portrayed in a positive manner. In addition, 21 characters were dynamic and 15 characters were static. Lastly, out of the 34 books analyzed for this study, only three books were told from the point of view of the individual with a developmental disability.

The second theme analyzed was the relationship among characters with and without developmental disabilities. During this theme, the authors looked at the characters through primary relationship, victim, protector, dependent, caregiver, friendship, instructor, fear, and feelings of guilt. Based on the findings, Dyches and Prater (2005) concluded the character with developmental disabilities was most commonly displayed through a relationship with a friend, followed by a sibling, then parents and family. Most of the characters in the stories were displayed as victims, rather than protectors. As for the instructors, some of the relationships were stronger and some were weak, while some professionals played an important role and some were less formal. Out of the 34 books studied, five books portrayed the characters with developmental disabilities as being afraid and embarrassed. Lastly, characters without developmental disabilities felt a sense of guilt in their relationship with the individual with developmental disabilities.
The third theme analyzed were the changes in the characters without developmental disabilities. Based on the findings, Dyches and Prater (2005) concluded the majority of the books portrayed the character with developmental disabilities as a change agent for those individuals without developmental disabilities. The author’s data concluded that by the end of the book, many of the characters without developmental disabilities, soon learned to accept and understand the individual with a developmental disability.

The last theme analyzed were special topics related to the field of developmental disabilities. The authors examined the characters’ education, recreation, residence, and family characteristics. Dyches and Prater (2005) concluded that of the 34 books studied, only 24 books were based around the school life of the individual with a developmental disability; however, the characters were portrayed in an inclusion school setting. In addition, some characters were portrayed as not receiving educational services, followed by residential and self-contained classrooms. Throughout the books studied, the recreational activities did not include peer involvement; however, some characters with developmental disabilities did interact with their peers, but mainly interacted with their siblings. The characters with disabilities lived in their family home; one book portrayed the character as homeless. Lastly, majority of the books studied, portrayed traditional types of families. However, some books included single parents, no family members, or the character with developmental disability was the parent or guardian figure in the story.

In conclusion, Dyches and Prater (2005) stated all of their books were analyzed and considered for the Dolly Gray Award in Children’s Literature. Dyches and Prater stated, “This award recognizes high quality children’s literature that characterizes individuals with developmental disabilities” (p. 214). Unlike past books that portrayed characters with
disabilities, present fictional children’s books are portraying the characters more as a positive aspect than a negative aspect. Dyches and Prater ended their study informing future authors to add more depth to the characters with developmental disabilities, requiring them to make independent choices, impact the lives of themselves and others around them, serve as a protector, rather than a victim, and involve them more in activities with their peers.

**Gender**

In the same way, studies have been done focusing on gender issues in children’s literature; Ya-Lun (2008) studied the differences of male verse female characteristics in books. In the majority of children’s books that are read, main characters are portrayed as males, while the female characters are briefly mentioned. In addition, Ya-Lun noticed that male characters dominated female characters, where female characters were considered unimportant. Ya-Lun concluded, after analyzing her data, a reader is more likely to perceive the image of male characters as being heroes, someone who is powerful, and active, while female characters are seen as non-active, mild, and rarely mentioned.

Hunter and Chick (2005) studied gender differences in basal reading series. Forty-seven books were chosen and 746 stories were read for grades second through sixth. They collected data throughout each story based on the main characters’ gender roles. They found that almost 1000 male characters were present in the stories; however, only 780 female characters were present. Similar to Ya-Lun’s (2008) study, Hunter and Chick, found “Boys were presented as active, brave, intelligent, and industrious; girls were passive, mindless, and domestic” (p. 66).

Similar to the Ya-Lun (2008) and Hunter and Chick (2005) studies, Weitzman, Eifler, Hokada, and Ross (1972) focused on gender roles; however, they focused on the socialization of preschool children through representations in books. Weitzman et al. (1972) stated:
Through books, children learn about the world outside of their immediate environment; they learn about what other boy and girls do, say, and feel; they learn about what is right and wrong; and they learn what is expected of children their age. Books provide children with role models—images of what they can and should be like when they grow up. (p. 1126)

Books that accurately portray characters of the same gender as the individual with a disability, can allow the individual to become aware of their own life and use characters as role models. Similar to Ya-Lun (2008) and Hunter and Chick (2005) studies, Weitzman et al., (1972) discussed in their study the image children books have on female roles; invisible. They noticed that often times females are not represented in the titles, roles and pictures; however, children’s books represent boys and men. Throughout their study, Weitzman et al., looked at 18 Caldecott winners over the last couple of years and found 261 pictures of male characters verse only 23 pictures of female characters throughout children books, boys are considered the heroes and adventurous, where the girls are passive and quiet.

Diversity

Not only do gender issues impact the way individuals are portrayed in children’s books, but diversity amongst the characters seems to be of concern to today’s educators. Exploring the content of books with characters who have disabilities will provide a better understanding of people with disabilities. Smith D’Arezzo (2003) believes using characters with disabilities in texts is an easy strategy for educators to introduce and use with their students. Having books in the classroom that focus on specific disabilities will help not only the teacher, but also the students understand the impact the disability has on that individual. It is important to understand, accept, and promote awareness on an individual with a disability.
When choosing books that portray characters with disabilities, Smith D’Arezzo (2003) focused on four areas:

The structural elements should be well developed if not outstanding. The book should be appealing to children, and the characters in the books should be well developed to show children with disabilities in a realistic light. The book should strike a positive emotional chord in the teacher. The book should present special education issues accurately. (p. 77)

Smith D’Arezzo examined 35 intermediate books, preferable for grades fourth through sixth. Specific criteria were set for choosing each book, which consisted of (a) characters with cognitive disabilities, rather than emotional and physical disabilities, (b) books published after 1975, and (c) books based on realistic fiction. Throughout each book she analyzed the theme, plot, characters, style, and setting. In addition, special education issues were also analyzed. Books can be written well, however, authors who inaccurately portray a disability, can impact the way the reader views that disability and can give them the wrong impression. Giving readers the wrong impression, may impact the way they treat those individuals with disabilities because of the image they saw or read in the book. Using books that meet criteria, allows teachers to help children recognize attitude and differences towards those with disabilities.

In conclusion, out of the 35 books studied by Smith D’Arezzo, 16 books met the criteria that were set. She felt sympathetic toward the characters with disabilities while she read most of the books, children’s attitudes toward characters with disabilities were often negative, friendship was accurately portrayed among the characters, and the point of view or theme of the story was portrayed through the voices of the characters. In addition, the plots throughout the stories were realistic with well-developed characters having realistic qualities. Educators and students who locate appropriate books that portray characters with disabilities in an accurate and realistic light
are more likely to appeal to those books and learn about that disability (p. 91). Choosing books that portray characters with disabilities help students understand and accept their peers with disabilities.

Summary

In summary, Landrum’s study (2001) was researched differently then Prater’s (1999) and Dyches et al.’s (2001) studies, due to the fact that Landrum’s study focused more on increasing awareness and acceptance of those with disabilities. She focused on three specific categories; plot, character development, and tone, whereas Prater and Dyches et al. focused more in depth by analyzing and looking closely at each individual character who had a disability in each book, along with looking at different themes in order to determine accurate children and adolescent books that portrayed characters with disabilities.

In addition, Altieri’s (2008), Prater’s (2003), and Dyches and Prater (2005) studies were similar in the ways the authors read, reviewed, and analyzed their books that portrayed characters with dyslexia, learning disabilities, and developmental disabilities. They all found similar results in the ways that individuals with disabilities were portrayed. Altieri’s (2008) study was similar to Prater’s (2003) study because of similar data that was found throughout their books, and their conclusions that characters with disabilities developed low self-esteem. Not only did they notice low self-esteem, the two authors, noticed that often times in the stories, general education teachers were portrayed as negative and ignorant, while special education teachers were portrayed as positive role models toward individuals with disabilities.

In addition Altieri (2008) and Dyches and Prater (2005) both used books published between 1993 through 2003; however, they collected different data when they analyzed the educational aspects of the individuals with disabilities. Based on the findings, Altieri concluded
a majority of the books portrayed students with dyslexia as being schooled through home instruction or tutoring; whereas, Dyches and Prater concluded in their investigation, students with developmental disabilities were schooled with inclusion, residential or self-contained classrooms. All three studies examined books that portrayed disabilities to provide awareness and understanding for pre-service educators, educators, librarians, and parents who have a desire to teach their students and children with disabilities and without disabilities about differences amongst individuals.
CHAPTER III. METHODS AND PROCEDURES

New legislation has resulted in students with disabilities being included in the inclusion classrooms, rather than a self-contained special education classroom. This shift has forced all teachers and students to learn more about students with disabilities and their impact on the educational system. One way that teachers and students can learn more about the children with learning disabilities is to read children’s books that focus on the disabilities to ensure a positive and accurate portrayal of children with disabilities. Searching for books that accurately portray characters with disabilities may help familiarize not only general education teachers, but also their students, in understanding and accepting those who have disabilities.

This study was designed to purposefully select 30 fictional children’s books for intermediate grades that portrayed characters with disabilities. Using the selected list of 30 fictional children’s books for intermediate grades, 10 books were identified by randomly selecting every other book in no particular order. The three questions addressed in this study were: (1) Are the characters with disabilities main, minor, or mentioned characters in the books? (2) What is the relationship between the characters with disabilities and the plot of each story? (3) How diverse are the characters with disabilities in each book? Chapter III provides a detailed discussion of the methods used for this investigation and the procedures that were followed.

Methods

Research Design

This study was designed to review fictional children’s books for intermediate grade levels that portrayed characters with disabilities. This was determined by how the characters with disabilities were portrayed in children’s literature (a) by examining whether the characters were major, minor, or mentioned characters in the story, (b) by exploring the relationship between
characters with disabilities and the plot, and (c) by identifying the diversity represented amongst the characters.

This investigation used a mixed methods research design with content analysis as the research method. Prasad (2008) defined content analysis as, “The study of the content with reference to the meanings, contexts and intentions contained in messages” (p. 1). Krippendorff (2010) distinguished content analysis from other observational methods in social sciences by stating, “…the answers to its research questions are inferred from available text” (p. 234).

Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected to answer the research questions. Qualitative analysis was used throughout this study to collect data from the specific fictional children’s books for intermediate grades. Defining characteristics for qualitative research, Kohlbacher (2006) stated:

A focus on interpretation rather than quantification; an emphasis on subjectivity rather than objectivity; flexibility in the process of conducting research; an orientation towards process rather than outcome; a concern with context—regarding behavior and situation as inextricably linked in forming experience; and finally, an explicit recognition of the impact of the research process on the research situation. (para. 1)

Qualitative analysis research was completed to successfully determine the specific children’s books for intermediate grades that portrayed characters with disabilities, while focusing on certain criteria and collecting data.

In contrast, quantitative analysis research was used as well throughout this study. Kohlbacher (2006) defined quantitative research as, “collecting data in the form of numbers” (para. 2a). Quantitative data were used for frequency counts describing the nature of the relationship of disabilities as represented in the books.
Materials

The data, information, and analysis were collected for this study by purposefully selecting 30 fictional children’s books for intermediate grades that portrayed characters with disabilities (see Appendix A). The fictional children’s books for intermediate grades were based on two criteria: (a) the books were published between 2000-2013 and (b) the books included characters with disabilities. Once it was established that the books met the first criteria, the second criteria were identified through book summaries, online library catalogs, published articles, search engines on the Internet, and visits to the local Wood County Public Library.

Once the books about children with disabilities were identified, then the investigator randomly selected every other book until 10 books were identified (see Appendix B). This was to ensure a random sample of books about disabilities was selected for the investigation.

Instrumentation

Several data charts were used for data collection and data analysis. The first chart listed the 30 books selected for the purposes of this study (see Appendix A). The second chart listed the 10 fictional children’s books for intermediate grades that portrayed characters with disabilities used in this investigation (see Appendix B). Each book was categorized based on the disability identified in each book.

The third chart contained the data collected before reading, during reading, and after reading the books (see Appendix C and D). This chart focused on how the characters with disabilities were portrayed: (1) Are the characters with disabilities main, minor, or mentioned characters in the books? (2) What is the relationship between the characters with disabilities and the plot of each story? (3) How diverse are the characters with disabilities in each book?
The fourth chart included a short summary for each book discussed in the study (see Appendix E). The author, title, and year the book was published, along with a short summary, which included how characters were portrayed.

Procedures

Several steps were used in planning this study on fictional children’s books for intermediate grades that portrayed characters with disabilities. The first step in this investigation reviewed the literature that had been published on the topic.

Next, criteria were established regarding the characters in the book to determine which books would be collected. For the purposes of this investigation, fictional children’s books for intermediate grades were based on two criteria: (a) the publication date and (b) the book had to include characters with disabilities. Once it had been determined that the books met the publication date criteria, a more detailed search ensued to determine whether the books contained characters with disabilities. Book summaries, online library catalogs, research articles, search engines on the internet, and library visits to the local Wood County Public Library were used to identify potential books. The 30 books were identified and organized in a word document, randomly placed by title, author, year, and disability portrayed. Then 10 books were randomly selected from the initial list of 30.

The next step was to read each book to examine certain criteria. This was determined by how the characters with disabilities were portrayed: (a) as main, minor, or mentioned characters, (b) the relationship between characters and the plot, and (c) the diversity of the characters. To determine how to code the data, certain definitions had to be established.
Character Role in Story.

Three separate definitions were used to determine characteristics of main characters, minor characters, and mentioned characters. A main character was the focus of the story (Gillespie, Powell, Clements, & Swearingen, 1994), and one who was clearly critical to story content (Hunter & Chick, 2005). A minor character appeared in the story and contributed to the storyline (Gillespie, et al.). A mentioned character was referenced in the story, but did not contribute to the storyline (Gillespie, et al.).

Relationship Between Characters and Plot.

A number of definitions were used to determine the relationship between the characters and the plot of the story. Three categories were used: disability specific, disability generic, and disability neutral. Disability specific texts describe stories that authentically illuminate the experience of the disability. The text realistically taps into the disability (Hollie, 2012). Disability generic texts contained few, if any, details that define characters with disabilities. The text could be about anybody, regardless of disability (Hollie). Disability neutral texts are not recommended as appropriate books. These feature characters and themes that are about individuals with disabilities but fundamentally are about something else (Hollie).

Additional information regarding the portrayal of characters with disability was also collected. A column labeled portrayal on the data sheet was completed and these data were merged with the reporting of data generic, specific, and neutral.

Diversity.

Three areas of diversity were considered for this investigation: gender, race, and disability. Clues and references in the text were used to identify gender. Through the use of pronouns, references to male/female, and names, all the characters in the books were identified.
as male or female. Analyzing characters based on race was not a simple task. Clues and references in the text were used to identify race. Pictures, if present, were also used to determine whether the characters were white or non-white. Additional texts, including character descriptions, were used. Identifying the specific disability or disabilities represented in the text were completed through the discussion in the text. Additional text, including rich character and descriptions, were used.

These headings (characters, character/plot relationships and diversity) were written on a spreadsheet. While reading, notes were taken that provided answers/responses to each of the questions (see Appendix D). Specific page numbers and quotes were provided to support the summaries.

The final step analyzed the data both qualitatively and quantitatively and answered the research questions by drawing conclusions from the data. Conclusions and recommendations were also considered.

Data Collection

The first step, purposefully selected a list of 30 fictional children’s books that portrayed characters with disabilities for intermediate grades and randomly selected every other book until 10 books were identified. The title and author of each intermediate trade book, the publication date, and the disability represented in the book were considered. The specific data collected and analyzed during the second step focused on (a) whether the characters with disabilities were main, minor, or mentioned characters, (b) the relationship between characters and the plot, and (c) the diversity of the characters. Structured notes were taken providing answers/responses to each of the questions (see Appendix D). Specific page numbers and quotes were provided to
support the summaries. Additional data, in the form of another data chart, included book titles and book summaries.

**Data Analysis**

Although a data chart was constructed, there was no analysis needed for the first and second data chart since it included only descriptive information about the books (see Appendix A and B). The third chart (see Appendix C) included the data collected before reading, during reading, and after reading the books. This table focused on certain criteria throughout the books (a) the portrayal of characters with disabilities as main, minor, or mentioned characters, (b) the relationship between characters and the plot, and (c) the diversity of the characters. While reading, notes were taken that provided answers/responses to each of the questions (see Appendix D). Specific page numbers and quotes were provided to support the summaries.

A fourth chart (see Appendix E) included summaries of the books used in this investigation. Descriptive information about the types of disabilities found in the books were provided through the use of frequency counts.

Qualitative analysis research was completed to successfully determine the specific children’s books for intermediate grades that portrayed characters with disabilities, while focusing on certain criteria and collecting data. Quantitative data were used for frequency counts describing the nature of the relationship of disabilities as represented in the books. Data were analyzed by the characters’ roles in the stories (main, minor or mentioned characters), the relationship between the characters and the plot (disability specific, disability generic, disability neutral), including the portrayal section and diversity (gender, race, disability).
Summary

This study was designed to purposefully select a list of 30 fictional children’s books that portrayed characters with disabilities for intermediate grades and randomly selected every other book until 10 books were identified. To determine how the characters with disabilities were portrayed this study looked at three specific questions: (1) Are the characters with disabilities main, minor, or mentioned characters in the books? (2) What is the relationship between the characters with disabilities and the plot of each story? (3) How diverse are the characters with disabilities in each book?

A list of 10 fictional children’s books related to disabilities and published between 2000-2013 were collected and categorized in appropriate groups, based on the disability. Once criteria were set and books were examined, data were collected. Data were collected and analyzed around how characters with disabilities were portrayed. Three specific questions were examined in this investigation: (1) Are the characters with disabilities main, minor, or mentioned characters in the books? (2) What is the relationship between the characters with disabilities and the plot of each story? (3) How diverse are the characters with disabilities in each book?
CHAPTER IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Children’s books that portray characters with disabilities have been around for a number of years; however, research has shown significant differences between books that were written in the past and today’s children’s books. The purpose of this investigation was to explore the presentation and representation of children with disabilities in fictional children’s books for intermediate grades. This study was designed to purposefully select 30 fictional children’s books for intermediate grades that portrayed characters with disabilities and randomly selected every other book until 10 of those books were reached. Three specific questions were examined in this investigation: (1) Are the characters with disabilities main, minor, or mentioned characters in the books? (2) What is the relationship between the characters with disabilities and the plot of each story? (3) How diverse are the characters with disabilities in each book?

Data Analysis

A list of 10 fictional books for intermediate grades that portrayed characters with disabilities; specific data were collected and analyzed around how characters with disabilities were portrayed. The data were collected based on certain categories: character role in the story (main, minor, or mentioned characters), relationship between characters and plot (disability specific, generic, neutral), including the portrayal section of the data chart, and diversity of characters (gender, race white or non-white, disability).

Character Role in the Story

Looking at the first category or the role of the person with disabilities in the story (Main, Minor, or Mentioned character), there were a total of 16 characters with a disability portrayed throughout the 10 books read for this study. A total of 12 characters were considered main
characters; three characters were considered minor characters, and one character was simply mentioned.

Main Characters.

Main characters with disabilities were found in all 10 books: *Reaching for Sun* (Vaughn Zimmer, 2007), *Rules* (Lord, 2006), *Joey Pigza Loses Control* (Gantos, 2000), *Blue Bottle Mystery* (Hoopman, 2001), *How Many Days Until Tomorrow?* (Janover, 2000), *Strong Deaf* (McElfresh, 2012), *Clay* (Rodowsky, 2001), *Anything but Typical* (Raleigh Baskin, 2009), *Deaf Child Crossing* (Matlin, 2002), and *The London Eye Mystery* (Dowd, 2007). The approaches that were taken during each book to identify main, minor, and mentioned characters were looking at characters and author’s point of views.

*Reaching for Sun* was told from Josie’s point of view. Josie was the main character in the story who had cerebral palsy. Josie told readers about her life with cerebral palsy.

*Rules* was told from Catherine’s point of view. Catherine was one of the main characters in the story; however, she did not have a disability, but she had a younger brother named David who was autistic. Catherine told readers how she wanted a “normal” life, but with David, the family revolved around his disability. David was also another main character in the story because the story was about him and his disability, but based on his sister’s point of view.

*Joey Pigza Loses Control* was told from Joey’s point of view. Joey was the main character in the story who had Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). He visited his father during the summer, who also had ADHD; however, Joey and his father did not get along. He told readers how he felt about his disability and how he felt like he was trying to be two Joey’s at once (mom’s Joey and dad’s Joey). Joey’s father (Carter) was also one of the main characters in the story who attempted to teach Joey how to take control of his own life.
*Blue Bottle Mystery* was told from the author’s point of view. Ben was the main character in the story who had Asperger Syndrome. The author described Ben’s disability throughout the story; however, Ben, his father, and grandmother, did not find out he had a disability until chapter nine.

*How Many Days Until Tomorrow* was told from two brothers’ point of views. Josh was a main character who was dyslexic and Simon was a main character who was gifted. Both characters talk about the differences, obstacles, and outcomes of their disabilities.

*Strong Deaf* was told from two sisters’ point of views. Marla was a main character who was deaf and her sister, Jade was a main character who could hear. The story was told from the two sisters’ perspectives; Jade’s narrative was in perfect English and Marla’s narrative was typed out as if she was signing in American Signed Language.

*Clay* was told from Elsie’s point of view. Elsie was one of the main characters in the story. She did not have a disability, but her younger brother, Tommy, was autistic. Elsie told readers how she took care of her brother when their mother kidnapped them and took them away from their father. Tommy was also a main character in the story because the story was about him and his disability, but written from his sister’s perspective.

*Anything but Typical* was told from Jason Blake’s point of view. Jason Blake, a main character in the story who was diagnosed with autism. He told readers about his experiences and obstacles he faced with autism, but soon accepted his differences.

*Deaf Child Crossing* was told from the author’s point of view. Megan was a main character who was deaf. Megan became friends with a girl named Cindy (hearing) and a girl named Lizzie (deaf). The girls came from different backgrounds, but before they could overcome obstacles they faced, they had to learn what it meant to be friends.
*The London Eye Mystery* was told from Ted’s point of view. Ted, a main character in the story who was diagnosed with autism, told readers how he was able to solve a mystery because his brain had a different wiring and operating system than other people.

**Minor Characters.**

Minor characters with disabilities were found in three books. The books were: *Rules* (Lord, 2006), *Anything but Typical* (Raleigh Baskin, 2009), and *Deaf Child Crossing* (Matlin, 2002).

In *Rules*, Jason played a minor role in the book. Catherine (main character without a disability) met Jason at David’s (Catherine’s brother who is autistic) therapy clinic. Jason was a minor character who was non-verbal and wheelchair bound. Catherine’s and Jason’s friendship grew throughout the book, which required Catherine to look at different perspectives and appreciate those with disabilities.

*Anything but Typical* included Rebecca, who played a minor role. Jason Blake (main character with autism) met a girl named Rebecca who was blind on a website called “storyboard.” Jason and Rebecca became lifelong friends.

The book, *Deaf Child Crossing*, had a minor character named Lizzie. Megan (main character who was deaf) met Lizzie who was also deaf, at summer camp.

**Mentioned Character.**

There was one mentioned character with a disability in *How Many Days Until Tomorrow?* (Janover, 2000). Deb was simply mentioned in the book. Josh (main character who was dyslexic) met Deb, who was dyslexic, while on his summer trip with his grandparents. She was referenced during the middle of the book with having dyslexia; however, she did not play a major role or contribute to the plot of the story.
**Relationship Between Characters and Plot**

To analyze the data for this topic, two sources of data were used. First, books were identified as disability specific, disability generic and disability neutral. Additional descriptive information were collected on the data sheet identified as portrayal. These were combined to present a better overview of the representation of the relationship between characters and plot. There were a total of 16 characters with a disability portrayed throughout the 10 books read for this study. Based on the books that were randomly selected and read, eight books were disability specific; one book was disability generic, and one book was identified as disability neutral.

**Disability Specific.**


In *Reaching for Sun*, the author described the disability Josie had (cerebral palsy) and how it affected her physically and emotionally throughout different circumstances. Physically, Josie had an odd walk, slow speech, thumb pasted to her palm, fingers frozen on her left hand, and attended therapy. Emotionally, Josie felt embarrassed, lonely, invisible, disappointed, frustrated, and sad. Josie grew tired of spending all of her time in therapy working on what was wrong with her. Kids at school called her “retard,” and “tard,” while teasing, and bullying her.

The author of *Rules* described David’s cognitive disability and Jason’s physical disability and how it affected not only their lives, but also others around them. Jason had a motorized wheelchair that allowed him to be independent, a communication book, and attended both occupational and physical therapy. David also attended both occupational and physical therapy,
held his hands over his ears, and set objects in line. Catherine, David’s sister, is depicted as frustrated, and embarrassed, but at the same time, caring. She dreamed of having a “normal” life and wondered how her brother looked so normal, but Catherine’s wish for her brother was to “reach her fingers through the perfect top of his head and find the broken places, turn the knobs, and flip switches, where all the autism is wiped out” (p. 140). When Catherine noticed people staring at her brother, calling him stupid, and making him feel invisible, it hurt her feelings.

In *Joey Pigza Loses Control*, Joey mentioned how he felt sad, how he did not like playing with other kids because they teased him, chased him, threw rocks at him, and called him “retard.” Joey recognized that he was different from other kids. Joey’s mom always told him, “It is my mistake that made you interesting” (p. 109). Joey’s grandma told him, “You can not be fixed, you have something that is broken and will stay broken forever” (p. 160). The author talked about how both Joey and his dad were “wired” and how Joey took medication (patches). Joey’s dad wanted to show him that he was a “normal” kid and could take control of his own life, so, he took his medication away. Readers soon realize Joey cannot handle his disability, without proper medication.

In the *Blue Bottle Mystery* Ben, who had Asperger Syndrome, did not like change because he instantly became confused and frighten. At school, Ben was teased, bullied, and pushed around, which left him frustrated, angry, and sad. Ben had one best friend, named Andy, where he often asked, “Why do kids always pick on me?” Before Ben realized he had Asperger Syndrome, he did not understand what was wrong with him. Not only was Ben confused, but also his father and grandmother did not understand why he was different or what was wrong, until they took him to the doctor. After Ben understood what was wrong with him, he responded, “I am happier knowing that my problem has a name and I wasn’t different for no
reason” (p. 89). The author discussed Asperger Syndrome, the causes of Asperger Syndrome and how it affected Ben. The author explained that Asperger Syndrome is caused by a problem in the brain that makes people act differently. The author explained that those with Asperger Syndrome have difficulty understanding others, as well as portraying feelings and thinking. According to Hoopman, those with Asperger Syndrome can become geniuses in certain areas (Ben is obsessed with computers), and hate large crowds (Ben hates sports). In addition, Ben flapped his arms, loved being distant and alone, and hated being touched.

The book *Strong Deaf* had one character with a disability. The author developed the character of Jade (hearing) with perfect English, so the reader knew when Jade was talking. The author developed the character of Marla (deaf) through American Sign Language, so it was evident when Marla was talking. When Marla spoke, the author finger spelled words, descriptions were written out for particular signs (I love you), and the family was involved with Gallaudet College. Exploring these two different perspectives, the author helped readers differentiate between the communication styles and techniques used by the way a person who can hear and by a person who is deaf. Marla (deaf) loved the Deaf world. She believed the Deaf world was her family, not the hearing world. Often times, when hearing people communicated, Marla felt left out. Jade (hearing) was on Marla’s softball team because Marla needed an interpreter, however, Marla did not like the idea and said she was independent. When Marla went to Deaf school she felt independent, responsible, and a leader.

The author of *Clay* showed Tommy as being an outcast when he was around other kids. For example, he sat with his back away from people. In addition, his physical actions included the way he rocked back and fourth, flapped his hands, lined up objects, and never looked anyone in the eye. The way he communicated with others was relevant. When he did talk, he sounded
like a robot or moaned. On the other hand, Elsie, Tommy’s sister, portrayed her feelings toward her brother Tommy who was autistic. She never knew how much he really understood when she communicated with him and when he was going to care about things. She called him conversationally challenged (p. 27). Their mother was in denial and believed that nothing was wrong with Tommy. However, their dad believed there was something wrong with Tommy and suggested that he needed to see a special doctor. Dad noticed that Tommy acted different than others because he did not look at anyone when they talked to him, he rocked back and fourth, and his body became stiff and folded over when someone picked him up. Similar to Rules, Tommy did not seem to notice or recognize that he had a disability.

In, Anything but Typical, the author used terms such as non-verbal learning disorder (NLD), Pervasive Developmental Disorder Non-Specific (PDD-NOS) to describe Jason. Jason’s physical appearance included flapping his arms, pulling his hair, and blinking his eyes; however, mentally, he was unable to recognize people and was silent. Occupational therapy and physical therapy were discussed as well. Jason’s occupational and physical therapist taught him to look people in the eye when he was talking and how to control noise levels. In addition, the author talked about Jason’s Individualized Educational Plan (IEP). For example, his written IEP stated that he did not need a one-on-one aide, could go home whenever he thought he could not handle school, and could stay inclusionary. In addition, Jason Blake described his disability and how others portrayed his disability. For example, at the beginning of the story he portrayed how people looked at him, “Kid is weird. He blinks his eyes, sometimes one at a time, sometimes both together” (p. 2). However, what most people see with his disability is silence (p. 3). Kids at school have called him a “retard,” “retardo,” and made fun of his appearance (blinking traffic signal). However, Jason Blake accepts his disability. He loves to write and meets a girl who is
blind on a website called “storyboard.” He mentioned that he had never had a “real” friend before. In regards to Jason’s education, he does not like physical education because there is too much noise (p. 94), however, he does like Language Arts because there are no right answers and people ask him for help (p. 107). Jason dreams of becoming a famous writer and write a book about his life (p. 113). Jason’s mother always wanted to help him, make him happy, but understood that she could not fix him (p. 17). Jason’s grandmother always shouted at him as if he was deaf, which was not the case (p. 17).

In, *Deaf Child Crossing*, often times, when Megan talked with others, it sounded as if she were yelling at them and her speech took a lot of getting use to, but eventually people understood her. Megan wore hearing aids, used a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD), and communicated with others using sign language. Megan understands that her voice sounds different, but she gets upset and frustrated. When Megan gets upset or frustrated, she closes her eyes, that way she can not see anyone signing to her. She always dreams of doing things that “hearing” people can do (talking on the phone). Megan likes being independent and does not like when people try to help her, but her mother warns her that “some things you need a little help with” (p. 44) and her father has warned her that, “it is ok to ask for a little help” (p. 195). When Cindy (hearing) first met Megan, she asked, “What’s the matter? Are you deaf or something?” (p. 10) After that, they soon became best friends and Cindy learned American Sign Language.

*Disability Generic.*

Only one book was identified as Disability Generic: *How Many Days Until Tomorrow?* Throughout this story, bits and pieces about Josh’s disability were portrayed. Readers knew he was dyslexic because he hated to read, took Orton Gillingham’s tutoring program, his spelling
was based on how he heard the sounds, and his brother and grandfather always corrected his grammar. Often times, his brother, Simon (gifted), would correct Josh by saying, “can’t you say anything right” (p. 49)? In addition, when his brother called him stupid, stupid idiot, or moron, it made his blood boil. At times, Josh felt lonely and wanted to escape, therefore, his tutor told him to breathe deeply when he felt like swearing, crying, or punching. Josh hated reading, writing, and directions, but he loved listening to his grandmother read to him. At the end of the story, Josh mentioned when he goes back to school, he will get books on tape because he remembered more things when someone read aloud to him. However, the author did not provide specific details regarding dyslexia, beyond informing readers of the basic signs. There was no discussion of the Orton Gillingham program. At the beginning of the story, readers were told that Simon was gifted; however, there were no additional details. This book was not based on the portrayal of disabilities, but rather two brothers who visited their grandparents in Maine for the summer.

Disability Neutral.

The final book was identified as Disability Neutral: The London Eye Mystery. In this book, readers understand that Ted has a disability, because he mentioned in the beginning, “It’s this thing in my brain, it’s not that I’m sick, stupid, but I am not normal either” (p. 36). Ted is the main character, however, the plot of the story is not based around his disability. The book focuses on how he became a hero when he helped solve the mystery of his missing cousin. Ted the main character who is autistic, understood that he had a “funny brain.” He understands that his brain runs on different operating systems and wiring systems from other people. He calls himself a “weirdo,” but he does not like being different, being in his brain is like a big empty space (p. 39). Ted believes he is good at counting, time, remembering things, recognizing
people, which in the end, helped him solve the mystery. Ted’s sister, Kat believes one day he will be normal.

Diversity of Characters

Gender.

There were a total of 16 characters with a disability portrayed in the 10 books read for this study. Ten characters with disabilities were boys and six characters with disabilities were girls. Of the boys, five were autistic; two were ADHD; one was dyslexic; one was gifted, and one had physical disabilities (wheelchair). Of the girls, three were deaf; one was dyslexic; one was blind, and one had cerebral palsy.

Race.

There were a total of 16 characters with a disability portrayed throughout the 10 books read for this study. Based on the study, 16 characters were white and zero characters were non-white. Analyzing characters was not a simple task. Evidence used to identify race (white verse non-white) included: clues and references in the text, along with pictures, if present.

Disability.

Of the 16 characters with a disability portrayed throughout the 10 books read for this study, five books portrayed autism; two books portrayed deaf; one book portrayed cerebral palsy; one book portrayed Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and one book portrayed dyslexia.

Discussion of Results

This study was based on three specific questions, which were analyzed before, during, and after reading each book. (1) Are the characters with disabilities main, minor, or mentioned
characters in the books? (2) What is the relationship between the characters with disabilities and the plot of each story? (3) How diverse are the characters with disabilities in each book?

Character Role in the Story

To answer the first question, “Are the characters with disabilities main, minor, or mentioned characters in the books?” In the 10 fictional books for intermediate grades that portrayed characters with disabilities, a total of 16 characters had a disability. The results indicate 12 characters with disabilities were portrayed in the books as main characters; three characters with disabilities were portrayed in the books as minor characters and one character was portrayed in the books as a mentioned character. The majority of the characters, as identified in the books for this investigation, were major or minor characters.

Relationship Between Character and Plot

To answer the second question, “What is the relationship between the characters with disabilities and the plot of each story?” To answer this question, data were used from the relationship between character and plot (disability specific, generic, and/or neutral) and the portrayal section of the data chart. In the 10 fictional books for intermediate grades that portrayed characters with disabilities, a total of 16 characters had a disability. The results indicate eight books were disability specific; one book was disability generic, and one book was disability neutral. Therefore, 80% of the books used in this investigation were disability specific.

Looking at the portrayal of how characters with disability portrayed themselves and how others portrayed characters with disabilities were both accurate. Characters with disabilities throughout the entire books read, were teased, bullied, called “retard,” “stupid,” “moron,” “idiot,” “weird,” or “special.” They were considered “outsiders.” Most to all of the characters
with disabilities did not like being around other kids, felt sad, lonely, frustrated, invisible, and embarrassed.

_Diversity of Characters_

To answer the third question, “How diverse are the characters with disabilities in each book?” Data were collected from several categories: gender, race (white verse non-white), and disability. Ten fictional books for intermediate grades that portrayed characters with disabilities were selected. Ten characters with disabilities were males and six characters with disabilities were females. All 16 characters with disabilities in all 10 books were white. Looking at diversity as a whole, there appeared to be some gender equity, but there was no racial diversity amongst the books for intermediate grades read for this study. Regarding the disabilities themselves, 50% involved autism; 20% involved deafness; 10% involved dyslexia; 10% involved cerebral palsy, and 10% involved ADHD. In conclusion, autism is portrayed more in fictional children’s books for intermediate grades, than any other disability.

_Summary_

In the 10 fictional books for intermediate grades that were read for this study, a total of 16 characters had a disability. There were 12 characters who were considered main; three characters who were considered minor, and one character who was mentioned. Looking back at the 10 books randomly chosen for this study, the author’s portrayed majority of the characters with disabilities as either main or minor. Most of the characters with disabilities played a major role in the story, were crucial to the storyline, and contributed some way. A few characters appeared in the story and contributed some way. However, one character throughout this study was considered mentioned. This specific character was briefly mentioned in the story and did not play a major role or contribute to the plot of the story.
Not only were most of the characters with disabilities portrayed as main or minor, but how the author portrayed their disability was a crucial part of this study. Based on this study, eight books were disability specific; one book was disability generic, and one book was disability neutral. Based on this study, 80% of the books focused on the experiences of disabilities and those affected by the disability. In addition, this study also looked at the portrayal of disabilities, based on characters with disabilities and others around that person with a disability. Across the books, characters with disabilities were teased, bullied, called names such as “retard,” “stupid,” “moron,” “idiot,” “weird,” or “special.” They were considered “outsiders.” Most to all of the characters with disabilities did not like being around other kids, felt sad, lonely, frustrated, invisible, and embarrassed.

Lastly, this study also focused on gender, race (white verse non-white), and diversity amongst disabilities. Based on the findings from this study, 10 characters with disabilities were males and six characters with disabilities were females. However, all 16 characters were white; there was no diversity represented. Of the ten books read, 50% involved autism; 20% involved deafness; 10% involved dyslexia; 10% involved cerebral palsy, and 10% involved ADHD. Autism was portrayed more in fictional children’s books for intermediate grades than any other disability. Based on the results, there were more cognitive disabilities than physical disabilities.
CHAPTER V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

Students with disabilities are now being integrated in inclusion classrooms, rather than self-contained special education classrooms. This has caused both classroom teachers and students to learn more about those with a disability. One way that teachers and students can easily learn more about those with disabilities are to read fictional children’s books that focus on disabilities.

The question of whether or not fictional children’s books for intermediate grades portrayed disabilities in an appropriate manner is not a new research question. Smith-D’Arezzo and Moore-Thomas (2010) found that children’s literature from the past did not portray their characters with disabilities in a positive manner. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine 10 fictional children’s books for intermediate grades that portrayed characters with disabilities. The three questions addressed in this study were: (1) Are the characters with disabilities main, minor, or mentioned characters in the books? (2) What is the relationship between the characters with disabilities and the plot of each story? (3) How diverse are the characters with disabilities in each book?

Summary

Ten fictional children’s books related to disabilities and published between 2000-2013 were identified. Qualitative analysis research was completed to successfully determine the specific children’s books for intermediate grades that portrayed characters with disabilities, while focusing on certain criteria and collecting data. Quantitative data were used for frequency counts describing the nature of the relationship of disabilities as represented in the books. Data were analyzed by the characters’ roles in the stories (main, minor or mentioned characters), the relationship between the characters and the plot (disability specific, disability generic, disability
neutral), including the portrayal section and diversity (gender, race, disability). Once criteria were set and books were examined, data were collected. Data were collected and analyzed around how characters with disabilities were portrayed.

Of the 16 characters with disabilities, there were 12 characters who were considered main; three characters who were considered minor and one character who was mentioned. Based on this study, eight books were disability specific; one book was disability generic, and one book was disability neutral. Lastly, this study focused on gender, race (white verse non-white), and diversity amongst disabilities. Based on the findings from this study, 10 characters with disabilities were males and six characters with disabilities were females. However, all 16 characters were white; there was no ethnical diversity represented. Of the ten books read, 50% involved autism; 20% involved deafness; 10% involved dyslexia; 10% involved cerebral palsy, and 10% involved ADHD.

Conclusions

One conclusion that can be drawn from the study is that characters with disabilities are appearing frequently as main and minor characters in today’s children’s literature. In this investigation, 60% of the books were told from the character with a disabilities point of view, while 40% of the books were told from either a family members point of view or the author’s point of view. This investigation, along with previous research, demonstrates that in books that portray characters with disabilities, the characters are either considered main or minor. Prater’s (2003) study also showed that the majority of the books investigated were told from either main characters or dynamic characters point of view. The importance of this finding can be expressed by Stelle (1999), “Children’s literature can be used to develop positive attitudes and to encourage positive peer relationships among children of differing abilities” (p. 123).
Second conclusion that may be drawn from this study is that books today are more likely to be disability specific, with the books being about characters with disabilities as opposed to books about another topic containing characters with disabilities. The results of this investigation (80% of the books being disability specific) are in line with previous research. Dyches, Prater, and Cramer (2001) examined books that included characters with disabilities. Their study concluded that majority of the characters in their books were portrayed in a positive light. Similarly, Prater (2003) stated, “Today, authors include characters with disabilities to focus on the life of an individual with a disability, tell a story that happens to include an individual with a disability, or teach about a disability” (p. 47). Gervay (2004) helps us understand the importance of disability specific books that portray characters with disabilities as human beings rather than as stereotypes.

Books in the past that portrayed characters with disabilities were very different than how they are portrayed today. Authors have come a long way in representing characters with disabilities as a positive portrayal, rather than a negative portrayal. With respect to diversity, it can be concluded that children’s books about children with disabilities lacks diversity. While this investigation found gender diversity, there did not appear to be diversity represented by race or by disability. These findings are similar to those of Dyches, Prater, and Cramer (2001), except for gender. They found that nearly all the characters with disabilities were boys. This study found the distribution to be more equitable. However, similar to this investigation, all characters were Caucasian in Dyches, et al.’s investigation. This investigation also suggests cognitive disabilities (70%) appear to be favored over physical disabilities (30%). While there were some differences in the specific disabilities portrayed, the most popular of the disabilities (50%) was autism, which is trending now, across the country. Prater, Dyches, and Johnstun
(2006), argue, in most books, it is common to see physical, sensory, and cognitive disabilities the characters portray.

Lastly, from the study, today’s children’s books about children with disabilities are superior to those in the past that portrayed children with disabilities in a negative light. Today’s books, according to this investigation, do include children with disabilities as main characters. More importantly, however, is that the books are disability specific in that they teach the reader about the disability in a way that is informative and engaging. Prater (2003) supports this idea, “Today, authors include characters with disabilities to focus on the life of an individual with a disability, tell a story that happens to include an individual with a disability, or teach about a disability” (p. 47).

Recommendations

Recommendations for Classroom Educators

Students with disabilities are now being integrated within inclusion classrooms, requiring classroom teachers and students to learn more about students with disabilities. One way that classroom teachers can learn more about disabilities is to read children’s books (picture books or chapter books), which focus on the life of characters with disabilities. This process will ensure that the portrayal of children with disabilities includes discussion of students with disabilities. Reading these types of books will not only familiarize the classroom teacher, but also their students by understanding the differences represented in their classroom. This is one of the simplest and easiest ways to learn about disabilities.

Classroom teachers must not focus merely on the summary of books, but read the books before they decide to recommend them to their students. When searching for specific books that portray characters with disabilities on the internet, classroom teachers should type into the search
engines, these specific words and phrases: “fictional children’s books that portray characters with disabilities, fictional books for intermediate grades about disabilities, fiction books on disabilities, and books about disabilities.” Classroom teachers should not assume that all books found on booklists on the Internet are appropriate to use with students; however, based on this study, 10 books were randomly chosen and 80% of the books read and analyzed were books that could be read, discussed, and recommended for students.

Classroom teachers should also visit their local librarians for specific recommendations on books that accurately portray characters with disabilities. Using books that appropriately portray individuals with disabilities can be an effective teaching method and be utilized throughout the school year. When discussing particular books, teachers should ask librarians about the language represented in the books. For example, some of the books that portray characters with disabilities, certain words such as “retard,” and “special” will show up often throughout the reading. It is recommended that these words be included during the reading, making teachable moments and talking about the words in context.

Recommendations for Parents

Parents have a huge impact in the types of books their children read. When parents choose books that portray characters with disabilities, they must have a purpose for choosing such books to present to their children. It is important to learn about individuals with disabilities by providing children with books that accurately and favorably portray characters with disabilities. Parents providing exposure to such books will help their children understand the differences of their peers. If parents are unable to provide books based on disabilities that accurately portray characters and disabilities, then their children will react differently, approach those with disabilities inappropriately, and disrespect them. Parents should not assume that
booklists found on the Internet are accurate to use with their children. Using the same process as recommended for teachers, parents should be able to find high quality literature for their students. Parents are recommended and encouraged to discuss specific books based on disabilities with local librarians and classroom teachers.

Recommendations for Librarians

Based on the information provided in this study, librarians should encourage classroom teachers and parents to particular children’s books (picture books or chapter books) that accurately portray individuals with disabilities. Prater, Dyches, and Johnstun (2006) argue that children books portraying characters and/or individuals with disabilities are used to promote awareness, understanding, and acceptance of those individuals with disabilities. Therefore, librarians must be able to locate and suggest particular books based on disabilities, to choose books and provide a purpose for choosing such books to students, parents, and educators.

In addition, librarians must communicate and alert parents and classroom teachers about the language represented in the books. Some of the books that portray characters with disabilities, certain words such as “retard,” and “special” will show up often throughout the reading. Librarians should encourage parents and classroom teachers to not omit words such as “retard” or “special” while they are reading, but rather, make teachable moments and talk about the word itself and in contexts.

Recommendations for Teacher Educators

Students with disabilities are now being integrated within inclusion classrooms, causing special education teachers and general education teachers to collaborate and communicate with each other. Therefore, professors of higher education are encouraged to give proper instruction, accurate curriculum, and provide appropriate literature for future classroom teachers. Teacher
educators must be aware of the differences between books that accurately portray characters with disabilities verse books that inaccurately portray characters with disabilities. Teacher educators are encouraged to introduce future classroom teachers with a wide range of books for their future students to read that accurately portray disabilities. Providing appropriate books for classroom teachers, allows them to understand disabilities and influence their future students to understand and accept those with disabilities. Lastly, teacher educators must teach the importance of reading books based on disabilities and focus on the impact these books may have on students with and without disabilities. Teach future educators the importance of social skills, listening skills, read alouds, think alouds, and integrating these particular books within content area’s and common core standards.

Recommendation for Publishers

Publishers must understand the importance of accurately portraying books based on disabilities for readers to accept, understand, and become aware of disabilities. With stories that are realistic and meaningful, readers will be able to relate with the characters in the stories with their own lives. We want readers to explore those with disabilities in a positive portrayal. In addition, Prater, Dyches and Johnstun (2006), recommend that characters with disabilities do not look any different from other characters in the book. These books should be positive experiences for authors and readers. However, publishers have come a long way and has portrayed characters with disabilities in a more positive and accurate light. Characters with disabilities are now considered either main or minor characters, their stories are becoming more disability specific; where their disability is realistically portrayed and readers are able to understand their disability and how it can affect their lives. In this study, 100% of the books portrayed characters who were Caucasian. Publishers must keep in mind to provide more ethnical diversity within
their books, otherwise, those without disabilities and with disabilities may believe that there is only one ethnic group (Caucasian) who are diagnosed with disabilities.

Summary

This chapter is a summary of the study designed to purposefully select 30 fictional children’s books for intermediate grades that portrayed characters with disabilities. Using the selected list of 30 fictional children’s books for intermediate grades, 10 books were identified by randomly selecting every other book in no particular order. The three questions addressed in this study were: (1) Are the characters with disabilities main, minor, or mentioned characters in the books? (2) What is the relationship between the characters with disabilities and the plot of each story? (3) How diverse are the characters with disabilities in each book? According to this study, of the 16 characters with disabilities, there were 12 characters who were considered main; three characters who were considered minor and one character who was mentioned. Based on this study, eight books were disability specific; one book was disability generic, and one book was disability neutral. Lastly, this study focused on gender, race (white verse non-white), and diversity amongst disabilities. Based on the findings from this study, 10 characters with disabilities were males and six characters with disabilities were females. However, all 16 characters were white; there was no ethnical diversity represented.

Recommendations for classroom educators, parents, librarians, teacher educators, and publishers were also included in this chapter. Teacher educators must teach the importance of reading books based on disabilities with classroom educators and parents. While, librarians locate and suggest particular books based on disabilities, to choose books and provide a purpose for choosing such books to students, parents, and educators. Additionally, publishers must keep in mind to provide more ethnical diversity within their books; otherwise readers will believe
there is only one ethnic group (Caucasian) who are diagnosed with disabilities. Further studies could examine specific authors represented in the books portrayed in this study and determine why majority of disabilities portrayed in fictional children’s books for intermediate grades are Caucasian? This study is one contribution towards the presentation and representation of characters with disabilities in fictional children’s books for intermediate grades.
REFERENCES


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title, Author, Year</th>
<th>Disability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Boy Who Ate Stars; Kochka; 2006</td>
<td>Autism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anything but Typical; Nora Raleigh Baskin; 2009</td>
<td>Autism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deaf Child Crossing; Marlee Martlin; 2002</td>
<td>Deaf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What Would Joey Do; Jack Gantos; 2002</td>
<td>ADHD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joey Pigza Loses Control; Jack Gantos; 2000</td>
<td>ADHD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al Capone Does my Shirt; Gennifer Choldenko; 2005</td>
<td>Autism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue Bottle Mystery; Kathy Hoopman; 2001</td>
<td>Autism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pinned; Sharon G. Flake; 2012</td>
<td>Learning Disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rules; Cynthia Lord; 2006</td>
<td>Autism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretty Like Us; Carol Lynch Williams; 2008</td>
<td>Progeria (Physical Disabilities)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reaching for Sun; Tracie Vaugn Zimmer; 2007</td>
<td>Cerebral Palsy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al Capone Shines My Shoes; Gennifer Choldenko; 2009</td>
<td>Autism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The London Eye Mystery; Siobhna Dowd; 2008</td>
<td>Autism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Silent Boy; Lois Lowry; 2005</td>
<td>Mental Disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong Deaf; Lynn McElfresh; 2012</td>
<td>Deaf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wonders; R.J. Palacio; 2012</td>
<td>Abnormalities (physical disabilities)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How Many Days Until Tomorrow; Caroline Janover; 2000</td>
<td>Dyslexia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madame Squidley and Beanie; Alice Mead; 2004</td>
<td>Chronic Fatigue Syndrome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clay; Colby Rodowsky; 2001</td>
<td>Autism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tangerine; Edward Boor; 2006</td>
<td>Blind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gentle Holler; Kerry Madden; 2005</td>
<td>Blind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Small White Scar; K.A. Nuzum; 2006</td>
<td>Mental Disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leading Ladies; Marlee Matlin &amp; Doug Coonet; 2007</td>
<td>Deaf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Falconmaster; R.L. LaFever; 2003</td>
<td>Physical Disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Mango-Shaped Space; Wendy Maas; 2003</td>
<td>Synesthesia (Physical disability)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Unforgettable Summer; Joni Eareckson Tada; 2000</td>
<td>Physical Disability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A corner of the Universe; Ann Martin; 2002</td>
<td>Mental Disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eleven; Patricia Reilly Giff; 2008</td>
<td>Learning Disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Struck in Neutral; Terry Trueman; 2000</td>
<td>Cerebral Palsy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mockingbird; Kathryn Erskine; 2010</td>
<td>Autism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# APPENDIX B.
## FICTIONAL CHILDREN’S BOOKS FOR INTERMEDIATE GRADES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title, Author, Year</th>
<th>Disability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Anything but Typical</em>; Nora Raleigh Baskin; 2009</td>
<td>Autism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Deaf Child Crossing</em>; Marlee Martlin; 2002</td>
<td>Deaf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Joey Pigza Loses Control</em>; Jack Gantos; 2000</td>
<td>ADHD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Blue Bottle Mystery</em>; Kathy Hoopman; 2001</td>
<td>Autism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Rules</em>; Cynthia Lord; 2006</td>
<td>Autism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Reaching for Sun</em>; Tracie Vaugnh Zimmer; 2007</td>
<td>Cerebral Palsy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The London Eye Mystery</em>; Siobhna Dowd; 2008</td>
<td>Autism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Strong Deaf</em>; Lynn McElfresh; 2012</td>
<td>Deaf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>How Many Days Until Tomorrow</em>; Caroline Janover; 2000</td>
<td>Dyslexia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Clay</em>; Colby Rodowsky; 2001</td>
<td>Autism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# APPENDIX C
## DATA CHART

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title, Author, Year</th>
<th>Main, Minor, Mentioned Characters</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>White or Non-white</th>
<th>Disability</th>
<th>Disability Specific, Generic, Neutral</th>
<th>How character with disability portrayed?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### APPENDIX D.
SAMPLE COMPLETED DATA CHART

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title, Author Year</th>
<th>Main, Minor, Mentioned Characters</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>White or Non-White</th>
<th>Disability</th>
<th>Disability Specific, Disability Generic, Disability Neutral</th>
<th>How was the character with a disability portrayed?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Reaching for Sun,</em></td>
<td>Josie: Cerebral Palsy (Main)</td>
<td>Girl:</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Cerebral Palsy</td>
<td><em>Disability Specific:</em></td>
<td>Point of View: Josie’s story!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracie Vaughn Zimmer; 2007</td>
<td>(straight blond hair, blue eyes) p. 15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>*Odd walk and slow speech. P. 4</td>
<td>Right at the beginning of the book, the author portrays Josie’s disability, by talking about what disability she had and how it affects her physically and emotionally.</td>
<td>*Josie feels embarrassed: “She hides in the bathroom stall until she hears voices disappear before she rushes back to her special ed. Classroom (204).” P. 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>*“My thumb will always be pasted to my palm, and my left wrist and shoulder connected by an invisible rubber band.” P. 6</td>
<td>Physically, Josie’s has an odd walk, slow speech, her thumb is pasted to her palm, fingers are frozen on the left hand, and she goes to therapy. However, emotionially, Josie feels embarrassed, lonely, invisible, disappointed, and sad.</td>
<td>*Josie feels lonely: “Lonely taste of seventh grade.” P. 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>*Good hand, but frozen fingers on the left. P. 22</td>
<td></td>
<td>*Josie feels invisible: “Kids from school who usually pretend I’m invisible wish me Merry Christmas and say hello in front of their parents.” P. 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>*Josie goes to a speech therapist, occupational therapist, and physical therapist. “When I push sounds from my mouth it’s not elegant. I wrestle to wrap my lips around syllables, struggle with my tongue to press the right points.” P. 43</td>
<td></td>
<td>*“I must be a real disappointment.” P. 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>*Josie feels sad: “Lazy Acres the nursing home, only place that smiles and greets her, other than her farmhouse.” P. 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“They start teasing us about being in love the genius and the ‘tard.” P. 70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# APPENDIX E
## BOOK SUMMARIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>AUTHOR</th>
<th>SUMMARY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anything but Typical</td>
<td>Nora Raleigh</td>
<td>A twelve-year-old boy named Jason Blake was diagnosed with autism at the age of eight. He loved routines, hated noise, overcrowded places, did not look at anyone, tended to flap his arms, blinked his eyes, and constantly reminded himself to breath. Jason had very few friends, but through an online writing website called “Storyboard” he connected with another twelve year old girl, who he soon realized was blind. Jason loves writing his own stories and locates his way in the world of “neurotypicals.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deaf Child Crossing</td>
<td>Marlee Martin</td>
<td>This story is based around two girls, who came from two different backgrounds. Megan is deaf and Cindy is hearing. However, they overcome these obstacles and challenges of communication when Cindy decides to learn American Sign Language. They soon spend hours together, everyday, signing. Cindy and Megan decide to go to summer camp, where Megan meets a girl, named Lizzie who is also deaf. However, Cindy is soon forgotten. Toward the end of the story, Cindy and Megan are quickly reminded of the friendship they shared before summer camp and become friends again.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joey Pigza Loses Control</td>
<td>Jack Gantos</td>
<td>Joey Pigza, a young boy who is diagnosed with ADHD, tells his story. He lives with his dad for the summer who is also “wired.” Joey does not want to leave his mom, however, he has never truly gotten to know his dad; his dad ran off when Joey was five years old. What Joey didn’t know is that his father and him were going on many adventures together, such as sneaking into the storyland museum at night, playing baseball, skydiving, and getting to know each other. However, Joey’s dad is an irresponsible parent who decided that Joey did not need his medication anymore and tells him to step up and be a man. Joey tried to learn how to tame his ADHD, use his ADHD positively, and get his family back together, but soon loses control and realizes that he will never get his family back together and would rather live with his mom and their dog Pablo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue Bottle Mystery</td>
<td>Kathy Hoopman</td>
<td>This story followed a young boy named Ben who was diagnosed with Asperger Syndrome. Throughout the story, Ben always felt he was very different from other children; however, he had one best friend, Andy. During the story, Ben and Andy find a blue bottle that</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
released a wisp of smoke and followed them around. Throughout the book, things started to happen that the two boys wished for, however, Ben still dealt with his everyday life, being told off at school by his teacher and classmates, not being understood by his father, nor understood people and the world. At the end of the book, Ben’s father and grandma told him he had Asperger Syndrome and he was much happier now that he knew what was wrong and accepted his disability.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rules</th>
<th>Cynthia Lord</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Catherine, a twelve year old girl, who just wanted a normal life, however, she has a younger brother who is autistic and a family that revolves around his disability. She is constantly babysitting David, her father rarely spends time with her alone, and David constantly embarrasses her in front of her friends and neighbors. However, Catherine loves her brother, so much that she always adds to a list of “rules” for him (rules that average people know and learn along the way, but David needs to be taught). David must follow these rules in order to keep his anxiety under control and keep him in check in social situations. Along the way, Catherine meets a boy named Jason at her brother’s therapy clinic, who only communicates by pointing to pictures in his communication book and is wheelchair bound. When Jason asked Catherine to a summer dance, she is torn between their friendship and embarrassing herself in front of her new neighbor and friend Kristi, however, she is faced with a moral decision between what type of person she wanted to be.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reaching for Sun</th>
<th>Tracie Vaughn Zimmer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This is an interlinked set of free verse poems that are separated into four seasons, and tells the story of one full year of Josie’s life. She was born with cerebral palsy. Josie always knew she was different and felt like an outcast, but she lives with her mother and grandmother in an old farmhouse, while the popular kids at school live in the rich neighborhood behind her house. Josie does not have any friends; she is invisible around her peers. However, she has her grandmother and the people at the nursing home, but her mother is not around nearly as much due to working long hours and going to school. One day a new kid named Jordan comes to town. Unlike the other kids, he does not seem to notice or care that Josie is different, but rather spends a lot of time at her house and becomes a friend, Josie never had.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The London</th>
<th>Siobhna Ted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ted, a boy who is autistic, tells readers how he has a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Author</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eye Mystery</td>
<td>Dowd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong Deaf</td>
<td>Lynn McElfresh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How Many Days Until Tomorrow</td>
<td>Caroline Janover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clay</td>
<td>Colby Rodowsky</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>