EXPLORING ENACTMENTS OF AGENCY IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

FROM SCHOOL LIBRARIES

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The purpose of this study was to analyze student-selected library books for how, if at all, agency is enacted by the characters. This study uses tenets from critical multicultural analysis (CMA) and elements of visual analysis (VA) to guide a critical content analysis of enactments of agency in the most circulated books from three school libraries during the 2019-2020 school year. This study builds on and extends the existing research on agency development in children and demonstrations of agency in children's literature. Data revealed a variety of characters, genre, and contexts within the identified books. Analysis provided evidence that characters in these child-selected books demonstrated enactments of agency in varying ways and degrees across all titles. Following a discussion that is organized around the themes created from the findings, characters are identified as belonging within one of the following agentic groups: activists, survivors, problem solvers, and friends. Implications for practice and research include further study of agency in characters of popular books, how children perceive enactments of agency of the characters, and the need for school librarians and other educators to understand agency development and acknowledging the agency of children as they make choices in the literature they read.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Activists, problem solvers, and friends—those are just the characters in the books!

Imagine reading a book. You get so engrossed that you do not realize you have been

reading for several hours. You love the way the characters handle themselves, how they respond

to an issue, and that they are not afraid to jump into the fray. You begin to believe that you have

what it takes to do those same things and make a difference. That is what agency can look like in

a book and in real life.

Agency addresses autonomy, interdependence, confidence, and the ability to make

choices, similarly to the ones made by characters in books. It allows people to take responsibility

for their wellbeing by acting upon and modifying their actions in a more broad-minded way,

especially in matters of social justice. As both a school librarian and a classroom teacher, I

understand the importance of giving children access to high-quality literature, which aids in

creating a deeper and broader understanding of the world in which they live. Children's literature

provides opportunities for young people to learn about diversity in our pluralistic society,

including the intersections of ethnicity, family structure, sexual identity, disabilities, language,

socioeconomic status, cultural identity, gender, and religion. As noted by many, experiencing

literature that is reflective of the world is critical to educating children to be positive members of

our global society (Durden, Escalante, & Blitch, 2014; Ladson-Billings, 1995).

A school library, which houses collections of high-quality literature, has a unique

opportunity to facilitate and bolster student agency. Nothing energizes and motivates children

more than the opportunity to become active agents in their learning (Williams, 2017). This is not

knowledge imparted by the teacher onto the student, as in the banking model of education

(Freire, 1972), but rather the opportunity for learning based on children's interest and curiosity. As Freire (1970) posits, people live in social contexts that "mark them and which they also mark" (p. 90). This suggests that in any circumstance, our interactions are reciprocal, meaning that we have a positive or negative effect in everything we do. Taking this a step further, "students are prompted to use literacy to address social inequities in children' immediate or local communities" (Hansfield, 2016, p. 83). As children become more adept at examining the world around them using a critical lens, their reactions will allow them to engage in social change, thus developing their own sense of agency. When they have the opportunity to establish their own identity, recognize their personal integrity, and act on their agency, they are able to be independent thinkers (Williams, 2017).

According to Krashen (2011), voluntary reading or reading for enjoyment, children have the opportunity to choose what, when, where, and how they want to read in their native language. This implies that, in this case, the school librarian allows the children to choose the book or other type of reading material, without a grade, test, report, or reading level for their voluntary reading. The benefit of this type of freedom or agency leads to children reading more, reading for longer periods of time, and becoming lifelong readers who learn more. This study focuses on the books chosen by children to be read voluntarily. It explores the intersection of agency, reading, and school libraries and librarians, concentrating on how agency is demonstrated, if at all, in the most frequently circulated books from three school libraries.

Purpose of Study: Research Gap and Problem Statement

For the purposes of this study, I set forth with the following thought: Today's children must develop agency to "think uncongenially, question the herd, imagine new scenarios and produce astonishing work" (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2006, p. 10). Agency guides the

understanding that an individual is able to take a stand and/or execute social action when situations arise (Bandura, 2001, Short, 2012, Mathis, 2015).

The need for this study stems from the idea that for children to develop their agency, they must read about characters who are role models and who are able to demonstrate agency in their own lives. A substantial amount of research exists on agency development in children, and there are demonstrations of agency in children's literature. This study furthers that research by focusing on how characters from children's literature, specifically in books from school libraries, demonstrate agency. The following research question guides the study: How is agency enacted, if at all, by the characters in the most circulated books from three elementary school libraries in a midsized school district in the southwest?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study borrows from Todd and Kuhlthau's Model of the School Library as a Dynamic Agent of Learning (2005), which posits that a school library is an information place and a knowledge space where children and the school community engage in "knowledge creation, knowledge production, knowledge dissemination, and knowledge use, as well as the development of information values" (Todd & Kuhlthau, 2005, p. 4). The essential interconnected components of the model—transformational, informational, and formational attributes—point to school libraries being agents of active learning. Transformational attributes relate to reading engagement, information literacy, and technology literacy; informational attributes concern the use of information resources, technology infrastructure, and reading resources; and formational attributes bring the model together, showing how learning experiences affect student outcomes. The elements of this model are illustrated in Figure 1.1 (Todd & Kuhlthau, 2005), where it is evident that the transformational and informational

components lead to formational (outcomes), indicating that a school library is an agent of active learning.

Figure 1.1

Model of the School Library as a Dynamic Agent of Learning
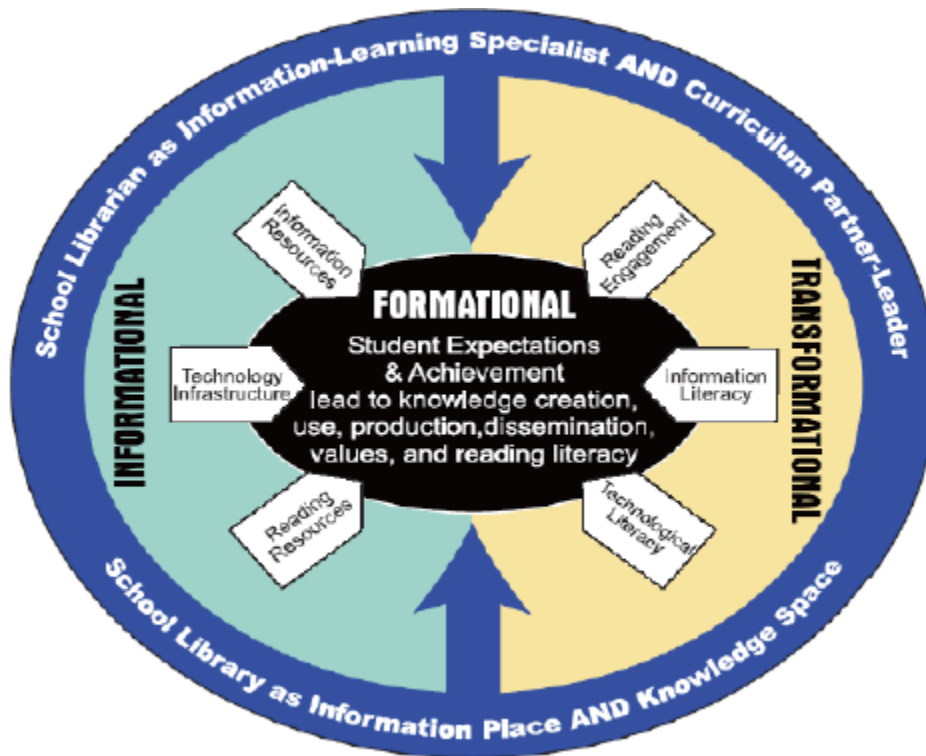
Source: Todd & Kuhlthau, 2005

The interconnected components of the conceptual framework stem from books in a school library (refer to Figure 1.2). The conceptual framework highlights specific areas of the model, namely, the transformational attribute of reading engagement and the informational attribute of reading resources within a school library, which lead to the formational outcome of student self-awareness, identity, and agency. This concept positions the library as an agency-making space, which is the overarching concept of the framework. The research design employs critical content analysis (CCA) and the tenets of critical multicultural analysis (CMA) to interpret the enactment of agency in books from a school library. The analytical framework using

CCA and CMA, described in Chapter 3, is a fundamental piece of the conceptual framework. This framework focuses on the intersection of agency, reading, and school libraries, as well as the critical lenses that guide the analysis.

Figure 1.2

Conceptual Framework
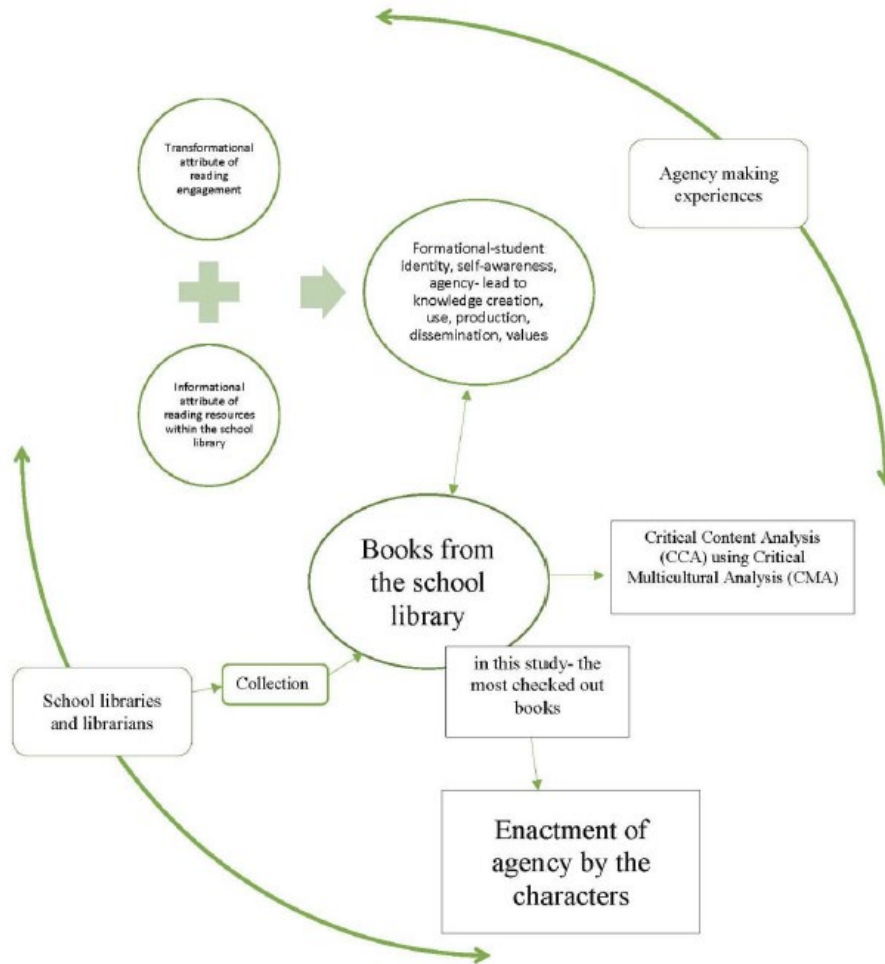
Note. The arrows indicate the interconnectedness of each concept.

Summary

This study employs a CCA of text and images. As revealed by the conceptual framework, the study is located at the intersection of agency, reading, school libraries, and books.

The literature review in Chapter 2 begins with an overview of the history of both libraries and children's literature. This provides a trajectory to begin addressing the research question. The literature review then creates a connection between the modern school library and the librarian, the collection, and the reader. Chapter 2 concludes with an explanation of how agency and the critical lens are at the center of this study.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This literature review is divided into three parts. First, the evolution of libraries, librarians, and children's literature is described. Then, the connections between the role of the school library and librarian, the collection, children's literature, and the reader are explained. Finally, agency, as defined for this study, and the critical lens are discussed as crucial aspects of this study.

History of Libraries and Children's Literature

To appreciate the opportunities to share information and literature in modern school libraries, the humble beginnings of libraries and text must be acknowledged. Furthermore, the history of both libraries and literature shows a continuous need to keep patrons informed and educated, which aids in agency development.

The Library: A History

Ancient Libraries

From prehistory to today, some form of information depository or library has supported the quest for information access. There have been myriad changes over the past 5,000 years, as noted by Krzys (2003):

> If an extraterrestrial spaceship had been stationed high above the region of the Tigris, the Euphrates, and the Nile for the past 5000 years and its sights had been directed toward libraries, the interpreters of the data would have observed remarkable changes. Clay tablets of Mesopotamia and papyrus rolls of Egypt would have given way centuries later to parchment and paper codices and then to microforms and computer tape. The buildings that house these bibliographic records would have changed from monumental archives to modest private collections and functional public, academic, school, and special libraries. Lastly, the users of the collections would have enlarged in scope from a few priests, royalty, and scribes to masses of children, researchers, and ordinary citizens. From this stream of changes, the interpreters of data would have to isolate the main currents of

librarianship, to identify the forces that drew them along, and to formulate a theory explaining all the phenomena observed. (p. 1621)

As we move toward the modern era and school libraries in the United States, it is important to recognize the establishment of school libraries in England in Medieval times. Medieval libraries had information in a central location, which allowed governments and wealthy businesspeople to hoard the information. Additionally, historians suggest that some of these libraries were school libraries, which have existed in England since the eighth century in York, Winchester, and Hexham (Ray, 1972). A scholar, chief scribe, or priest would run these centralized information spaces, which were not open to the average citizen.

In 780 AD, King Charlemagne invited Alcuin to establish a new school. Alcuin had vast experience curating a collection of materials as the head of the episcopal school in Northumbria and was able to send scribes to recreate the books held at the episcopal school (Clyde, 1999). These books focused on Latin, Greek, grammar, writing, logic, and theology (Good, 1963). The establishment of this type of school library is reflected in other libraries of that period, with the goal of such a library being to educate young men for the betterment of society.

In the 14th century, the act of bequeathing books to establish libraries meant for instruction traces back to two men, William de Tolleshunt and William Ravenstone (Clyde, 1999). Ravenstone's gift contained 43 manuscripts, some with more than one copy, on multiple topics (Orme, 1973; Courtenay, 1987); this sizeable gift was unheard of previously. Larger gifts to universities in the 14th and 15th centuries to Eton (James, 1928) and Winchester College (Yeats-Edwards, 1976) are still active collections today. The collection at Eton was written into the school charter as a "common library," which still had the books chained to a cupboard or desk but allowed some of the works to be borrowed by children and scholars alike (Clyde, 1999). This type of lending and communal library system is the precursor to todays' school libraries,

and evidence suggests that English grammar schools for boys have had school libraries since the 1670s (Clyde, 1999).

The reasons for referencing both school libraries in England and the ancient libraries are to recognize the ways in which these libraries aid in agency development of those involved and, most notably, because the past gives context to the present. Whether it was the ancient libraries used by business people to bolster their business undertakings or scholars looking to better themselves with knowledge, both aided in the development of agency among the libraries' patrons. As Strout referenced in 1956, "knowledge of the historical development of an institution or concept helps to clarify it." As for the future, Strout (1956) continues, "a survey of origins and manner of development may make it easier to evaluate present usages; it may, by furnishing a better perspective, help to free us from…the bonds of tradition" (p.254).

Moving Toward the Modern Era

School libraries in the United States derived from humble beginnings. Whether it was a small closet in a classroom, the sharing of a public library, or a dedicated space, the evolution of the school library is intriguing.

A definitive starting date of school libraries in the United States is not known. However, the colonial one-room schoolhouse has been deemed the first school library because the teacher placed "the Bible, a chapbook, and the Bay Psalms Book on the corner of his desk" (Kent, et al., 1968, p. 360). The more likely scenario took place in 1740 when Benjamin Franklin advocated for school libraries as part of the ideal school setting. Per Franklin's suggestion, the Penn Charter School created a designated room for a library in 1744 (Kent, et al., 1968).

Later, in the mid-19th century, states began to allocate funding for school libraries with a special focus on young men who wanted to educate themselves (Clyde, 1999). In 1835, New

York State passed a measure allocating taxation funds to a school library (Sayers, 1963). These funds—20 dollars to begin a library and 10 dollars for the upcoming years—were used to purchase new books. At the peak in 1838, one could find 1.6 million books on the shelves of school libraries in New York. However, as the years progressed, money was no longer allocated, and the collections were no longer updated, and as of 1861, school libraries were no longer the fashion in New York (Warren & Clark, 1876). Other areas of the United States had school libraries with smaller collections, which were well used, and money was still allocated to update the books.

As we reach the 20th century, it is important to acknowledge that school libraries have changed over the past 100 years. At the beginning of that century, school libraries were seen as "a source of enrichment for the curriculum, and a means of developing reading and study habits in the pupils" (Clyde, 1981, p. 263). W.A. King (1929) created a five-stage series of developments to establish school libraries:

1. Small collection of books in classrooms

2. The "storeroom" stage, with books stored centrally (usually in a cupboard) and with a regular teacher in charge

3. A library room without a librarian in charge

4. A library room with a librarian in charge

5. The library "programmed" as part of the teaching and learning process in a school.

The fifth point is the final and desired level of development, and it most closely resembles the libraries of today. As the tastes and needs of the children changed, so did the school library.

The Rise of Children's Literature

The development of children's literature "is linked to social, educational, and above all,

economic factors" (Ray, 2004, p. 850). As the times and priorities changed, so did the reading material. Even with the evolution of children's literature, oral storytelling, which began with the rise of man, was still used to share stories. Each country had its own tales, shared orally, which "reflect such basic truths that the same stories crop up all over the world, the details adapted to local circumstances" (Ray, 2004, p. 850). These stories have been integrated into children's literature. Through my research, in addition to the evolution of the types of children's literature, I noticed an imbalance of power of the adult (teacher) over the student. Moreover, one will notice an evolution of focused attention on what adults want children to be exposed to or learn.

The 15th and 16th Centuries

During the 15th and 16th centuries, children were not treated as they are today. They drank alcoholic beverages, smoked, used profanity, and worked in jobs we would only consider for modern adults. Books were not written specifically for children during this time period, with the exception of books that could be considered educational. For example, in 1476, William Caxton published *A Book of Curtesye*, one of the first known children's books, published on the first printing press in England. It was a quintessential example of children's books used primarily for instruction. The invention of the printing press can be credited with the rise of printed traditional stories as a cost-effective way of putting literature meant for entertainment into the hands of children (Ray, 1972).

The 17th Century

During the Puritan era, there were more books written for children. They were religious in nature and intended to scare or shock children into behaving because they needed to be saved from their "natural" proclivity toward evil (Marcus, 2008). As was the case in literature written by adults for children, these books were crafted to teach children something, an example of

adults having power over children (Hunt, 1994). At the same time in both England and America, hornbooks and chapbooks were the fashion for reading materials. Hornbooks often were used with lesson sheets attached that contained Bible verses as well as the printed alphabet. Chapbooks were published for all ages and contained stories that were fairy tales and stories of adventures (Temple, Martinez, & Yakota, 2019).

The 18th Century

As the Age of Enlightenment began, literature became more "playful and pleasurable," with less doom and gloom. Rousseau and Locke's more romantic view of childhood in society influenced the publication of picture books. Locke had previously written that children enjoy pictures and entertainment in their literature (Wilson, 2009). Books such as *The New England Primer,* which was the most widely read book of the 18th century, gained in popularity and contained lessons on the alphabet and religious teachings. Still, books such as *Gulliver's Travels* by Jonathan Swift and *Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel Defoe were books intended for adult audiences but read by children.

By the time Benjamin Franklin suggested the creation of school libraries, John Newbery, "the father of children's literature," had already begun publishing children's books in England, making him one of the most prolific publishers of the 18th century. *A Little Pretty Pocket-Book* (1744) was released by Newbery and is considered to be one of the first books published specifically for children (British Library, n.d.).

The 19th and Early 20th Centuries

The 19th and early 20th centuries were known as the "Golden Age of Children's Literature." It is worth mentioning that at this time, people started treating children like children, not as small adults. The literature of this period "frequently use[d] children as characters to

signify the loss of innocence, and the possibilities of retrieving a childlike vision" (Thacker & Webb, 2002, p. 41). The Civil War era marked a significant change in children's literature. During this time, adults realized that when children were given more freedom, they were less likely to rebel, and children's books hence became less moralistic. More adventure books were published (Marcus, 2008), and attitudes began to change in terms of what was deemed appropriate content for children.

Temple, Martinez, and Yakota (2019) discussed books written for children during the 19th century, including well-known books that are still read today: *The Night Before Christmas* (Moore, 1823), *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (Carroll, 1865), *Little Women* (Alcott, 1868), *The House That Jack Built* (Caldecott, 1878), and *The Jungle Book* (Kipling, 1894), among others. Continuing into the 20th century, books such as *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (Potter, 1902), *Peter Pan in Kensington Garden* (Barrie, 1906), *The Story of Doctor Dolittle* (Lofting, 1920), and *Winnie the Pooh* (Milne, 1926) remain memorable and have been adapted into movies. Considering the political and social events of the early 20th century, books during the depression were commonly historical fiction (e.g., the *Little House* series, Ingalls-Wilder, 1932) that transported readers to different time periods (Marcus, 2008). Then, WWII caused a paper shortage, which brought about less expensive books that did not require as much paper. The "Baby Boom" following WWII also increased and sustained the demand for children's books.

Modern Children's Literature

Children's literature experienced further evolution in the mid-20th century. For example, young adult literature became much more prevalent, and coming-of-age books such as *Catcher in the Rye* (Salinger, 1951), *M.C. Higgins the Great* (Hamilton, 1974), and *The Yearling* (Rawlings, 1974), as well as Judy Blume's *Are You There God, It's Me Margaret* (1970) paved

the way for more adolescent-centered books. These particular novels contained characters who were driven to make changes in themselves or in the world around them. At the same time, children's chapter books contained mixtures of realism and fantasy, with aspects of hope and unexpected, life-changing epiphanies, for example *Charlotte's Web* (White, 1952) and *James and the Giant Peach* (Dahl, 1961). Authors, including Beverly Cleary, brought characters such as Ramona, Henry Huggins, and Beezus to the mainstream reader, all of whom experienced relatable personal and social issues in their stories. Each of these characters demonstrated agency and was in sync with the mid-century social shift toward realism, which this shift had a clear and lasting effect on children's literature today.

Throughout the last decades of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century, children's literature has seen an extension of the realistic nature of books. Social factors such as family dynamics, divorce, love, hope, loneliness, fear, belonging, issues of social justice, and other previously marginalized topics have been given even more consideration (Short, Lynch-Brown, & Tomlinson, 2017). Contemporary children's literature allows for more variety and has expanded the subject matter that appeals to children. Publishers have targeted tween and middle-grade readers (Short, 2018)—a shift that has increased the publication of book series such as *Ivy and Bean*, Wimpy Kid, *Captain Underpants*, *Harry Potter*, and *Dog Man* (Jarrard, 2016). Book series appeal to children of this age because they are moving from picture books to chapter books, which follow the same plot and characters throughout the series (Sibberson & Szymusiak, 2016). Moreover, the rise and acceptance of graphic novels as literature is a product of interest in visual culture (Short, 2018, Jarred, 2016). Previously published works and classic novels have been modified into graphic novel interpretations (e.g., *A Wrinkle in Time: The Graphic Novel* (Larson, 2015), *Anne of Green Gables: A Graphic Novel* (Marsden, 2017), *The Baby-Sitters*

Club, Kristy's Great Idea: A Graphic Novel (Telgemeier, 2015)). At the same time, original graphic novels—both fiction and nonfiction—have become increasingly popular (Short, 2018). Graphic novels, with their detailed illustrations and varying text difficulty, appeal to readers of all levels. Furthermore, electronic books and digital content have given readers access to a broader variety of topics in addition to print books in the 21st century (Short, 2018). eBooks that incorporate illustrations, text, and interactive features afford children new literacy experiences (Yakota & Teale, 2014).

Access to international literature provides opportunities to read books from across the globe. Nonprofit organizations such as the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) have made it their mission to bring "books and children together" through their international network (IBBY, n.d.), while their United States national section, the United States Board on Books for Young People (USBBY), has undertaken the mission "to promote international understanding and good will through books for children and adolescents" (USBBY, 2018). Through access to international and multicultural children's literature, children can learn more about not only their own cultures but also those of others.

The Quest for Knowledge

The quest for knowledge and understanding has not diminished; however, the way in which that pursuit is undertaken has advanced. Libraries have evolved from stone tablets and papyrus copied by hand to mass-produced texts and electronic tablets. At the same time, literature has evolved from epic poems to literature written specifically for children.

Over the past 100 years, school libraries and librarians have endeavored to meet the informational and instructional needs of children by providing resources to help them become lifelong readers, learners, and agents of change in their own lives. Contextualizing our present

protocols, while understanding past protocols, justifies what we know and may already be doing when engaging children in literacy experiences. As one archivist stated, "by studying the same or like processes in other societies in the past, societies that were experiencing equally disconcerting shifts, we gain a critical perspective on our own experience and, perhaps, the courage to face the challenges ahead" (O'Toole, 2004, p.175). That gain in perspective is agency-making in itself.

The Role of the School Library

The following quote from the *State of America's Libraries 2020* (ALA, 2020) captures the unique role of school libraries and the many ways in which they influence the greater school community: "School libraries and librarians continue to evolve to meet the demand for equity and access in a culturally responsive learning environment offering physical and digital resources and connections to a global world" (ALA, 2020, para. 1). The United States has 90,400 public and private schools for kindergarten through 12th grade; 82,300 (91%) of them have school libraries, and 56,000 (61%) have full-time librarians (ALA, 2019).

The School Library

The purpose and standards of a school library have changed significantly over the last century. They once focused on library facilities in the 1920s and then moved toward access services around the 1950s. Each revision of school library standards has addressed the current needs of school libraries. To better understand the atmosphere of a school library, the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) created a new set of *National School Library Standards* (2018). According to the AASL (2018),

> An effective school library includes diverse and inclusive resources, programs, and services that meet the needs of all learners; represents various points of view on current

and historical issues; and provides support across a wide range of interest areas with opportunities for learners to recognize themselves. (p. 54)

According to the current standards, a school library is able to

provide learners with a venue to explore questions that arise out of personalized learning opportunities and out of individual curiosity and interest. A school library focuses on the development of a culture of reading, supports reading for learning and personal enjoyment, and provides opportunities for learners to read for pleasure. To meet the needs of all learners, the school library provides a wide variety of resources in multiple formats. (AASL, 2018, p. 55)

A school library collection can be defined as "a group of information sources (print, nonprint, and digital) selected, organized, and managed by the school librarian for a defined user community" (Mardis et al., 2016, p. 2). To understand the purpose of the library, we must deeply consider the role of the librarian and their interaction with the collection as well.

The Librarian

The role of a librarian is considerably complex. A school librarian is at minimum a leader, an instructional partner, an information specialist, a teacher, and a program administrator (AASL, 2018). In the late 1990s, the standards described the role of the school librarian as a teacher, instructional partner, information specialist, program coordinator, and leader (Keeling, 2017), and the expectations and responsibilities of a school library and librarian have only increased over the years. Librarians' involvement includes collaboration with teachers to design and teach inquiry-based lessons or provide learning experiences, which aid in incorporating multiple literacies, while fostering critical thinking and assisting in curriculum development by serving on campus and district-level committees. At the same time, librarians must create a learning environment that ensures equitable access to all. To do so, they select resources that adhere to the principles of intellectual freedom, which include diverse points of view today's pluralistic society. The *Professional Ethics* (ALA, 2019) adopted in 2008 guides librarians

toward ethical decision-making for their libraries.

A librarian is entrusted with creating a culture of reading not only within the library but also in the school community. A certified librarian has taken coursework in school library science and has passed a variety of tests or met competency requirements for the state in which they work. They are expected to be able to curate a proper collection of materials for the school library based on their knowledge of the school community. This collection should be relevant and cover myriad subjects, issues, and interests of the children that complement and fit in with the rest of the collection. At the same time, a school librarian must know exactly what resources are in their collection, know the condition of those resources, and understand how they could be utilized in academic programming, whether by the librarian themselves or an instructional partner.

Certified librarians recognize the development of a school library as a space for inquiry and collaboration, and they are able to curate a collection of resources that aid in the development of agency in learners. For each student, no matter their background, "it is the simple miraculous act of reading a good book that turns them into readers. The job of adults who care about reading is to move heaven and earth to put that book into a child's hands" (Atwell, 2007, p. 28). The domain of the librarian and school library is the site of voluntary reading led by student choice (Merga, 2013). When children visit a library, they interact with a librarian through lessons, conversation, recommendations, and various other experiences. Librarians must thus know their collection and their children to match a book with a student, and vice versa. Each of these opportunities for interaction in the library could promote the development of agency in children.

Knowing, Understanding, and Curating a Collection

When evaluating the ways in which a school library is an agency-making space, multiple factors come into play, starting with the collection. For instance, when a student asks for resources on a specific subject or a book from a series, the school librarian aims to match the student with the material. This means that by understanding both the population of the school community and the collection itself, the school librarian has the opportunity to encourage children not only to read something new but also to continue reading their favorite books.

The process of collection development, as described by Howard (2017), is "the process of being prepared so that the right materials are available for children to access when that information is needed" (p. 55). A well-developed collection is based on the needs of the school community and grants access to a number of resources that are vital to the school's library program. Therefore, it would behoove the librarian to be well connected within the school community, perhaps by hosting events for children, families, and community members.

The collection of a school library includes resources that aid in access to information. The first thing that comes to mind when thinking about the collection is books. When curating a collection of books for a school library, it is important for the librarian to consider how the books and the collection as a whole will aid in the inquiry process and supplement or support the curriculum. In my experience, collaborating with teachers and instructional coordinators at the building level was beneficial when choosing books for the collection.

Children's Literature and the Collection

The needs and diversity of the school population should influence the text in the collection. In the National School Library Standards, the AASL (2018) indicated that

> an effective school library includes diverse and inclusive resources, programs, and
> services that meet the needs of all learners; represents various points of view on current

and historical issues; and provides support across a wide range of interest areas with opportunities for learners to recognize themselves. (p. 54)

Mirrors and Windows

The need for children to see themselves in literature and to read about others' cultures is especially important in this age of a global society. Bishop's (1990) metaphor of books serving as windows and mirrors provides an interesting way in which to think about books that should be in a library collection. A "mirror" book allows children to see characters depicted in a way that is similar to their own, whereas a "window" book allows children to see characters depicted in a way that is different from their own. These opportunities also aid in developing children's viewpoints and awareness of both their own cultures and those of others (Chan, 1984; Johnson, 2012). Moreover, increased use of high-quality multicultural literature is thought to enable minority children to see themselves and their cultures represented in books, thereby instilling a sense of pride in their own culture (Koss, 2015).

Authenticity

To become globally aware, literary opportunities must have authentic depictions of people within the texts. As Short (2019) theorizes, "authenticity goes beyond details to the core values at the heart of a culture. Although there are always multiple values and ways of living within a culture, authenticity focuses on believability" (p. 3). The books must be free of stereotyping and be accurate in their depictions of everyday life and the vernacular used by the characters (Short, 2019).

The roles of the library and librarian on the one hand and the collection on the other reiterate the understanding that school libraries are the "heart of the school." Findings from 60 studies focusing on the impact of school libraries in 22 states demonstrated that access to a

school library staffed with a full-time librarian contributed to increases in student achievement (Scholastic, 2016). When children have access to books and are allowed to read what interests them, they are more likely to achieve a level of independence and demonstrate agency in today's world.

Access to Books

The past 100 years have seen many changes in school library resources, especially in the way children access literature and other types of reading materials. The evolution of children's literature from picturebooks to chapter books and beyond has elevated the mission and purpose of school libraries. A notable transformation is the variety of ways in which children's literature can be read, shared, created, and organized. From paper to electronic, comic books to graphic novels, phonograph to cassette, compact disc to streaming and digital download, they have all given both librarians and their patrons quicker access to more literature. Even in 1921, immediate access to information was key. Parks (1921) referred to a teacher who needed a piece of poetry for her class to complete an assignment and sent a student to the library to retrieve a copy of the poem. According to Parks, the fact that the teacher associated the school library with a means to receive the poem quickly was "immediate and correspondingly impressive" (Parks, 1921, p. 277). Thus, the need for access to a well-curated collection and a librarian was acknowledged 100 years ago.

Research regarding the impact of access to books on literacy development in children spans over 50 years. This research has consistently shown a disparity between children who have everyday access and those who do not (Evans et al., 2010; Krashen, 2011). In addition, those that face economic challenges, leading to having no or few reading materials in the home or in school compared to their middle- and upper-income counterparts, have been the focus of multiple

studies (e.g., Lindsay, 2010; Krashen, 2011). In a 2001 study, Neuman and Celano examined four neighborhoods in their study—two lower-income and two middle-income neighborhoods—and found "stark and triangulated" disparities in access to reading materials in the neighborhoods. The middle-income children had more opportunities to be exposed to, interact with, and acquire their own books, with an average of 13 books per child. In contrast, the lower-income children had less access to print resources. Their school libraries had less than one title per 300 children, whereas in other more affluent neighborhoods, the average was 12 books per child (Neuman & Celano, 2001). Furthermore, students in Beverly Hills had access to eight times as many books as students in high poverty areas of Watts and Compton. The school library collections were almost three times as large, and the public library collections were almost twice as large (Krashen, 2012). In each of these cases, there was systemic poverty in the lower-income areas, which negatively impacted student access to high-quality literature in the schools. Additionally, a meta-analysis of 44 studies found that access to print materials improved reading performance and was influential when children were learning to read. In turn, children read for longer periods of time and improved their attitude toward reading (Lindsay, 2010).

Unrestricted access to age-appropriate books and school library materials is important for all children. By creating a space where equitable access to the collection is available, inside and outside of the school day, barriers are removed that would otherwise limit the way in which children use the library. In fact, Allington and McGill-Franzen (2009) stated, "We should make it a national priority that all children from all backgrounds have easy access year-round—at home and at school—to all the books they want to read." Constantino (2008) also found that children who had access to a school library were more likely to visit it more often and were more likely to be interested in the books and reading (Constantino, 2008). Moreover, by creating an

online presence with access to text via technology, school libraries give children more opportunities to engage with books. A study focusing on technology in the home found that parents, on average, had positive reactions to allowing their child to read using technology (Eutsler, 2018).

Voice and Choice

When given the opportunity to choose what they read, children are more likely to be motivated and show academic independence (Schunk, Meece, & Pintrich, 2013). A well-run school library allows for personalized opportunities and is more focused on the individual student's reading preferences. In a leadership brief, the International Literacy Association (2018) stated that children who select their own books "develop a sense of agency and identify themselves as readers…. we increase children's motivation for reading as a practice" (p. 5).

Agency Development in Children

As agency develops in children, they are able to begin taking responsibility for their own actions. When given the chance to be autonomous and confident and the freedom to make their own choices, this agentic behavior leads children to be active participants in their own lives. This allows them to act upon and modify their actions in a thoughtful way, by acting as agents of their own experiences. Additionally, agency allows children to find their own voice, which will help them feel in control of a situation (Mathis, 2015, Short, 2012). Bandura (2001) presents individuals as "agents of experiences rather than simply undergoers of experiences" (p. 4). A sense of agency, as Mathis (2015) presents, can help children understand issues in their community and society in general. James and Prout (1990) extend this notion of agency, stating,

> Children must be seen as active in the construction and determination of their own social lives, the lives of those around them and of the societies in which they live. Children are not just passive subjects of social structures and processes. (p. 30)

Confidence in themselves and in their own self-reliance influences demonstrations of agency when the need arises for change in the community and others. As agency develops, children would ideally be able to face challenges, make sound choices, overcome limitations, come to the aid of their friends and family, and champion those who cannot do the same, while acknowledging their own hopes and dreams.

Agency and Literacy

When reflecting on a child's sense of agency and identity, teachers and other influential adults must remember that knowledge creation leads to action by encouraging readers to think critically. As children learn to read, they begin interpreting the world around them (Giroux, 1997, Gritter et al., 2017). Children who are given the opportunity to voice their choice of what to read for pleasure, as well as what resources to use for research, take ownership of the experience. Vaughn (2014) found that children who demonstrate agency had an impact on the instructional opportunities that arose during their knowledge-making experiences in her study. These agency-making experiences are powerful opportunities for inquiry. Engaging in critical inquiry with respect to literature, personal identity, and worldview promotes emotional maturity in children while helping to shape and build perspectives, opinions, arguments, and connections to the world around them (Pageanelli, 2017).

Children begin to understand the "truth" of why literature is written, who wrote it, and who benefits from the information by understanding bias (Luke, 2012). As Freire (1970) stated, people live in social contexts that "mark them and which they also mark" (p. 90). This suggests that in any circumstance, our interactions are reciprocal, meaning that we have a positive or negative affect in everything we do. Taking that a step further, Hansfield (2016) stated, "...students are prompted to use literacy to address social inequities in students' immediate or

local communities" (p. 83), which is an enactment of agency. Mackey and Alphen (2016) extend this concept of supporting children's agency and understanding of social justice through their study of teachers and their interactions with children between three and five years old. In their study, picture books were used as a catalyst for conversation between the teachers and students on topics of social justice, and the results pointed to a significant increase in the teachers' ability to support student agency through dialogue with the aid of picture books and learning stories (Mackey & Alphen, 2016).

Regarding self-selected reading, Ivey and Johnston's (2013) study focused on 71 students' self-selected reading and its effects on student identity, their sense of agency, and various aspects of their lives. The findings of their study noted "shifts" in five domains of agency—most notably, agency in reading related to students taking the initiative to control their reading (i.e., making time to read for their enjoyment and acquire books to read). Ivey and Johnston (2013) mentioned students changing their interactions and relationships with peers as a result of reading certain books. The study reiterated that students' choice of reading material was based on what they wanted to read, not on the level of the text, which is an act of agency as well.

The School Library

The school library invites children to speak and hear what others have to say. Learners have the right to choose what they will read, view, or hear and are expected to develop the ability to think clearly, critically, and creatively about their choices, rather than allowing others to do this for them (AASL, 2019). As readers gain an understanding of the knowledge–power connection along with the ability to question, they develop the need to act in response to their knowledge (Norris, Lucas, & Prudhoe, 2012). This development of agency through knowledge construction affords the reader the competence to affirm their own power and take responsibility

for their actions. It should be mentioned that studies involving school libraries, agency, and student choice are lacking.

By acknowledging a child's agency, as Moore and Cunningham (2007) discuss, we as educators believe that children are able to make decisions about who they are and who they will become. The authors continue this notion with the understanding that agency allows people to change over time. Most of all, with a sound sense of agency and identity, children are able to make meaningful decisions and will be able to acknowledge their accomplishments as individuals and members of society (Gowrie South Australia, 2015).

<center>Research through a Critical Lens</center>

Literacy and literature are socially and politically situated; they are not neutral. Readers need to reach beyond their basic literacy skills and think critically, thus using the ability to investigate the political aspects of language and power in the individual text (Johnson & Freedman, 2005). This thought suggests that language is never neutral and presents a perspective that conveys messages; therefore, individuals are encouraged to examine the world around them through a critical lens. This lens through which readers study "the relationship of language and power with practical knowledge of how to use language for advocacy, social critique, and cultural transformation" (Knoblauch & Brannon, 1993, p. 152) is used in the current study.

According to Lewison, Flint, and Sluys (2002), critical literacy has four common elements: disrupting the commonplace, interrogating multiple viewpoints, focusing on sociopolitical issues, and promoting social action. Critical literacy represents the thinking that is needed to change society via education and literacy. It invites readers to not read and automatically accept the message they interpret, but to analyze the social and power relations that exist between readers and writers (McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004). Critical literacy opens a

completely new mode of "critical readings, critical reading positions, and practices" (Luke, 2004, p. 5). Just as we encourage our children to use a critical lens, I us a critical lens in this study, focusing on the tenets of CMA (Botelho & Rudman, 2009) through which I will examine children's literature in Chapter 3.

Many previous studies have used a critical lens to conduct their research. Koss, Martinez, and Johnson (2016) critically analyzed 25 years of Caldecott-Award-winning and -honor books for representations of main characters. The books contained at least one human main character and were coded for culture or ethnicity, gender, age, the place where the character lives, the time period in which the character lives, disability, religion, socioeconomic status, and language usage. Their analysis revealed that the main characters in Caldecott books were predominantly White, and there was little representation of varied socioeconomic status, disability, religion, or language. The study also indicated a need for educators to be aware of the diversity of their children when choosing books for their collections.

In an additional study, Koss (2015) examined 455 contemporary picture books to recognize which diverse populations were represented in both the authors or illustrators and characters. A descriptive content analysis of the ethnicity, gender, disability, and author or illustrator information was conducted. The findings showed that books containing diverse populations were rare, as was the number of books by diverse authors and illustrators. In a similar study, Chaudri and Schau (2016) critically analyzed Scholastic Reading Club order forms for kindergarten through to Grade 6 to assess representations of Native Americans. They found that out of 2,807 books, only 40 (1.4%) had representations of Native Americans, with several of the books containing stereotypical misrepresentations. There were no Native American authors and illustrators.

Acevedo (2017) employed CCA in analyzing books with Puerto Rican representation in 20 contemporary realistic fiction books. The characters, settings, languages, family, and communication practices were assessed, and there were "magical but limiting findings of the islands" and a lack of African or Afro-Puerto Rican individuals. There were also stereotypical references to Puerto Rican attitudes.

In multiple cases, critical studies on children's literature approach the analysis such that the power struggle between the child and adult is at the forefront (Lukens, 2008; Nodelman & Reimer, 2003; Hollindale, 1997). Children's literature was included in each of the studies mentioned. However, none of the studies referred to the school library or a librarian. When researching for the literature review, I found no studies conducted by librarians focusing on books from the school library.

Summary

To answer the research question (How is agency enacted, if at all, by the characters in the most circulated books from three elementary school libraries in a midsized school district in the southwest?), I reviewed the existing literature that relates to the purpose of the current study. By including the history of libraries and children's literature, along with contemporary information, connections with agency development can be made throughout. Chapter 3 describes the methodology for the CCA as guided by the conceptual framework.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this qualitative study is to critically examine the most circulated books from three elementary school libraries for enactments of agency. While there is considerable previous research on agency development in children and agency in children's literature, studies focusing on books from a school library are lacking. I conducted a CCA of the books to obtain this information. The research question guiding this study is:

> *How, if at all, is agency enacted by the characters in the most checked out books from three elementary school libraries in a midsized school district in the southwest?*

In this chapter, I explain the methodology for the study, including the research setting, participants, and the methods employed for data collection and analysis.

Analytical Framework

Content Analysis

Content analysis can be traced back to the 17th century when Catholic scholars studied newspapers for heretical content, as well as in the 18th century, when Swedish hymns were analyzed for anti-sematic thoughts (Krippendorff, 2004). Content analysis gained popularity in the United States during World War II, when it was used to aid in code breaking and assisted researchers in the analysis of newspapers. Extending the thinking, and with content analysis moving "beyond the technique's initially journalistic roots, the past century has witnessed the migration of content analysis into various fields and the clarification of many methodological issues" (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 17).

The definition of content analysis progressed with the century. Berelson (1952), Carney (1972), and Holsti (1969) argued that content analysis was a research technique with objective, systematic, and quantitative descriptions of specific units of data (Cullum-Swan & Manning,

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1994). More recently, researchers approach content analysis as an umbrella method that views data both quantitatively and qualitatively (Weber, (1990); Elo & Kyngas, 2008; Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009; Neuendorf, 2002; and Grbich, 2013). Krippendorff (2004) and Weber (1990) add that researchers are able to make valid references from texts when using content analysis. Furthermore, content analysis streamlines the process of searching through large amounts of data. For instance, Grbich (2013) indicates that researchers "explore large amounts of existing textual information in order to ascertain the trends and patterns of words used, their frequency, their relationships and the structures, contexts and discourses of communication" (p. 190). Additionally, multiple researchers have provided general constructs for content analysis (Elo & Kyngas, 2007; Zhang & Wildemuth, 2016). As is the case in this study, a more appropriate recursive model, allowing for flexibility of the researcher, is needed (Johnson, Mathis, & Short, 2017).

Galda, Ash, and Cullinan (2000) believe there are two strands of research in children's literature. The first is literary analysis, which examines what authors do, and the second is content analysis, which examines what a text is about (Short, 2017). Content analysis, as a tool used in the field of children's literature, focuses on the representations of the human experience and asks higher-level questions regarding the text (Stephens, 2015). Recent research is framed around the reading and understanding of texts in the sociopolitical and cultural context in which they are presented (Short, 1995). Content analysis is reader-response based, or transactional in nature. The analyst interacts or engages with the text, allowing the reader to respond to the text in their own way (Rosenblatt, 1978), or in the words of Probst (1988), "text is just ink on a page until the reader comes along and gives it life" (p. 378).

Critical Content Analysis

CCA signifies the use of a critical lens to frame an entire study. A critical lens, when added to content analysis, indicates a political stance added to the analysis. This allows a researcher to identify underlying messages relating to power in social practices by examining inequities in society (Rogers, 2004; Short 2017). By critically evaluating text, the reader's response or transaction is uniquely their own, stemming from their own lived experiences, standards, and beliefs (Rosenblatt, 1938). However, this does not mean that the author did not want to convey a message or position the reader in such a way that matches the author.

Figure 3.1

Critical Content Analysis Process
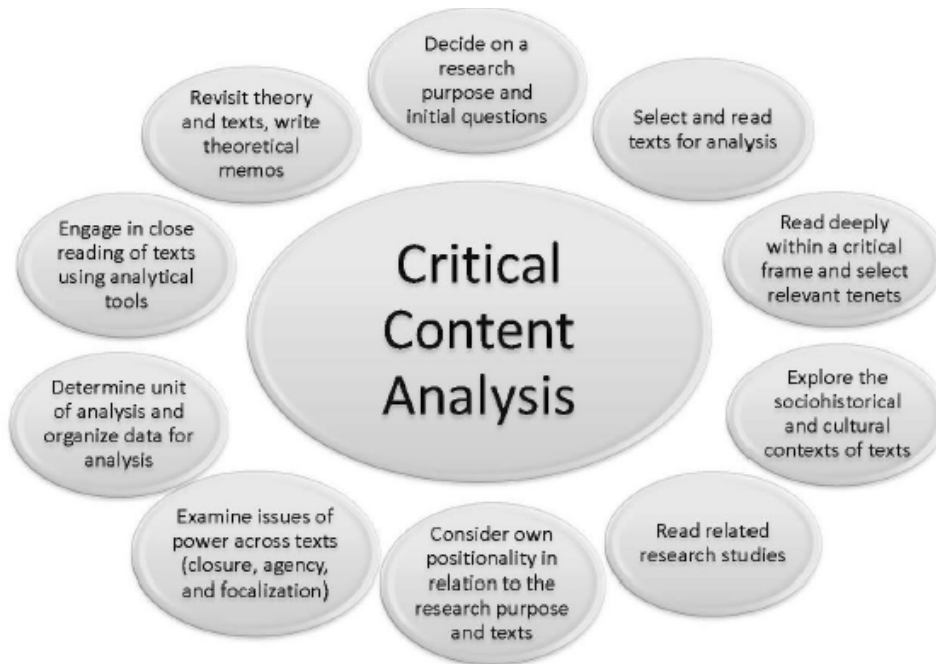
Source: Johnson, Mathis and Short (2017).

Questioning the way in which the reader is positioned in relation to the text and focusing on inequities and the marginalization of characters within books is the objective of reading the word and the world (Freire & Macedo, 1987). The critical lens questions whose "truth" or whose

story is being told, from whose perspective, and in whose voice. Freire (1970) takes the concept of the critical lens further, offering three steps through which we are able to read the world while reading the word: 1) critique or deconstruction, which involves "questioning what is and who benefits;" 2) hope or reconstruction, which relates to "asking what is and considering new possibilities;" and 3) action, which is about "taking action for social justice" (Short, 2017).

Based on these theoretical tenets, Johnson, Mathis, and Short (2018) developed a process for researchers undertaking CCA in the field of children's and adult literature. Steps for the recursive and flexible process are illustrated in Figure 3.1.

Critical Multicultural Analysis

The current study uses tenets of Botelho and Rudman's (2009) CMA. As the theoretical foundation for this study, "critical multicultural analysis of children's literature acknowledges that all literature is a historical and cultural product and reveals how the power relations of class, race, and gender work together in text and image, and by extension, in society" (Botelho &Rudman, 2009, p. 1). This allows the reader to connect deeply with the characters while completing close critical readings of the literature (Short, 2017). Each theory embodies tenets that guide the analysis by citing what to look for from the unit of analysis. Based on the purpose of this study, the following tenet statements of CMA were most significant for my analysis of selected books on agency demonstrations:

- Focalization—the positioning of characters in reference to their ability to demonstrate agency

- The social processes of characters—representation and enactments in light of race, gender, and other social constructs

- Closure—the assumption of who holds the power at the end of the text.

Data Collection

In this study, the process of CCA (Johnson, Mathis, & Short, 2017) guided the collection of data, which included the selection of school library books for analysis, close readings of those books to become familiar with their content through the lens of the theoretical tenets of focalization, the social processes of characters, and closure, as well as additional agency-focused readings of the same set of texts. For each of the selected books, data for this study was collected in a data collection table (Appendix A).

Selected Texts

Sampling was purposive based on the specific requirements for the study. For this inquiry, the school libraries chosen are located in three different areas of the same district, and the schools have varying demographics. All are elementary schools catering for students in kindergarten through fifth grade, and each school has a full-time certified librarian who served at the school during the 2019–2020 school year (Appendix B). Reports of the most circulated books from August 2019 to March 2020 were obtained from each library. The sample consisted of the most circulated books by children in grades K–5 from three school libraries during the 2019–2020 (through March 2020) school year (Appendix C). By choosing this range of grades and books, I was able to explore a variety of fiction books for a well-rounded sample. The books used for the study were obtained from the public library, university libraries, and my personal children's literature collection.

The lists were combined and alphabetized into a list of 90 books, which were then arranged by series or non-series. Each series was subsequently arranged in order from most to least circulated (Appendix D). The most circulated books from each series were added to the list of books to be analyzed, along with the books that were not part of a series. This process

narrowed down the list to 35 books, 9 of which were eliminated because they were only available to a subset of the population. The final sample consisted of 26 books (Figure 3.2), each of which was categorized into four types: a picture book (PB), a graphic novel (GN), a fiction or chapter book (F), and fiction with illustrations (FI).

Figure 3.2

Selected Texts

Fiction	Fiction with illustrations	Graphic Novels	Picturebooks
Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone	Captain Underpants and the Big, Bad, Battle of the Bionic Booger Boy, Part 1	Amulet: The Stonekeeper	Can I Be Your Dog
		Big Nate and Friends	Creepy Pair of Underwear
	Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Dog Days	Bone Volume One: Out of Boneville	Fly Guy's Big Family
		Click	I Really Like Slop
Refugee	Dork Diaries: Tales from a Not So Happy Birthday	Dog Man	Pete the Cat & The New Guy
		Ghosts	The Cookie Fiasco
	The Last Kids on Earth and the Nightmare King	Sisters	The Day the Crayons Quit
Saving Winslow		The Baby-Sitter's Club: Kristy's Great Idea	The Perfect Tea Party
	Wishtree	The Cardboard Kingdom	The Pigeon Needs a Bath

Guiding Questions

The data collection was guided by three critical categories suggested by Botehlo and Rudman (2009): focalization, the social processes of characters, and the closure or ending. To create a true picture of who the main characters were in each text, an in-depth look at the characters was needed. The following questions based on the tenets of CMA (Botelho & Rudman, 2009) and the purpose of the study guided the data collection of each text:

- Focalization: Whose story is being told, and from whose point of view?

- The social processes of characters: Who has the power? Who has the agency? Who are the characters in the book?

- The closure or ending: How is the story resolved? What are the assumptions in the story's closure?

For each book, the initial close reading allowed for a more in-depth response to the guiding questions, where I began to create a character sketch for each character.

The final 26 books were reread with an agency focus. The descriptors of agency employed during this process were keywords or phrases from various readings on agency. I focused on the following descriptors and demonstrations of agency:

- Autonomy / Individual freedom: to be one's own person, not influenced or manipulated by others.

- Self-determination: perseverance in making their own choices

- Self-reliance: faith in their own efforts and abilities

- Confidence: a belief that they can do or accomplish something

- Finding their own voice: to be able to express themselves in a manner that displays their thinking

- Acting as agents of their own experiences

- Taking personal responsibility: the character was able to accept responsibility for their actions

- Influencing change in others and the community at large

- Initiating change in themselves

Memos and notes were taken for each applicable descriptor and demonstration of agency on the data collection chart, along with memos taken in the case of little or no ability to demonstrate agency.

Data Collection Tables

To collect the most accurate data, a collection table was completed for each of the books (Appendix E). To further illustrate the data collection process, an example of the data collection

table from a book in the current study, *The Day the Crayons Quit* (Daywalt, 2013), is presented

below (Table 3.1). After the initial reading of the book, I completed Part 1 of the data collection

table relating to the guiding questions. Part 2 was completed after a second reading, which

focused on the descriptors of agency, as well as solidifying the responses to the guiding

questions.

Table 3.1

Data Collection Table Example: The Day the Crayons Quit

	Examples/Comments
Part 1.	
Focalization (POV): Whose story is being told, and from whose POV?	The crayons: Red, Purple, Beige, Gray, White, Black, Green, Yellow, Orange, Blue, Pink, and Peach.
Social processes of characters: Who has the power? Who has the agency?	The crayons are taking back their power from Duncan (the little boy who owns the crayons). They are each asserting their agency in a letter, where they each offer an example of how they are feeling.
Closure/ending: How is the story resolved? What are the assumptions in the story's closure?	Duncan wants to make his crayons happy, so he uses all of the crayons in an out-of-the-ordinary way.
Other/additional thoughts	Who knew that crayons could exhibit so much agency? This is a deep picture book.
Part 2.	
Having autonomy / individual freedom	Each crayon is expressing an issue in their own life.
Possessing self-determination	Examples: Gray is tired and would like to color smaller pictures, such as baby penguins.
Having self-reliance	There are several crayons that provide examples of how they could be used.
Having confidence	The crayons are displaying their confidence in their requests in the letters.
Finding their own voice	This entire book is about the various crayons finding their own voices and being individuals. For example, Beige would like to do more than color wheat— they are asking for more attention. The same goes for White. Moreover, Black would like to be more than an outline.

(table continues)

	Examples/Comments
Acting as agents of experience	Green is acting as an agent for Yellow and Orange. He would like for them to have their argument settled.
Taking personal responsibility	Duncan takes personal responsibility for his crayons not being happy.
Influencing change in others and in the community at large	Refer back to Green's actions (see agents of experience).
Influencing change in themselves	Red would like a rest; he is quite tired. Duncan made a change in the way he was using his crayons. It made him rethink his creativity.
Other—little to no ability to demonstrate agency or power by the main character	Several of the crayons feel like they have little or no power or the ability to demonstrate agency.

Source: Daywalt, 2013.

For this study, I used a critical lens when I developed both the guiding questions and descriptors of agency, as well as during the analysis of the selected books. The CCA was developed using the selected tenets of CMA (Botelho & Rudman, 2009) and the descriptors of agency. The data collection was completed using components of Johnson, Mathis, and Short's (2018) CCA, following their multistep recursive process (refer to Figure 3.1, p. 32). To evaluate the data, coding and memo-ing from the data collection tables were analyzed. Many of the categories overlapped, with the same examples referring to multiple descriptors of agency within the same book.

Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (1985) offer criteria to address trustworthiness in naturalistic inquiries—credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. First, credibility was affirmed via researcher reflexivity through repeated readings reflecting on the aspects of agency and the guiding questions. Second, data collection tables and the recursive process of CCA allowed me to check the data collection multiple times and aided in dependability. Third, a peer

review of the data collection process was undertaken as part of confirmability. The peer reviewer was given the guiding questions and descriptors of agency, as well as data collection tables to follow the process for two books. The reviewer was then able to follow the steps of data collection and complete the data collection tables for both books, and the responses were within 10% agreement of my responses. Fourth, given the small sample size, no claim is made or implied regarding transferability or generalization for this study. The transferability of this study is aided by the purposive sampling of the selected books and, as Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest, "thick descriptions" regarding the findings from the analysis. A thick descriptions is a "complete, literal description of the incident or the entity being investigated" (Merriam, 1998, p. 11). Through the reflexive process, I used descriptive explanations and writings that will enable readers to understand the analysis process.

According to Elo et al. (2014), trustworthiness can be identified throughout the three phases of a content analysis study—the preparation phase, the organization phase, and the reporting phase. By acknowledging the aspects of trustworthiness in the three phases and fully incorporating the constructs from CCA, the probability of trustworthiness increases. As is the case with most qualitative studies, I endeavored to be systematic and well organized to enhance the trustworthiness of the study (Saldaña, 2011).

<center>Researcher Positionality</center>

I am a cisgender White female living in a midsized city. I grew up in a small town and attended racially diverse schools while living in a two-parent household with one sibling. I had access to literature that provided more mirrors than windows while growing up. As an adult, I obtained advanced degrees, and I went on to become an elementary school teacher, a school librarian, and a university-level educator with 18 years of experience. As an elementary school

librarian at an urban school, I was cognizant of the demographics of the almost 650 Pre-K through fifth-grade students who attended. My goal was to have books in the collection that would allow them to see within and outside their small community. I was also highly active in ensuring that they had reading material at home, through multiple resources, and I made sure that books were in the hands of those who needed them. Whether through a family literacy program that provided books weekly for every family that attended the six-week program or by writing grants that provided multiple books for every student in the school, I made a point of giving students the opportunity to see themselves in the books they were exposed to. My worldview has been shaped by my family, the place in which I grew up, my schooling, and my occupation, all of which have led to biases, which I acknowledged throughout all aspects of this research.

As a school librarian, I oversaw the collection development, advocacy, and promotion of my school library. I was actively and critically involved in evaluating children's literature and information resources. My interest in the influence of such literature and agency development in children stems from previous research and observations (i.e., mentor teachers, mentor school librarian observations, school library volunteering, and observations in a local school district). While I realize that my previous experiences do not encompass all that there is to know about evaluating children's literature, this study has allowed me to use the knowledge of my previous experiences as a school librarian to learn more.

Summary

This chapter described the analytical framework for the CCA approach I used in my inquiry. I collected and analyzed data to identify how enactment of agency takes place, if at all, in the most circulated books from three elementary school libraries, using selected tenets of CMA and the descriptors of agency. Chapter 4 contains the findings for this study.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings that emerged from a CCA of a selection of the most frequently circulated books from three school libraries. The purpose of this study is to further research on agency development in children by focusing particularly on how characters from children's literature, specifically from the most circulated books in three school libraries, demonstrate agency. Guided by the theoretical statements of CMA for this study, the examining devices of focalization, social processes of characters, and closure/ending (Botehlo & Rudman, 2009), and descriptors of agency, the analysis focused on answering the following research question: How, if at all, is agency enacted by the characters in the most circulated books from three elementary school libraries in a midsized school district in the southwest? First, I describe the initial findings guided by the tenets of CMA. I then present the findings from the analysis focused on enactments of agency, both positive and negative, or the lack of enactments of agency. The final section focuses on enactments of agency as seen through illustrations.

Initial Findings

The tenets of CMA, which are focalization, the social processes of characters, and closure, offered me an in-depth overview of the characters in each story. It was important to guide the analysis in this way, thereby gaining perspective about who the characters are before moving into a more thorough agency-focused second reading of the selected texts.

While analyzing the selected texts, I examined the type of characters using the following categories: type of character, gender, and other basic information related to the characters (Appendix F). Ten of the books have anthropomorphized main characters, seven of which are animals, and one with a character that is half man, half dog. The two remaining books contain

anthropomorphized characters: crayons and a 216-year-old redwood tree. I also found that 16 of

the main characters are boys, while 10 are girls, and three have no gender indicated. Regarding

the racial identities of the characters, I noted that only four of the books have main characters

that are people of color. Eight books contain secondary characters of color, and another eight

have no characters of color. Furthermore, family, friends, personal identity, and decision-making

were most frequently identified basic topics and plot points. A portion of the data is found in

Figure 4.1. This information allowed me to begin creating detailed character sketches, and I was

able to use these findings to delve deeper into the characters' actions in the next area of analysis,

namely, agency.

Figure 4.1

Basic Character Information for the Selected Books

Types of Characters	Protagonists	Basic Topics
• 10 anthropormorphic main • 16 human main • 3 anthropormorphic secondary • 6 human secondary	• 16 boy protagonists • 10 girls as main characters • 3 with no gender indicated • 119 characters—cisgender girls and boys, other gender identities	• Family • Friends • Personal identity • Decision making

Agency in Narrative Text

In each of the texts analyzed, characters act as agents of their own experiences through

enactments (both positive and negative), inspire change in others and in the community at large,

and in several cases show little or no ability to demonstrate agency or power.

> The human dimension of agency emphasizes individual freedom. If focuses on
> autonomy, accounting for some individuals' unique thoughts, beliefs, and feelings.

Agency addresses humanity's free will and self-determination. It involves personal decision-making. When people assert their agency, they carry out their intentions, acting according to their own purposes. (Moore & Cunningham, 2006, p. 132)

The above-mentioned definition of agency was used as a reference in addition to the descriptors of agency (discussed in Chapter 3), which served as categories for the analysis.

In the following section, findings from the analysis are presented according to the descriptor of agency, where several enactments stood out as clear representations. These findings are based on the text and, when applicable, the illustrations (the illustrations are described in a later section).

Self-Determination

- Harry Potter: 11-year-old wizard, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (Rowling, 1997)

In this part of the story, Harry is talking to Ron and Hermione about disobeying the rules to find the sorcerer's stone.

> If I get caught before I can get to the Stone, well, I'll have to go back to the Dursleys and wait for Voldemort to find me there, it's only dying a bit later than I would have, because I'm never going over to the Dark Side! I'm going through that trapdoor tonight and nothing you two say is going to stop me! Voldemort killed my parents, remember? (Rowling, 1997, p. 270)

This enactment of agency is also an act of rebellion; Harry is breaking the rules to save the lives of others. Even though he lived most of his life with little to no ability to demonstrate personal agency, he is now acting as his own agent of experience. Additionally, with this enactment, Harry creates a change for the wizarding community at large.

- Sofia: 8-year-old girl, *The Perfect Tea Party* (Posner-Sanchez & Lee, 2013)

Sofia attends school at Royal Prep, where she is chosen to host the annual school tea party. Amber, Sofia's step sister, convinces her that the tea party needs to be fancy with an elaborate dress code, but Sofia wants to throw a simple tea party, similar to the ones she used to

have in her village. She reluctantly goes along with Amber's suggestions and sadly tells her mother, "It's going to be so big and fancy. Amber says everyone is going to love it, but part of me wishes I could just have a sweet tea party like the ones I used to have with Ruby and Jade" (Posner-Sanchez & Lee, 2013). However, the story shifts when preparations fall apart on the day of the event. Sofia is now able to create a magical tea party in her secret garden with blankets on the grass set with mismatched teapots and cups, just the way she imagined. Everyone has a wonderful time, even Amber. She admits, "Nice job Sofia. I guess bigger isn't always better" (Posner-Sanchez & Lee, 2013).

The Perfect Tea Party (Posner-Sanchez & Lee, 2013) is an example of both self-realization and self-determination. When the fancy tea party begins to fall through, Sofia sees an opportunity to make her original tea party vision a reality. She returns to the idea of having a simple tea party by borrowing the teacups, knowing it would not matter whose they are or that they do not match, because she is determined to have a tea party that the other princesses will enjoy. This enactment of agency shows Sofia becoming confident in her own beliefs and more aware of her capabilities, which are grounded in unique personal experiences.

Inspiring Change in Others and the Community at Large

- Red: 216-year-old Redwood tree, *Wishtree* (Applegate, 2017)

Red, at different points throughout the story exhibits all three of the main descriptors of agency. The instance that stands out is when the tree breaks the "*Don't Talk to People* rule" (Applegate, 2017, p. 127). Red's says,

> Oh, the things I wanted to say to those two! I wanted to tell them that friendship doesn't have to be hard. That sometimes we let the world make it hard.
>
> I wanted to tell them to keep talking.
>
> I wanted to make a difference, just a little difference, before I left this lovely world.

And so, I did it.

I broke the rule.
"Stay," I said. (Applegate, 2017, p. 126)

This enactment of agency, a simple word ("stay") uttered by a 216-year-old redwood tree, changes the trajectory of the entire story. Through this enactment, Red manages to embody each descriptor of agency—most notably, the ability to influence change in others and in the community. It aids in combating xenophobia, bullying, animal endangerment, and Red's own welfare. *Wishtree* is a story about belonging, respect, speaking up for those who are unable to and for what is right. Red's resilience and fortitude when dealing with these critical issues is reflected in the supportive response of the community.

Inspiring Change in Themselves

- Roy, the bully: boy, *The Cardboard Kingdom* (Sell et al, 2019)

The stories in the graphic novel *The Cardboard Kingdom* (Sell et al, 2019) are complex and multilayered, each containing enactments of agency. Through the use of words and images, the creators of this world designed an immersive experience. An example of the word-image relationship is explored in a subsequent example.

In the current example, Roy, the bully in a chapter aptly titled *The Bully*, lives with his grandmother because his mother is unable to take care of him. Roy starts out being bullied by older children in the neighborhood and eventually becomes a bully himself. The cycle of Roy being bullied and then bullying others repeats throughout the story. At the same time, Roy's grandmother wants him to make friends and be a good boy. After a final incident with the older children, Roy is disheartened, angry, and embarrassed. The illustrations in conjunction with the words make his feelings and actions clear. The story continues with invitations from the other kids in the Cardboard Kingdom for Roy to hang out and play, which Roy ignores. He peeks into

a tent where another character is creating Megalopolis, and he then runs home to begin creating a new cardboard costume. The chapter ends with Roy at his desk with a menacing expression on his face as he creates his new costume.

Megalopolis, the next chapter, opens with Peter unveiling his cardboard city, large enough that other members of the Cardboard Kingdom could play there as well. Roy approaches Megalopolis in his Godzilla-type costume and destroys Peter's creation. As he leaves, the older children bully Roy and push him into the bushes. Both Roy and Peter are angry. The next day, Roy returns to Megalopolis and picks a fight with Peter. During their fight, the older bullies begin hitting Roy and Peter with water balloons. Roy and Peter decide to join forces against the bullies, at Roy's suggestion. In the illustrations, the shift in Roy is visible as they turn the tables on the older bullies. Once they are gone, Roy, Peter, and the rest of the children from the Cardboard Kingdom rebuild Megalopolis.

Throughout these chapters, the decisions Roy makes, both positive and negative, reflect his state of mind. The color shifts, facial expressions, and body language in the illustrations add another dimension to Roy's story. His demonstrations of agency, be it picking on Peter, running away from the bullies, or rebuilding Megalopolis with the rest of the children, could occur in the real world. These experiences lead to Roy making changes within himself, as he realizes that being a friend is more important than making other people feel bad.

Autonomy / Individual Freedom

- Cat, teenaged girl, *Ghosts* (Telgemeier, 2016)

Cat, the main protagonist, and her family have moved to Bahia de la Luna on the coast of California for Maya's health, as she has cystic fibrosis. Cat is not happy about moving to a new place and leaving her friends, but over the course of the story, she is finally able to make new

friends. Cat and her friends attend the Dia de los muertos or Day of the Dead festival in town.

They are having fun experiencing all the festival has to offer, until Maya finds them. Maya

shouts,

> "Cat!"
> "Hey! We went Costume shipping at the Halloween store! I got so much cool stuff!"
> Pant, pant.
> "Are these your friends?"
> "I'm Cat's sister Maya!"
> "Sister?" [Seo Young, Cat's friend, asks]
> "What's the matter?" [Maya asks]
> "Nothing it's just…" [Cat stammers]
> "You told them about my breathing tube, right?" [Maya asks. Cat does not respond.]
> "You told them I exist…right?" [Maya asks. Cat does not respond.]

Cat's decision not to tell her friends about her sister is a way for her to be her own person, not

Maya's sister. This is an example of a negative enactment of agency. While Cat wants her

individual freedom and to have her own experiences, she does not take her sisters feelings into

consideration.

Little to No Ability to Demonstrate Agency or Power

- Josef: 12-year-old Jewish boy, *Refugee* (Gratz, 2017)

Josef, after being forced to leave Germany during the Nazi invasion, is unable to leave

the ship that is supposed to take him and his family to safety. He, his mother, and his sister are

aboard, and his father is in hospital after jumping off the ship in Cuba for fear of being sent back

to Germany. The ship is leaving Havana Harbor:

> As he stood at the rail with the rest of the passengers saying a tearful good-bye to the
> only place that had ever promised them refuge, Josef said good-bye to his father as well.
> …
> Josef knew Papa was still alive, but it didn't matter. His father was dead to his family.
> And so, Josef realized, was their dream of joining him in Cuba. (Gratz, 2017, p. 222)

Josef feels completely helpless and unable to change their circumstances. This is one of the most overt instances of having little or no ability to demonstrate agency or power.

Another example was found in *The Big Banshee*, story three of *The Cardboard Kingdom* (Sell et al., 2019). We meet Sophie, who is outgoing, loud, and has stood up to the neighborhood bully. However, when she returns home, her grandmother, a stern-faced woman, states, "In my day, girls knew how to behave and be quiet. Not act like a hellion or yell like a banshee" (Sell, 2019, p. 38). This type of negative interaction takes all of Sophie's power away and tears down her confidence. Her ability to act as an agent in her own life is hence severely diminished. However, in a positive turn of events, Sophie's mother is encouraging of her outgoing personality and builds her back up.

It is worth noting that in 22 of the 26 books, adults are part of the storyline. The power that the adults have in each of these stories is not always positive. For example, in *Refugee* (Gratz, 2017), adults control how and where the three main characters must live because of war or oppression. *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (Rowling, 1997) begins with the Dursleys treating Harry as a servant of sorts, thus controlling his life. Characters such as Snape continue this exploitation of power once Harry arrives at Hogwarts. However, many of Harry's encounters with adults are positive. His interactions with Hagrid, Professor McGonagall, the Weasleys, and Dumbledore, for instance, demonstrate that power does not always have to be oppressive.

<center>Agency as Seen Through Illustrations</center>

The words and illustrations in picture books, graphic novels, and fiction books with illustrations, are essential for meaning making. To delve more deeply into enactments of agency, I analyzed the interactions between characters in the 23 texts that contained illustrations. The word–image relationship, focalization, character proximity, attitude, and ambiance were

documented during the analysis, in conjunction with the structure and contents of the frames in the graphic novels. The following examples represent enactments of agency.

Resolving Conflict

In *Click* (Miller, 2019), Olive, the main character, is trying to find a way to be part of a talent show without joining a group. Her Aunt Molly suggests hosting as a way to become involved, and she excitedly shares this idea with her mom. Olive's mom immediately takes an offensive stance, as she thinks that Molly has talked Olive into not joining a group. The mother begins arguing with Aunt Molly. In the first five frames (Figure 4.2), the mother's proximity and attitude indicate her displeasure with Aunt Molly. She grabs Molly's forearm, which reinforces the emotion presented in the text. The power dynamic between the two, depicted via both illustrations and written dialogue, switches throughout the frames. As objective viewers of the illustrations, these frames require minimal deduction to interpret the body posture and facial expressions. The naturalistic style of the illustrations portrays the characters in a realistic manner, which aids in understanding the events taking place.

Olive is shown standing to the side of her mother and Molly while they are arguing. Her emotions are clearly interpretable, allowing the reader to see Olive as a real person with real emotions. In frame 6 (Figure 4.2), at the bottom of the right-hand page, we interpret Olive's facial expressions, her posture, and a shift in background color from green to red as a rise in anger, especially when she yells, "Stop!" (p. 131). This enactment of agency pauses the argument. Olive explains the situation to her mother, who subsequently begins to understand Olive's reasoning. Olive enacts agency by standing up not only for herself but also for her Aunt Molly. The ambiance of the frames using tertiary, non-primary colors adds to the emotional nature of this scene. Had this been in written word form only, the story would have needed a

great deal more detail.

Figure 4.2

Olive Finds Her Voice in Click

Source: Miller, 2019, p. 130-133.

Taking Personal Responsibility

The Day the Crayons Quit (Daywalt, 2016) is written as a series of letters from disgruntled crayons who are taking back their power from their owner, a child named Duncan. In each letter, they assert their agency, finding their own voices by stating their feelings about what they are being used to draw. For example, Beige would like to do more than color wheat, and Black would like to be more than an outline. The reader is positioned to see the letters and illustrations, which are drawn in crayon (Figure 4.3), as Duncan would be viewing them. Each two-page spread includes the crayon as if they were reading the letter aloud, with the facial expressions indicating the crayon's emotions.

Figure 4.3

Pink's Letter and Drawings in The Day the Crayons Quit

Source: Daywalt, 2016, n.p.

The use of one predominant color for each crayon's letter and illustration changed the way I analyzed the visuals. Pink's letter begins, "Okay, LISTEN HERE KID! You have used me once in the past year" (Daywalt, 2016, n.p.). Pink is clearly unhappy about their lack of usage. As shown in Figure 4.3, the crayon's facial expression, posture, and crossed arms communicate Pink's feelings through words and mannerisms.

By the end of the book, Duncan takes personal responsibility for his crayons quitting by changing the ways he uses them (Figure 4.4). He colors a picture using the various shades in unusual ways, for example a blue alligator, a green monkey, and an orange whale. It is worth noting that *The Day the Crayons Quit* (Daywalt, 2016) represents each descriptor of agency.

Figure 4.4

Duncan's Illustration as a Response to the Crayons' Requests in The Day the Crayons Quit

Source: Daywalt, 2016, n.p.

The Pigeon Needs a Bath (Willems, 2014) is a picture book about convincing a pigeon to take a bath. In the "before" illustration in Figure 4.5, we see that Pigeon is covered in dirt, drawn in brown and black, but proudly proclaims, "I don't really need a bath! I took one last month!" (Willems, 2014, np). In addition to the visible dirt, the background of the illustration is a shade of khaki that resembles dirt. Pigeon's body language, facial expressions, and words allude to his feelings about taking a bath.

Figure 4.5

Pigeon: Before and During the Bath in The Pigeon Needs a Bath

Source: Willems, 2014, n.p.

These reactions, or enactments of agency, are presented via large illustrations with word bubbles containing simplistic language. Pigeon begins to doubt his cleanliness and acquiesces. Through the frames on the two-page spread, Pigeon proceeds to express what is wrong with the water in the filled bathtub (Figure 4.6). Pigeon finally gets in the bath and realizes how much fun a bath is through washing, singing, and playing with bubbles and toys. The illustrations are colorful, with bright tertiary colors depicting Pigeon's positive reaction to the bath. In the end, Pigeon has enjoyed the bath so much that they ask to stay forever (Figure 4.5).

The illustrations in Figure 4.6 show Pigeon before and during the bath. It is worth noting that the background color shifts from brown, matching the dirt, to a cleaner purple when Pigeon is in the bath. The facial expressions in the "during" illustration are coy and innocent, indicating that Pigeon was wrong about taking a bath. Overall, *The Pigeon Needs a Bath* contains multiple descriptors of agency: taking personal responsibility, having confidence, and acting as an agent of one's own experience.

Figure 4.6

Pigeon's Aversions to Bathwater in The Pigeon Needs a Bath

Source: Willems, 2014, n.p.

Finding their Own Voice

In *I Really Like Slop*, by Mo Willems (2018), Elephant and Piggie are demonstrating problem-solving in a friendship. Piggie is trying to convince Gerald the elephant to eat slop as part of pig culture. Both Piggie and Gerald can be seen in the illustrations, thus giving the reader an objective stance. The story continues with Piggie finally persuading Gerald to try the slop (Figure 4.7). In this two-page spread, Gerald's emotions are depicted in a realistic manner. On the left, his face shows skepticism, whereas Piggie is excited, sporting a large smile and wide-open eyes as she thrusts the bowl of slop into Gerald's face. On the right, Gerald snatches the bowl from Piggie. In Gerald's first enactment of agency, he makes it clear he will only taste a small amount, which he does. Piggie's eyes are small, and her hands are up as if she is still holding the bowl, seemingly shocked that Gerald took it from her.

Figure 4.7

Piggie's Persuasion Pays Off in I Really Like Slop
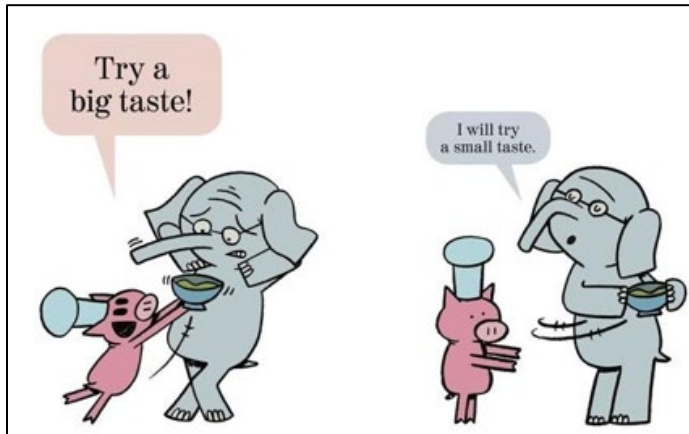
Source: Willems, 2018.

Even without words, Gerald's reaction is shown via the illustrations (Figure 4.8). He turns green, then purple, along with several other colors in subsequent illustrations, even developing polka dots, with steam coming out of his ears. By the end of the bite, Gerald is back to his original gray and admits that no, "I do not really like slop. But I am glad I tried it" (Willems, 2018, p. 52-53). These enactments of agency demonstrate that Gerald understands his own limits and is willing to voice them.

Figure 4.8

Elephant's Reaction to Slop in I Really Like Slop
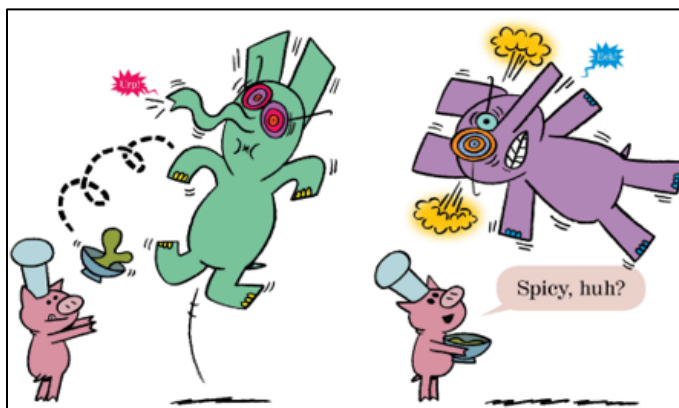
Source: Willems, 2018.

Throughout the book, the word–image relationship makes the story interactive. For instance, when a character is sad, the typeface in the thought bubbles is smaller, and when a word is uttered with much expression, the typeface is in italics. Along with the variation in the typeface, the characters' faces and body language are drawn to be exaggeratedly expressive. The pictures are uniform overall, with Piggie drawn in pink with a blue chef's hat, and gray used for Gerald. Moreover, the slop is bright green, with the bowl in another shade of blue. Piggie's and Gerald's thought bubbles are pink and gray, respectively. This is the only book in the selection that has thought bubbles that correspond to the color of the character.

Demonstrating Confidence and Self-Determination

Last Kids on Earth and the Nightmare King (Brallier, 2017) is the third book in the series about the lives of Jack and his friends after a zombie apocalypse. Jack is a 13-year-old boy living with his friends and several friendly monsters. The kids assume they are the last on Earth until they hear a radio transmission from other survivors. All the children are excited about the possibility of reuniting with their families, except Jack, who is an orphan. He makes it his personal mission to make his friends feel safe and happy in Wakefield, exemplifying his self-determination. The story continues with minimal drama until King Wretch, the Nightmare King, invades their space and their dreams. The kids end up having to fight King Wretch with the help of monsters.

From the beginning of the story, the reader is positioned as an objective observer. The combination of the minimalistic drawings with word bubbles and a different font to embellish certain words enhances the regular typeface of the pages (Figure 4.9). Additionally, the illustration highlights Jack's level of confidence both in Rover, his monster, and in himself during the climax of the fight with King Wretch. The details in black and white add another layer

of dimension to the story. Jack's main goal is to save his friends and the new life they have created. He develops his identity in this book, as well as throughout the series, and shows dedication to his goal through enactments of agency.

Figure 4.9

Jack and Rover's Battle to Overtake the King Wretch in Last Kids on Earth and the Nightmare King
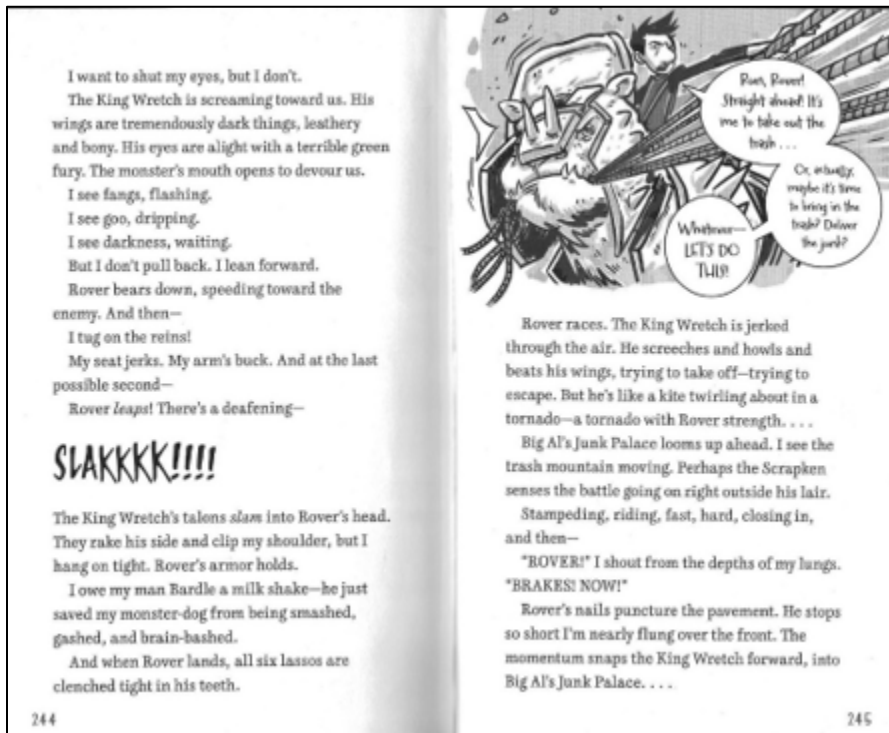
Source: Brallier, 2017.

Self-Reliance and Influencing Change in Others

Amanda, also known as The Scientist in the *Cardboard Kingdom* (Sell, et al., 2019), dresses in a lab coat, safety goggles, rubber gloves, and a thick fake mustache. She is ready to experiment and excited to help her friends enhance their costumes, from larger feet and different heads to mutant cyborgs. However, her father disapproves of her actions and questions why she spends all day changing her friends. Amanda is determined to remain positive and decides that

she is going to "make my friends more different and awesome" (Sell, et al., 2019, p. 150). Her goal is to make everyone feel better about themselves and help improve their self-esteem.

However, all does not go as planned. In Figure 4.10, in the frames on the first left-hand page, we see Amanda turning her friend with a broken arm into a shapeshifter. The background has bright vivid colors, and the faces and body language of the children show their enjoyment. However, the situation begins to shift in the frames in the second row, as her father has returned home and is unhappy to see her outside in her costume. His raised eyebrow is indicative of his displeasure, along with the implied tone of voice in the word bubble. He marches Amanda into the house, while her friends are left outside, visibly worried.

Amanda's confidence decreases throughout her conversation with her father (Figure 4.10). The father's proximity to Amanda, looming over her with his arms crossed, and angry facial expression, along with the shift in background color from lighter colors to reds and oranges, is a clear indicator of his anger. He verbalizes his anger as well, questioning why she is wearing a mustache that looks like his. He thinks she is making fun of him. She throws the mustache away and goes to her room. Her mother helps clarify why Amanda is wearing the mustache: to look like him, not make fun of him. Throughout the parents' conversation, the background begins to lighten from dark reds to a lighter orange.

The story ends with the father regretting his outburst. He attempts to right the situation by talking to Amanda (Figure 4.10), who is sitting on her bed with her head turned downward and a sad look on her face. He talks to her about acceptance and explaining that it is difficult to "accept what you don't understand" (p. 157). He hands her mustache back to her and in the process gives her back her ability to act as her own agent of experience. As Amanda and her father work out

their differences, the background changes to a lighter yellow, with their facial expressions and body language changing to illustrate their openness.

Throughout this story, we witness positive enactments of agency from Amanda. Her confidence and ability to influence positive change in the other children around her are unmistakable. The negative agency and power her father exhibits at the climax of the story is not long lasting but has a definite effect on Amanda's ability to act as her own person. This story has a happy ending, which is presented in the frames of the story.

Figure 4.10

Amanda, The Scientist in The Cardboard Kingdom

Source: Sell et al., 2019.

In each above-mentioned case, the enactments of agency take place when the characters are faced with either making a decision or the consequences of their actions. These decisions, both small and large, are life altering for each of the characters, and their agency-making experiences—positive and negative—as well as many others in the selected texts show characters taking on greater responsibilities, sacrificing, and finding confidence in themselves. The descriptors of agency that appear in each of the selected texts are presented in the table below (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1

Agency in the Selected Texts

Title	Main Character(s)	Autonomy/ Ind. Freedom	Self-determination	Self-reliance	Confidence	Finding Their Own Voice	Acting as Agents of Their Own Experience	Taking Personal Responsibility	Influencing Changes in Others & the Community	Inspiring Change in Themselves	Little to No Ability to Demonstrate Agency
Amulet: The Stonekeeper	Emily		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Big Nate and Friends	Nate	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Bone	Fone Bone	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Can I Be Your Dog	Arfy	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Captain Underpants	George and Harold, Marvin Sneedly	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X
Click	Olive	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Creepy Pair of Underwear	Jasper Bunny	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Dog Days	Greg Hefley	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Dog Man	Dog Man	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Dork Diaries: Tales from a Not So Happy Birthday	Nikki Maxwell	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Fly Guy's Big Family	Fly Guy and Buzz	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
Ghosts	Cat	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone	Harry Potter	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

(table continues)

Title	Main Character(s)	Autonomy/Ind. Freedom	Self-determination	Self-reliance	Confidence	Finding Their Own Voice	Acting as Agents of Their Own Experience	Taking Personal Responsibility	Influencing Changes in Others & the Community	Inspiring Change in Themselves	Little to No Ability to Demonstrate Agency
I Really Like Slop	Elephant and Piggie	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
Pete the Cat & the New Guy	Pete	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Refugee	Josef, Isabel, Mahmoud		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Saving Winslow	Louie	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Sisters	Raina		X	X	X	X	X	X			X
The Baby Sitter's Club: Kristy's Great Idea	Kristy Thomas	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
The Cardboard Kingdom	19 main characters	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
The Cookie Fiasco	A hippo, a crocodile, & 2 squirrels	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
The Day the Crayons Quit	The crayons & Duncan, the owner of the crayons	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
The Last Kids on Earth and the Nightmare King	Jack Sullivan	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
The Perfect Tea Party	Princess Sofia	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
The Pigeon Needs a Bath	Pigeon	X	X		X	X	X	X		X	
Wishtree	Red	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Closure

Closures exist in literature to address the reader's inherent sense of hope for the future. Authors typically employ a "happy for now" or a "happily ever after" ending. To analyze the closure or ending of each book, I examined how the stories were resolved and what assumptions were left for the reader to make. Overall, the picture books have the truest sense of finality. For instance, Pigeon takes his bath; Fly Guy gets to see his family; Gerald the elephant tries slop; the creepy underwear becomes a nightlight; the crayons have their demands met; Arfy, the dog, gets a new owner; the cookies are shared evenly; and the tea party is perfect for Sofia. In each of these stories, the endings leave the reader feeling hopeful, with a "happily ever after" assumption. The problems are resolved in a manner that readers would find satisfying. As for the remaining books, not all of them end with distinct closure for the characters. For example, *The Last Kids on Earth and the Nightmare King* (Brallier, 2017) and *Amulet* (Kibuishi, 2008) end their story lines, but leave purposeful cliffhangers for the subsequent books in the series. In addition, *Refugee* (Gratz, 2017) has a hopeful ending that wraps up the current story, but leaves the reader wanting to know what will happen to Isabel and Mahmoud in the future.

Summary

In this chapter, I presented the findings from the CCA that was guided by the tenets of CMA: focalization, the social processes of characters, and the closure or ending. The discussion of the findings continued, framed around the descriptors of agency that resulted from the analysis. Focalization provided the opportunity for me to understand whose perspective the stories were being told from and an in-depth look at the main characters individually. I was able to delve into the enactments of agency of some, while recognizing the lack of opportunities or the ability for demonstrations of agency in others. The characters' social processes allowed for

an exploration of agency, and the relationships between the characters enabled an analysis of sociopolitical and emotional experiences. Through the visual analysis of agency through illustrations, I presented the findings of the inquiry into the word–image relationship, focalization, proximity, attitude, and ambiance of the illustrations. Chapter 5 contains a discussion of the findings, implications, and concluding insights for the study.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUDING INSIGHTS

This study was constructed around the intersection of agency, reading, and school libraries, focusing on how the characters enact agency, if at all, in the most frequently circulated books from three elementary school libraries. Through the use of CCA using the tenets of CMA (Botelho & Rudman, 2009) and elements of visual analysis (Painter, Martin, & Unsworth, 2013), I analyzed the most circulated books from those libraries. The findings from this study demonstrate that each book, from the most complex fiction to the least complex picture book, contains enactments of agency.

Figure 5.1

Categorical Representations of Agency in the Narratives

After multiple readings of the books and analysis of the data, varied enactments of agency were identified, as demonstrated by diverse character types. As I continuously thought

about these characters in light of their agency and the descriptors that resulted from the analysis, I began to intuitively assign the characters to categories that not only reflect the way in which their agency manifests within the context of the narrative but also provide a way to think about agency in the lives of readers. These categories, namely, activists, survivors, problem solvers, and friends (Figure 5.1), ultimately became keywords as part of the analysis and confirmed both the impact of these acts of agency on characters and the importance thereof within the story context. Given that there is evidence of multiple categories within each book, the categories are pictured as overlapping; however, in the following discussion of each category, the representative books exemplify each category.

Activists

> Different languages, different food, different customs. That's our
> neighborhood: wild and tangled and colorful. Like the best kind of garden.
> *Wishtree*

Activists raise awareness about issues. They are leaders in the community and seek to collaborate with others to make a change. In a neighborhood that has witnessed prejudice, vandalism, unlikely friendships, and diverse characters, one book, namely, *Wishtree* by Katherine Applegate (2017), has a character, a 216-year-old tree named Red, who works to change it all. The critical topics explored in this book are offset by the symbolic nature of Red's actions. Throughout this book, the enactments of agency serve as a call to action for the reader. The reader has multiple viewpoints and is able to observe the power dynamics that arise frequently throughout the book. The storyline lends itself to myriad opportunities to engage in knowledge building and critical exploration. *The Cardboard Kingdom* (Sell, 2019) also has activist characters: Included in the stories are accepting and encouraging parents whose children identify outside traditional gender roles. The members of the Cardboard Kingdom are accepting

of and defend one another from bullies who seek to disrupt their welcoming neighborhood. While not traditional activists in the sense of holding rallies and making posters for issues, the characters are activists for inclusivity within their community.

<div align="center">Survivors</div>

Survivors cope with a situation and come out stronger. Mahmoud, one of the main characters in *Refugee* (Gratz, 2017), is escaping from the war in Syria with his family. He makes it out of Syria and undergoes a great deal to come out stronger. He states,

> And that was the real truth of it, wasn't it? Whether you were visible or invisible, it was all about how other people reacted to you. Good and bad things happened either way. If you were invisible, bad people couldn't hurt you. That was true. But the good people couldn't help you, either. If you stayed invisible here, did everything you were supposed to, and never made waves, you would disappear from the eyes and minds of all the good people out there who could help you get your life back. It was better to be visible. To stand up. To stand out. (p. 158)

Mahmoud embodied what it meant to be a survivor. His enactments of agency along with his hope for a better life allowed him to see a way to make it through his ordeal. All three of the intertwined stories in *Refugee* (Gratz, 2017) provide children with the opportunity to have open-ended critical discussions about agency and what it means to be a survivor.

In addition, four reluctant heroes are also survivors of their prospective quests, each one a modern fantasy book with extraordinary elements. The three graphic novels, namely, *Amulet* (Kibuishi, 2008), *Bone: Out of Boneville* (Smith, 2004), and *The Last Kids on Earth and the Nightmare King* (2017), and one fiction book, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (Rowling, 1998), present opportunities for critical interpretation of metaphors and images. The enactments of agency demonstrated by the characters would provide children with the opportunity to acknowledge sociopolitical and emotional issues not only in the books but also in their own lives.

<div align="center">66</div>

Problem Solvers

The findings from this study show characters who enact agency as they act as problem solvers. These characters deal with coming-of-age issues, from friendship building, respectful treatment of others, and hygiene to understanding the possible loss of a loved one. Through this study, problem-solving emerged as a frequent part of the storylines. For instance, with regard to Olive's quandary in *Click* (Miller, 2019), Olive does not want to upset any of the different groups of friends by joining one group over another in the talent show. Therefore, she chooses to be independent and host the talent show instead. This enactment of agency by solving her problem is one that easily stood out.

When addressing obstacles and new experiences, the characters demonstrate agency in resisting dominant discourses. Their direct acknowledgment of the issues allows for critical and creative thinking. Through the reading of these books, children could examine the stories from other points of view. Just as the characters interact with one another, work through their problems, and at times overcome their own bias, children can do the same.

Friends

> She's nice. She's just new. It's not the worst thing in the world to make a new friend.
>> *The Baby-Sitter's Club: Kristy's Great Idea*

The findings from this study revealed the existence of friendships in each of the books. The friendships that make up this category are those that fostered well-developed, personal connections between characters. Various types of friendships are portrayed in these books, and what makes them acts of agency is, for instance, the characters' ability to accept one another for their differences of opinion. The Cardboard Kingdom (Sell, et al., 2019) has a character named Jack, whose alter ego is the "Sorceress." Jack loves to dress up as the Sorceress and is clear that

the Sorceress is a female. The other characters with whom Jack interacts as the Sorceress are accepting of this alter ego, simply continuing to play. This may seem insignificant, but the general idea of groups of friends being different and accepting of one another while accepting themselves is an act of agency.

In the books, there are groups of characters who have been friends their entire lives, while other friendships begin during the story, and several bloom in between, as is the case with Elephant and Piggie (Willems, 2018): Gerald, the elephant, would not have tried slop if he and Piggie were not friends. Friendship thus affected his decision-making; he knew he could trust Piggie.

In *The Cardboard Kingdom* (Sell, et al., 2019), the children in the neighborhood have friends who started out as adversaries, such as Roy, the bully, and Peter. Their story is a prime example of someone taking responsibility for their actions and trying to become a friend. The enactments of agency that manifest throughout the stories in this book demonstrate the connections between the characters as well as their ability to overcome obstacles while taking responsibility for their part of the friendship. The friendships are characterized by the characters accepting one another for who they are and not trying to change them, which gives agency to all parties involved.

In addition to the friendships forming on the page, there is a case to be made for children seeing themselves and their friends in the storyline. In both realistic and less realistic circumstances, friendship is an overarching theme throughout the books. Moreover, to readers, characters in books may well feel like friends. As a child reads an individual book or series of books, they become attached to the characters; they find themselves hoping for the best and, for instance, understanding the motivation for the character's actions. The connections between

agency and friendship are apparent in the books, and the characters exercise their agency when developing or sustaining friendships. I observed many enactments of agency, such as self-reliance and confidence, between friends.

Table 5.1

Titles within Each Category of Agency Portrayal

Activists	Survivors	Problem Solvers	Friends
• *The Cardboard Kingdom* • *Wishtree*	• *Amulet: The Stonekeeper* • *Bone Volume One: Out of Boneville* • *The Cardboard Kingdom* • *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* • *Refugee* • *The Last Kids on Earth and the Nightmare King*	• *Can I Be Your Dog* • *Captain Underpants* • *Click* • *Cookie Fiasco* • *Creepy Pair of Underwear* • *Dog Man* • *Ghosts* • *Pete the Cat and the New Guy* • *Sisters* • *The Cardboard Kingdom* • *The Day the Crayons Quit* • *The Perfect Tea Party* • *The Pigeon Needs a Bath*	• *Big Nate and Friends* • *The Cardboard Kingdom* • *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Dog Days* • *Fly Guy's Big Family* • *Dork Diaries: Tales from a Not-so-Happy Birthday* • *I Really Like Slop* • *The Baby-Sitter's Club: Kristy's Great Idea*

These categories of children's literature are not exhaustive but provide an initial connection for conversations about the books and their characters—a starting point for book talkers (school librarians) and book listeners (children) to engage in deep conversations. Children's literature sparks a desire in children to learn how to be active in the world around them.

Children as Agents of Their Own Reading

Equitable access to age-appropriate books from a school library during and after the school day removes access barriers that would limit library use by children. Along with that access, children should be able to choose what they read. In this regard, "voice and choice" is a simple phrase that encompasses the opportunities for children to talk about and choose the books they read. The ability to choose empowers children and affords them experiences that potentially extend beyond those of books prescribed or assigned by others. By vicariously learning through characters and stories, they can gain a greater understanding of their own identity. We must remember, "Literature expands children's life spaces through inquires that take them outside the boundaries of their lives to other places, times, and ways of living" (Short, 2012, p.12).

Giving children a voice and choice to choose what they read is likely to motivate them as readers and diversify their book choices. When children read books they have chosen, they are not only reading for their enjoyment but also acting as agents of their own experiences. In addition, they gain a sense of empowerment from reading deep and powerful stories regardless of the classification of the book, including books that we as adults might otherwise overlook as meaningful reading material. Philip Williams (2017) asks, "How much are we listening to student voice, being responsive to student voice, and most importantly, enabling student voice?" (p. 11). This question purposefully advocates for moving the focus from the librarian to the student.

Although *Dog Man* (Pilkey, 2018), *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Dog Days* (Kinney, 2017), *Dork Diaries: Tales from a Not-so-Happy Birthday* (Russell, 2018), and *Big Nate and Friends* (Pierce, 2012) stood out as having enactments of agency, I would label them as high-quality, meaningful reading material in a school library. However, three out of these four books had over

150 circulations during the dates included in this study. The *Dog Man* series and the *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* series had over 400 and 300 circulations, respectively (Appendix D). This stands out as an opportunity for school librarians to trust their children to choose books for their reading entertainment. When children are allowed to choose what they read, they read more, longer, and later in life (Krashen, 2011). This demonstration of agency, by being part of a group that is reading these series or books, can positively influence how children see themselves (Smith, 1988), and as this CCA has revealed, their choices are important, considering the potential influences their reading choices hold.

Implications for Librarians and Other Educators

The findings from this study promote the need for librarians and other educators to understand agency and the development thereof. Their understanding of agency will enable them to discuss it in light of the significance of agency in books and in real life. This critical undertaking also presents an opportunity for school librarians to read the books already in their collection, as well as those they are considering adding to their collection, with a critical eye to engage with children. As Sylvia Vardell (2014) stated, school librarians have the following opportunity:

> Through our own modeling, as we talk about books and through our sensitivity to the special needs of each child reader, we are in a unique place to usher children into the world of books. What a privilege! But what a responsibility, too, because this also means sometimes putting aside our own personal preferences in seeking out the right book for the right reader. (p. 3)

In addition, books with more specific aspects of agency, focusing on more in-depth sociopolitical or emotional issues, might be included in librarians' recommendations. Having children gain a deeper understanding of the characters; their predicaments; and their experiences, as the characters in this study experienced, would position them as change agents in their own lives.

As stated above, the findings from this study point to the need to endorse and share books in engaging ways, focusing on the books in library collections. Access to books containing the voices of those who have been silenced or marginalized is invaluable for school libraries. Understanding the enactments of agency in each book would further develop a school librarian's ability to curate a collection and aid children in choosing books from the library. Additionally, the books chosen must create opportunities for the reader to connect with the characters. As Jen Aggleton (2018) suggests, "involving children in the development of children's collections helps to extend children's agency over the culture they create from reading children's books. ....it is also likely to result in a collection of books which children are more interested in reading" (p. 8). This is also an opening for dialogue between librarian and child. Children often open up to a librarian more than they would to a classroom teacher. Being able to talk about their feelings, personal responses, and experiences related to books is another step towards the library becoming an agency-making space for children.

In addition to understanding their collections, librarians could collaborate with classroom teachers. Professional development is an opportunity for librarians to open a dialogue with classroom teachers regarding the influence of books on children's agency development. While sharing information about agency development, the librarian and teachers could explore and share insights into the enactments of agency within the books, from the simplest picture book to more involved chapter books. This is not a one-time professional development opportunity, but a multistep process for all involved. Classroom teachers must value the school librarian as a resource for knowledge, especially when it comes to children's literature use as part of the curriculum. This interdependent relationship begins with dialogue and the desire to give children books to read, which should be the goal of a school librarian and classroom teacher.

Implications for Future Research

This study is an important step in understanding the agency development of children as associated with school libraries. The next step in this research path is to examine how children perceive the book characters' enactments of agency. Children's interactions and reactions to the characters would further this topic. Potential research opportunities with school librarians regarding children's selections of books, their perceptions, roles, and how they see agency is another implication. Another prospective topic is awareness of intended and unintended personal bias on the part of the school librarian when curating a collection. This is an opportunity for school librarians to examine how book promotions, displays, and the ways in which school librarians make book references have the potential to influence the books that children check out.

While the diversity of characters was not part of the design or purpose of this study, the content analysis brought about questions regarding this critical aspect of children's literature. Diversity was present in these books, although not regarding some of the cultural and ethnic issues that are recognized as significant in the field. Potential future research might respond to questions such as the following: How do diversity and agency interact? In what ways do children notice the diversity of characters? What roles do diverse characters play; are they main or secondary characters? Are diverse characters portrayed realistically?

Conclusion

The research question for this study asks the following: How is agency enacted, if at all, by the characters in the most circulated books from three elementary school libraries in a midsized school district in the southwest? I found enactments of agency in each book—some more involved than others, but enactments of agency nonetheless. These enactments suggest that children's literature contains characters that can shape who children are, what they think about

the world around them, and how they respond to their circumstances. As mentioned in Chapter 2, "…literature provides opportunities to explore identities, contexts, and constructs that they will undoubtedly encounter in their lives" (Dunkerly-Bean and Bean, 2015, p. 2). Through the experiences of the characters, the selected books provide opportunities for children to identify, learn, and grow from the characters. With our diverse student populations, we must acknowledge varied agency-making experiences and work toward the library becoming an agency-making space. By beginning this line of research, focused on the enactment of agency by the characters in children's literature, this study forges a path to understanding the development of agency in children on a deeper level.

APPENDIX A

DATA COLLECTION TABLE

	(Book Title)	(Book Title)	(Book Title)
Part 1			
Focalization (POV): Whose story is being told? From who's POV?			
Social processes of characters: Who has the power? Who has the agency?			
Closure/ ending: How is the story resolved? What are the assumptions in the story closure?			
Other, additional thoughts			
Part 2			
Descriptor			
Autonomy/Individual Freedom			
Self-Determination			
Self-Reliance			
Confidence			
Finding their own voice			
Acting as agents of experience			
Taking personal responsibility			
Influencing change in others and the community at large			
Influencing change in themselves			
Other – Little to no ability to demonstrate agency or power by the main character			

APPENDIX B

SCHOOL DEMOGRAPHICS

		School					
		A		**B**		**C**	
State Rating		C		B		C	
Total # Students		634		384		430	
Ethnicity	African American	58	9%	16	4%	35	8%
	Hispanic	219	35%	54	14%	266	62%
	White	311	49%	282	74%	111	25%
	American Indian	1	0%	2	1%	2	1%
	Asian	42	7%	24	6%	10	2%
	Pacific Islander	2	0%	1	0%	2	1%
	2 or more races	1	0%	5	1%	4	1%
Economic Disadvantaged		349		19		345	
At-Risk		175		50		288	
ELL		259		12		197	
Mobility Rate		62		18		95	

Note: Data from Texas Education Agency, *2019-20 School Report Card*

APPENDIX C

INDIVIDUAL SCHOOL LISTS OF MOST CIRCULATED BOOKS

Books that are repeated on the list are repeated in the school's catalogue.

Title	Total Circulations	Date Range Total
SCHOOL A		
Dog Man.	154	73
Amulet. The stonekeeper	173	55
Dog Man. Dog Man and Cat Kid	120	50
The Baby-sitters club. Kristy's great idea	79	46
Diary of a wimpy kid : dog days	258	43
Dog Man. Unleashed	146	43
Dog Man. brawl of the wild	79	42
Diary of a wimpy kid : Rodrick rules	216	40
Wings of fire: the graphic novel.	62	38
Creepy pair of underwear!	67	35
Diary of a wimpy kid : Greg Heffley's journal	362	35
The Baby-sitters club. Mary Anne saves the day	75	33
Diary of a wimpy kid : cabin fever	184	32
Diary of a wimpy kid : the last straw	122	31
Dog Man	92	30
The Baby-sitter's club	52	29
Dog Man	80	27
Bone.	109	27
Amulet. The stonekeepers curse	71	26
Diary of a wimpy kid : the ugly truth	171	26
The pigeon needs a bath!	180	24
The Baby-sitters club. Claudia and mean Janine	37	24
Click	26	23
Pete the cat and the new guy	75	21
The perfect tea party	50	21
Amulet. The last council	62	21
Pete the cat and his magic sunglasses	104	20
Amulet. The cloud searchers	77	20
Big Nate : the crowd goes wild!	133	20
Big Nate and friends	81	20
SCHOOL B		
Dog Man	124	71
Dog Man. Dog Man and Cat Kid	182	67
Smile	252	62
Dog Man. brawl of the wild	76	57
Dog Man.	103	54

Title	Total Circulations	Date Range Total
Dog Man	139	51
The pigeon needs a bath!	299	48
Sisters	209	45
Dog Man. Unleashed	137	43
Ghosts	178	41
I really like slop!	194	39
Rebound	59	37
The pigeon has to go to school!	35	35
Wonder	283	34
Saving Winslow	44	32
Dog man for whom the ball rolls	30	30
Can I be your dog?	34	28
Waiting is not easy!	196	28
We are growing!	69	27
Eleven	82	27
Refugee	70	26
The cookie fiasco	76	25
The Babysitter's club Kristy's big day	43	24
The Baby-sitters club. Mary Anne saves the day	147	24
I survived the sinking of the Titanic, 1912	172	24
Two dogs in a trench coat go to school	34	24
Don't let the pigeon drive the bus!	219	23
Don't let the pigeon stay up late!	184	23
Wishtree	39	23
The cardboard kingdom	32	23
SCHOOL C		
The duckling gets a cookie!?	300	82
Refugee	134	56
Tales from a not-so-happy birthday	66	53
Diary of a wimpy kid : the meltdown	50	43
Fly Guy's big family	104	42
The pigeon needs a bath!	256	42
The day the crayons came home	210	41
Diary of an awesome friendly kid : Rowley Jefferson's journal	40	40
The pigeon has to go to school!	40	33
Diary of a wimpy kid : the long haul	278	33
Harry Potter and the sorcerer's stone	359	32
Tales from a not-so-perfect pet sitter	194	32
Amulet.	56	31

Title	Total Circulations	Date Range Total
Diary of a wimpy kid : the third wheel	341	31
The last kids on Earth and the Nightmare King	80	30
Captain Underpants and the big, bad battle of the Bionic Booger Boy.	46	30
Tales from a not-so-glam TV star :	298	30
The day the crayons quit	282	29
Dog Man. Unleashed	76	29
Crenshaw	106	28
Wishtree	40	28
The one and only Ivan	155	28
Wonder	227	28
Eleven	68	28
I'm a frog!	56	27
Tales from a not-so-friendly frenemy	163	27
Pete the cat and the missing cupcakes	91	26
Tales from a not-so-secret crush catastrophe	44	25
Don't let the pigeon drive the bus!	66	24
Fly Guy's amazing tricks	232	23

APPENDIX D

COMBINED BOOK LISTS IN SERIES ORDER

Books selected for the series are highlighted yellow, repeated copies were consolidated, the eliminated books were not included in this chart.

Series Name	Book Title	Total circulations	Date range total Circulations 2019-2020 sy
Amulet	*Amulet. The stonekeeper*	229	86
	Amulet. The stonekeepers curse	71	26
	Amulet. The last council	62	21
	Amulet. The cloud searchers	77	20
Big Nate	*Big Nate : the crowd goes wild!*	81	20
	Big Nate and friends	133	20
Bone	*Bone.*	109	27
no series	*Can I be your dog?*	34	28
Captain Underpants	*Captain Underpants and the big, bad battle of the Bionic Booger Boy.*	46	30
Click	*Click*	26	23
Creepy Carrots	*Creepy pair of underwear!*	67	35
Wimpy Kid	*Diary of a wimpy kid : Dog days*	258	43
	Diary of a wimpy kid : The meltdown	50	43
	Diary of a wimpy kid : Rodrick rules	216	40
	Diary of an awesome friendly kid : Rowley Jefferson's journal	40	40
	Diary of a wimpy kid : Greg Hefley's journal	362	35
	Diary of a wimpy kid :The long haul	278	33
	Diary of a wimpy kid : Cabin fever	184	32
	Diary of a wimpy kid : The last straw	122	31
	Diary of a wimpy kid : The third wheel	341	31
	Diary of a wimpy kid : The ugly truth	171	26
Dog Man	*Dog Man*	692	308
	Dog Man. brawl of the wild	76	57
	Dog Man. brawl of the wild	79	42
	Dog Man. Dog Man and Cat Kid	182	67
	Dog Man. Dog Man and Cat Kid	120	50

Series Name	Book Title	Total circulations	Date range total Circulations 2019-2020 sy
	Dog man for whom the ball rolls	30	30
	Dog Man. Unleashed	146	43
	Dog Man. Unleashed	137	43
	Dog Man. Unleashed	76	29
Pigeon	*Don't let the pigeon drive the bus!*	285	47
	Don't let the pigeon stay up late!	184	23
	The pigeon has to go to school!	75	68
	The pigeon needs a bath!	555	90
	The duckling gets a cookie!?	300	82
	The pigeon needs a bath!	180	24
Fly Guy	*Fly Guy's amazing tricks*	232	23
	Fly Guy's big family	104	42
no series	*Ghosts*	178	41
Harry Potter	*Harry Potter and the sorcerer's stone*	359	32
Elephant and Piggie	*I really like slop!*	194	39
	Waiting is not easy!	196	28
	We are growing!	69	27
	I'm a frog!	56	27
Pete the Cat	*Pete the cat and the new guy*	75	26
	Pete the cat and his magic sunglasses	104	20
	Pete the cat and the missing cupcakes	91	21
no series	*Refugee*	204	82
no series	*Saving Winslow*	44	32
Sisters	*Sisters*	209	62
	Smile	252	45
Dork Diaries	*Tales from a not-so-friendly frenemy*	163	27
	Tales from a not-so-glam TV star :	298	30
	Tales from a not-so-happy birthday	66	53
	Tales from a not-so-perfect pet sitter	194	32
	Tales from a not-so-secret crush catastrophe	44	25

Series Name	Book Title	Total circulations	Date range total Circulations 2019-2020 sy
The Baby-Sitter's Club	*The Baby-sitter's club. Kristy's great idea*	131	75
	The Babysitter's club Kristy's big day	43	24
	The Baby-sitters club. Claudia and mean Janine	37	24
	The Baby-sitters club. Mary Anne saves the day	75	33
	The Baby-sitters club. Mary Anne saves the day	147	24
The Cardboard Kingdom	*The cardboard kingdom*	32	23
no series	*The cookie fiasco*	76	25
Crayons	*The day the crayons came home*	210	29
	The day the crayons quit	282	41
The Last Kids on Earth	*The last kids on Earth and the Nightmare King*	80	30
no series	*The perfect tea party*	50	21
no series	*Wishtree*	79	51

APPENDIX E

SAMPLE OF COMPLETED DATA COLLECTION TABLES

	Saving Winslow (F)	Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Dog Days (FI)	Last Kids on Earth and the Nightmare King (FI)
Part 1.			
Focalization (POV): Whose story is being told? From who's POV?	Louie- 10 yo, doesn't have the best luck taking care of animals. He takes on the task of keeping Winslow alive. We also meet Nora, who is very affected by the death of her infant brother and her dog. We hear a lot about Gus- the older brother who is in the army and is missed by all. The neighbor has a very cranky baby- Boom-Boom, who cries a lot. Mrs. Tooley doesn't like Winslow (we find out a lot about her as well). Mack (13), Louie's friend works at the feed store- he gets all swoony over Claudine (Nora's sister).	Greg Heffley is the main character and the story is told in first-person narrative. Rowley is his best friend- we see him throughout the story.	Jack Sullivan- 13 years old. June, Quint, Dirk "last kids on earth" after the zombie apocalypse. The Nightmare King AKA the King Wretch (dragon type monster) He is the main antagonist. Monster friends round out the characters. They live in a treehouse in Wakefield, MA. The book is told from Jack's POV.
Social processes of characters: Who has the power? Who has the agency?	Louie doesn't have a lot of power, but he wants to take care of Winslow. His parents give him that opportunity. Mom is very skeptical and doesn't want to "watch him die". The dad and mom finally let him keep it.	He thinks he does and he really thinks that he is in the right. Takes little to no responsibility for his actions… blames others like Rowley.	As Jack is getting ready for the adventure that will hopefully convenience his friends that Wakefield is the place to be, the Nightmare King- King Wretch invades the kids dreams. (He is showing them what the future of Wakefield could be.) The NK has a lot of power as he invades their dreams. Jack and his friends battle the NK, showing a lot of agency during the experience.
Closure/ ending: How is the story resolved? What are the assumptions in the story closure?	Winslow goes to live at Uncle Pete's Farm. Winslow is doing great and has grown a lot. We also see Nora and Louie develop a deep bond. The neighbor finally settles down.	He and Rowley played in the video game contest (which the VG store doesn't know about). G & R make up after their fight. R beats G. Greg decides that he "should have stayed inside". Dad wasn't speaking to him, but they rebonded over their mutual dislike of "Lil Cutie" still being published.	The book ends with the kids listening to the radio again- hearing the other survivors and trying to decide what to do next.
Other, additional thoughts	This is a very Charlotte's Web type story. Winslow is a donkey and is "saved" by Louie.	He thinks everything revolves around him- think Mr. Jefferson at the country club, he wasn't invited back.	Billed as a combo of the Walking Dead and Wimpy Kid series. Has the same basic introspective feeling as DOWK, but is much more mature. Jack has legit worries since he doesn't have any family to return to and his friends do. When they hear the

	Saving Winslow (F)	Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Dog Days (FI)	Last Kids on Earth and the Nightmare King (FI)
			radio broadcast he begins to freak out and tries to find a way to keep things the same.
Part 2.			
Autonomy/Individual Freedom	When he decides to take care of Winslow- and when he knows it's time to let Winslow go.	Goes through Rodrick's things- not his brightest idea.	The whole premise of the books is individual freedom to a certain extent. Jack and his friends are the "last kids". They have to take care of themselves and each other. They can do what they want, when they want- June acts as the mature one of the group- they all have to be rather mature actually.
Self-Determination	All of the letters from his brother make his determined to remember Gus and not give up on him. He is also determined to help Winslow survive, Nora to feel better about everthing after her loss.	various scems to make money- think lawn work company	Jack is determined to to show his friends how great it is in Wakefield, to have their own autonomy and that they are safe there.
Self-Reliance	He feeds and takes care of Winslow- he tries to keep Winslow out of trouble	various scems to make money- think lawn work company	Again, the whole premise is about relying on himself and friends.
Confidence	In his ability to be a good friend and caretaker.	Negative incident- when he tells Rowley to do all the lawn work.	He is confident in their ability to survive the fight against the King Wretch.
Finding their own voice	Louie lifted the donkey from the basket and held it close. It smelled of wet hay. It put its face against Louie's neck and made that noise again. *Please*. "Okay," Louie said. "I accept the mission." "What mission?" "To save this pitiful motherless donkey."	When he and dad stop talking, Greg makes the first step to work it out.	During the fight w the King Wretch, he makes statements vocalizing his belief that they can defeat the KW.
Acting as agents of experience	The whole act of helping Winslow is an experience for sure.	Make his own decision to stay up all night- again not his brightest idea.	The whole story is an experience
Taking personal responsibility	This whole books is taking responsibility- for himself, for Winslow & so on. Stand out experiences- when Louie has to give Winslow his shot,	Country club smoothie debt- see ways to make money	He takes personal responsibility when he decides to convenience his friends that Wakefield is the place to be
Influencing change in others and the community at large	Louie takes it upon himself to befriend Nora and try to make her less sad. She is worried that Winslow will die like her baby brother and her dog.	Very little	He - his friends realize they are better off working together.

	Saving Winslow (F)	Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Dog Days (FI)	Last Kids on Earth and the Nightmare King (FI)
	He makes her play and bond with Winslow. It does seem to help Nora. Winslow alerts everyone to a fire next door and saves Mrs. Tooley and the baby- then they like him too.		
Influencing change in themselves	Louie begins to mature as he takes care of Winslow. In the end he decides to give Winslow to his Uncle Pete who can use him as a LGD- Little Guardian Donkey or Little Gray Donkey.	Rethinking how he treats Rowley	He begins to realize that as long as he has his friends it's ok if they find more survivors.
Other – Little to no ability to demonstrate agency or power by the main character	When animal control comes to the house to tell them they can't keep Winslow. Louie felt helpless.	When his Dad had to come get him from the beach. (He actually hadn't done anything too bad.)	He has bad memories of being abandoned by his foster family at the beginning of the zombie apocolypse.

Samples 4-6

	Amulet: The Stonekeeper (GN)	Click (GN)	Can I Be Your Dog (PB)
	Part 1.		
Focalization (POV): Whose story is being told? From who's POV?	Emily Hayes, her brother Navin, mom Karen, father David (deceased), Trellis, Miskit, Cogsley, Bottle, Ruby, Theodore, Grandfather Silas, Slug	Olive- 5th grader, has multiple groups of friends- The Oddballs, The Dojo Duo, Team Players, Glam Girls, The Squad, Bashful Band, the fam (mom, brother, aunt). Olive's POV.	Arfy- the dog, told via letters from Arfy to various people on Butternut St. and their responses.
Social processes of characters: Who has the power? Who has the agency?	In the beginning- mom, after the death of the father they have to move to Grandfather's house. After the Amulet is found, mom is kidnapped- Emily has the power of the amulet and exhibits a great deal of agency.	Olive wants to fit in. Feels left out- one of her friends hands up to talk to a boy, then her friends begin to group up for the talent show-- she feels like they don't want her. Her friends are all excited. After she decides to host instead of joining a group, friends get unhappy. Over the course of the end of the book they begin to understand.	Arfy wants a new family- he enacts agency each time he writes a letter to a new family.
Closure/ ending: How is the story resolved? What are the assumptions in the story closure?	The kids with the help of the anthro. Anthro. Characters "unusual friends" help rescue mom, but she is in a coma. The book ends with a setup for the next book. Cliffhanger.	story ends with Olive hosting the show and doing great job, her mom and aunt are getting along, Olive's friends are happy with her again.	The story ends with the letter carrier leaving Arfy a letter asking him to be her dog. The reader takes away a sense of closure, knowing that Arfy has a safe home with his person.

	Amulet: The Stonekeeper (GN)	Click (GN)	Can I Be Your Dog (PB)
Other, additional thoughts	Multiple anthropomorphic characters- who aid the kids.	This is a coming of age story. Friendships are paramount. Self-discovery. Frames are well formed	The end of the book gives tips on how to help animals in need.
Part 2.			
Autonomy/Individual Freedom	She feels like it is taken away in the beginning, but she becomes more sure of herself as the story goes on.	Wants to do her own thing instead of joining a group	He wants a new family and writes letters- he accepts the mail carrier's offer to be her dog.
Self-Determination	The amulet makes her more confident- which was already inside her, which leads to her self-determination/reliance to save her mom.	She is determined to be a good host- she watches videos of other women who have hosted shows.	Arfy never gives up. He writes a letter to every house and business son the street.
Self-Reliance	The amulet makes her more confident- which was already inside her, which leads to her self-determination/reliance to save her mom.		He lives in a soggy cardboard box in an alley. He had to find the box and become self-reliant in order to survive.
Confidence	The amulet makes her more confident- which was already inside her, which leads to her self-determination/reliance to save her mom.	Hosting!!	Each time he writes a letter he is confident that it will work out.
Finding their own voice	Fighting the being that took her mom.	During Aunt Molly and mom's argument Olive yells 'stop' - explains that hosting was her idea and not Molly's	Writing the letters.
Acting as agents of experience	She had to choose to accept the amulet's power.	She wants to participate in the talent show in her own way.	Arfy wants a new family- he enacts agency each time he writes a letter to a new family.
Taking personal responsibility	She accepts the amulet's power and sets off on the journey to save her mom w her brother and new friends.	Navigating her new found willingness to be her own person. She is clear about her intentions.	Arfy wants a new family- he enacts agency each time he writes a letter to a new family.
Influencing change in others and the community at large	Her new family community is changed when Emily has the amulet-- they show they believe in her.	She was able to show her mom she could be successful and that she is growing up.	The impact he had on the letter carrier and the final note in the book on how people can help homeless animals. .
Influencing change in themselves	Emily sees the good/power in herself.	Making her own way and speaking up for herself. Olive is not normally one to speak up.	Arfy begins to have negative self-esteem and it changes his reactions.
Other – Little to no ability to demonstrate agency or power by the main character	She feels like she isn't ready to handle all fo the power that comes with the amulet.	Felt very sad when her friends were leaving her out or hanging out without her.	Through various letters from people on the street- Arfy is rejected and feels awful each time he gets a rejection letter (until the very end).

Samples 7-9

	Creepy Pair of Underwear (PB)	I Really Like Slop (PB)	Pete The Cat & the New Guy (PB)
Part 1.			
Focalization (POV): Whose story is being told? From who's POV?	Jasper Rabbit- he feels that he is very brave- until his underwear starts to glow and reappear even after it has been discarded.	Elephant (Gerald) and Piggy, dual narration. First person POV. Piggie is trying to persuade Gerald/Elephant to eat slop bc Piggie really likes it. She really wants him to try it.	POV- Pete The Cat and the new guy Gus who is a platypus. We also meet Wise Old Owl, Squirrel, Grumpy Toad, & Octopus. The story is told by Pete who meets Gus when he moves into the neighborhood.
Social processes of characters: Who has the power? Who has the agency?	Jasper wants to be a big boy rabbit. However, the underwear has the power, as it glows. Jasper over and over tries to get rid of the underwear and maintain his agency in the situations.	Piggy is acting as chef and desperately wants Elephant to try slop- she has the power. Elephant, in an enactment of agency decides to try the slop.	Pete wishes he and Gus could be friends, but Pete is shy and is nervous to make friends. Pete begins to take control when Gus meets Pete's friends and they want him to join in whatever they are doing. Gus doesn't think he can or is unable to join them in their activity. Pete wishes he could help Gus and that Gus would play with him.
Closure/ ending: How is the story resolved? What are the assumptions in the story closure?	After repeatedly trying to get rid of the undies, Jasper digs a deep hole and buries it. After all of this, Jasper realizes he is still afraid of the dark. He digs up the underwear, even goes so far as to buy more with his allowance. He strings them all up as nightlights. Taking it all upon himself, showing a great deal of agency.	Elephant hates the slop, but states that he is glad he tried it. Trying something new isn't always bad, be honest about your feelings. Piggie is pleased that Gerald, Elephant, tried it.	Pete finds Gus playing an instrument of his own in his own backyard. Pete is thrilled that Gus found something that he can do, which is also something Pete and his friends can do too.
Other, additional thoughts	Age old dilemma of growing up and feeling mature, while still having fears that make him feel little.	Very simplistic and humorous way to show the give and take of friendship. Not a very deep story, but one that could easily resonate with children.	Rhyming story about finding your own way and not letting what you can't do get you down.
Part 2.			
Autonomy/Individual Freedom	Jasper decides he wants to wear the cool glow in the dark undies.	Gerald shows his IF by standing by his assessment that he does not like slop.	Pete is in a band and wants to make a new friend.
Self-Determination	When is rather frightened of the undies he is determined to get rid of them. He buries, hides, mails them to try to get rid of the creepy undies.	Piggie is determined to get Gerald to try the slop- which he finally does.	Pete was determined to help Gus find something he could do. He even states "Pete said don't be sad don't be blue there is something everyone can do"

	Creepy Pair of Underwear (PB)	I Really Like Slop (PB)	Pete The Cat & the New Guy (PB)
Self-Reliance	He finally realizes that he can make his own decisions regarding the undies- he decides to use them as a nightlight.		He kept walking around the neighborhood with Gus to see if there was something they could do together.
Confidence	He feels like his new undies make him a big bunny- "Dad! I'm not a little bunny anymore!" said Jasper.	Piggie is very confident that if Gerald tries it he will like it.	Repeated refrain of -- don't be sad don't be blue there is something everyone can do"
Finding their own voice	He feels like his new undies make him a big bunny- "Dad! I'm not a little bunny anymore!" said Jasper.	Gerald uses his own voice to unequivocally state that he does not like slop in the end, but is glad he tried it,	"You're not like me and I am not like you, but I think being different is really very cool."
Acting as agents of experience	Page 1- when Jasper decides that he needs the creepy underwear.	Gerald decided to try the slop, even if he didn't initially want to.	Pete goes around to the other friends with Gus to find something he can do.
Taking personal responsibility	He takes responsibility when he acts like a big bunny.		They all joined the band together and Pete was very happy.
Influencing change in others and the community at large	He influences a change in his family and the way his parents look at him.	Piggie wanted to share something that she and all pigs like. "Eating slop is part of pig culture" she states.	Repeated refrain of -- don't be sad don't be blue there is something everyone can do"
Influencing change in themselves	He realizes that maybe he is not a big bunny, but not a little kid- somewhere in-between.	Piggie really wanted to change Gerald's mind about the slop.	He started out riding his skateboard by Gus's house multiple times- finally talks to Gus.
Other – Little to no ability to demonstrate agency or power by the main character	When the underwear kept coming back!	NA	When Gus couldn't find something he could do- "On Saturday Pete hoped Gus would come out to play. I wish Gus wasn't sad I wish Gus wasn't blue. I wish there was something we could do."

APPENDIX F

BASIC BOOK INFORMATION

Title	Protagonist	Characters of Color	Human/ Anthropomorphic	Setting	Basic topics covered	Illustrations	Types of Illustrations
Amulet: The Stonekeeper	female	No	Anthropomorphic secondary	US	family, loss, becoming the person in charge as a child	color	pencil, marker, then digital color, manga
Big Nate and Friends	male	Yes- secondary	human	US	coming of age, personal identity, friends, making decisions	color	pencil, marker, simplistic
Bone Volume One: Out of Boneville	male	No	Anthropomorphic with Human Sec	unknown	family, friends, battle between good and evil	color	ink and paintbrush- intricate
Can I Be Your Dog	male	Yes- secondary	Anthropomorphic w Human sec	unknown	chosen family, friendship, animal adoption, letter writing	color	digital
Captain Underpants and the Big , Bad Battle of the Bionic Booger Boy Part 1	male	Yes	Human	unknown	decision making, friendship, bullying	B/W	digital drawings
Click	female	Yes- Secondary	human	unknown	coming of age, personal identity	color	inked with digital color added
Creepy Pair of Underwear	male	N/A	Anthropomorphic	unknown	coming of age, personal identity	color	pencil then digitized
Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Dog Days	male	No	human	US	family, friends, personal identity	B/W	Flash- computer aided drawings
Dog Man	male	Yes- secondary	half man/ half dog	unknown	personal identity	color	very simplistic- digital drawings
Fly Guy's Big Family	male	No	Anthropomorphic, Human secondary	unknown	family, friends, chosen family	color	digital
Ghosts	female	Yes	human	US	family, culture	color	India ink with digital color added

Title	Protagonist	Characters of Color	Human/ Anthropomorphic	Setting	Basic topics covered	Illustrations	Types of Illustrations
Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone	male	Yes-secondary	human	International	chosen family, friends, personal identity	B/W chapter headings, Color cover	pencil then digitized
I Really Like Slop	1 female, 1 male	N/A	Anthropomorphic	unknown	friends, selflessness	color	pigment and computer generated
Pete the Cat & The New Guy	male	N/A	Anthropomorphic	unknown	friendship, problem solver	color	paint
Refugee	2 male, 1 female	Yes	human	International	Holocaust, Escaping Cuba, Syrian Civil War	B/W cover only	NA
Saving Winslow	male	No	human	US	taking responsibility, sacrificing,	B/W cover only	chapter headings-pen and ink
Sisters	female	No	human	US	family, personal identity	color	India ink with digital color added
Tales from a Not So Happy Birthday	female	No	human	US	personal identity, making choices/decision making	B/W	sharpie
The Baby Sitter's Club: Kristy's Great Idea	female	Yes-secondary	human	US	friendship, problem solver	color	India ink with digital color added
The Cardboard Kingdom	multiple characters-multiple genders	Yes	human	unknown	14 stories about wanting to belong, LGBTQ, domestic violence, divorce, bullying, gender stereo types	color	digital
The Cookie Fiasco	unknown-various animals	N/A	Anthropomorphic	unknown	fairness, thinking, friendship, problem solving	color	computer added color

Title	Protagonist	Characters of Color	Human/ Anthropomorphic	Setting	Basic topics covered	Illustrations	Types of Illustrations
The Day the Crayons Quit	crayons- no gender	N/A	Anthropomorphic Human secondary	unknown	standing up for themselves, decision making	color	crayon
The Last Kids on Earth and the Nightmare King	male	Yes- secondary	Anthropomorphic, Human secondary	US	friendship, chosen family,	B/W	marker
The Perfect Tea Party	female	No	human	International	decision making, being your authentic self	color	computer animated stills
The Pigeon Needs a Bath	ungendered- per the author	N/A	Anthropomorphic, Human secondary	unknown	decision making	color	pigment and computer generated
Wishtree	tree- no gender	Yes- secondary	Anthropomorphic, Human secondary	US	inclusion, cooperation, friendship,	B/W, color cover	pen and ink illustrations, minimalistic

APPENDIX G

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