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Exploring Portrayals of Black American Culture in Coretta Scott King Picturebooks Awarded from 2013 to 2020

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EXPLORING PORTRAYALS OF BLACK AMERICAN CULTURE IN
CORETTA SCOTT KING PICTUREBOOKS AWARDED FROM 2013 TO 2020

by

REBECCA JESSE

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the Honors in the Major Program in Elementary Education
in the College of Community Innovation and Education
and in the Burnett Honors College
at the University of Central Florida
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Thesis Chair: Dr. Sherron Killingsworth Roberts

ABSTRACT

Children's literature is crucial in shaping the way young children see and think about themselves in the eyes of society. Although diversity is increasing, a need remains for books that feature Black children as well as accurate portrayals of their lifestyles. According to the Cooperation Children's Book Center (2020), only 400 books out of 3,299 are about Black Americans, while a little over half of that number are actually written by Black authors. Why should children of color have to suffice with reading books that have no connection to their real-world life? Black children should have access to and enjoy quality, award winning books that accurately represent their everyday lifestyles and not merely retell stories from the past. To address these concerns, this thesis examined 16 of the Coretta Scott King (CSK) Award and Honor picturebooks, awarded in 2013-2020, to explore the contents in terms of themes to support young Black American children on their journey of finding meaning and joy in reading. Within the analysis, a total of 16 picturebooks showed that 8 featured Black Americans in struggling contexts highlighting historical events, while 8 focused on the everyday lives and culture of Black Americans. Delving deeper, two trends, artistic expression and self-confidence, were identified. Within the eight books focusing on everyday Black culture, four themes were agreed upon: 1) Navigating real societal problems within the Black community, 2) Realizing empowerment within ourselves, 3) Valuing relationships with others, and 4) Finding value in everyday activities.

DEDICATION

To my mother, who taught me the value of education and pushed me to always do my very best to achieve everything I want in life.

To my father, for navigating me through this thing called life in the gentlest way possible.

To my aunts, for raising me to be the independent woman I am today.

To my sister, for always supporting me and being there for me through thick and thin.

To Kervin, for always pushing me to be the best version of myself, ALWAYS.

To my professors, thank you for creating a space for me to be myself and successfully become the great educators you have all been to me.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
ANSWERING THE QUESTION: WHAT IS A PICTUREBOOK?	6
ANSWERING THE QUESTION: WHY PICTUREBOOKS?	7
ANSWERING THE QUESTIONS: WHY CORETTA SCOTT KING AWARD BOOKS?	9
REPRESENTATIONS OF BLACK AMERICANS IN CHILDREN’S LITERATURE	12
THE BENEFITS OF UTILIZING PICTUREBOOKS PORTRAYING AUTHENTIC BLACK AMERICAN CULTURE	15
SELECTION OF THE TIME FRAME FOR EXAMINATION	18
SELECTION OF THE TARGET POPULATION FOR EXAMINATION	19
METHODS FOR ANALYSIS	23
POSITIONALITY	25
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION	27
ANALYZING THE PICTUREBOOKS	27
<i>Table 1: Original list of 16, divided into two Categories</i>	29
<i>Table 2: Reorganization of the 16 books</i>	32
PICTUREBOOKS FOR EXPLORATION AND PICTUREBOOK SUMMARIES	34
<i>Crown: An ode to the fresh cut (Barnes, 2017)</i>	38
<i>Last stop on market street (de la Peña, 2015)</i>	38
<i>Sulwe (Nyong’o, 2019)</i>	38
<i>Each Kindness (Woodson, 2012)</i>	39
<i>Knock knock: My dad’s dream for me (Beaty, 2013)</i>	39
<i>In Plain Sight (Jackson, 2016)</i>	39
<i>H.O.R.S.E: The game of basketball and imagination (Myers, 2012)</i>	40
<i>Firebird: Ballerina Misty Copeland shows a young girl how to dance like the firebird (Copeland, 2014)</i>	40
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS	44
REVISITING AND SUMMARIZING TRENDS AND THEMES	44
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PARENTS AND TEACHERS	47

<i>Table 3: Recommended picturebooks</i>	48
EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS AND SIGNIFICANCE	51
RATIONALE AND LIMITATIONS FOR THE STUDY	52
NEXT STEPS AND FUTURE RESEARCH	53
APPENDIX A: GOOGLE FORM CODING SHEET	56
APPENDIX B: TEACHER RESOURCES/BOOK LIST	58
CHILDREN'S LITERATURE CITED	61
REFERENCES	65

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Growing up throughout elementary, middle, and high school, I attended Title 1 schools. I have witnessed the lack of resources and materials firsthand and seen how these factors can impact a child's education. The Black American presence and culture was very prominent within my day-to-day life at school, regardless of if it were through a teacher, administrator, or students. However, throughout my entire K-12 and undergrad education, I was only taught by about three Black teachers (Carter Andrews, Castro, Cho, Petchauer, Richmond, & Floden, (2019); Rodriguez, 2021; Siddle-Walker, 2000). Once I realized this lack of representation, I knew I wanted to become a teacher. Being able to positively influence young Black children by molding and shaping their minds is truly inspiring. To let these children, know that they can be in my shoes and become anything they set their minds to is the ultimate goal.

As I progressed throughout my primary and secondary schooling, the picturebooks that were my favorite lacked representation of Black Americans. As a child, I did not put much thought behind this, but as I got into my teenage years, it slowly began to bother me. Fast forward to 2019-2020; I am entering my senior year of college, going through children's literature education courses which has allowed me to thoroughly analyze children's literature in its entirety including sociocultural influences and educational benefits. In these courses, I learned about analyzing books thoroughly in terms of looking at the illustrations, analyze the text, looking for the author's perspective, as well as looking at these books from a child's viewpoint and determining which books are best for instructional use. As I reflect on my childhood, I think back to the books I adored, for example, Kinney's (2007) *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Greg Heffley's*

journal, Park's (1993). *Junie B. Jones and her Big Fat Mouth*, and Dr. Seuss's (1957) *The Cat in the Hat*. In the present, salient moments of learning to be a teacher, I realize that these books have little to no Black Americans in them. Once my memory landed on an award-winning book that features a Black American child, *Snowy Day* by Ezra Jack Keats (1962), I was stunned to learn that the author was not Black American. I began to feel offended that most of my favorite books growing up had nothing to do with the Black American culture.

Therefore, I wanted to conduct research on and provide a recommendation of resources highlighting authentic, award-winning Black American picturebooks written and/or illustrated by Black Americans published from 2013 to 2020. I felt compelled to figure out why there are not many picturebooks that children of color can see themselves in. I thought to myself: How could I implement Black American picturebooks in my classroom as well as the classrooms of my colleagues and the personal libraries of the families I know? Children's literature plays such an important role in cultivating how children view themselves and the world around them. Bishop (1990) offers an explanation to this in terms of mirrors and windows. Bishop states,

"Books are sometimes windows, offering views of worlds that may be real or imagined, familiar or strange. These windows are also sliding glass doors, and readers have only to walk through in imagination to become part of whatever world has been created or recreated by the author. When lighting conditions are just right, however, a window can also be a mirror" (1990, p. 1).

When Black children cannot mirror themselves in the picturebooks they read, what does this tell them about how the world views them in terms of looks and as a whole? Or even in worth? Black American children need to have Black representations in children's literature. This

is crucial for children to find themselves within these stories. According to a study released by the Cooperative Children's Book Center at the University of Wisconsin (2013), only 94 of the 3,200 children's books published in 2013 were about Black Americans. Also, this same study shows only 400 out of 3,299 children's books published in 2020 were about Black Americans. Just in this seven-year gap, the numbers have gone up tremendously but are still nowhere near the number of books published in their respective years by Caucasian Americans. As a Black woman myself, this statistic is troubling. As a future educator, I wonder how children of color are going to find themselves, if they cannot find accurate representations in books that mirror their lives? Reading for pleasure is something most children should strive for, yet young Black students are constantly being fed books about other people and lives that have no correlation to their own lives and experiences.

This thesis examined the Coretta Scott King (CSK) Award and Honor books that are used with our youngest children (awarded 2013-2020), published between 2012 to 2019, as a population to explore the contents of Black American literature in terms of the themes portrayed in these books in order to support Black American children in their quest of reading for enjoyment and meaning. To explore the possible diverse contents of children's literature, this thesis researched and provided a recommendation of resources highlighting authentic, award-winning Black American picturebooks written and/or illustrated by Black Americans published from 2012 to 2019. Additionally, the recommendation of book resources, provided at the end of

the thesis, can be used to highlight and experience the culture of Black Americans and to make available for all parents and educators.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED RESEARCH LITERATURE

In producing an effective analysis of children's literature that would shape how educators and parents use Black American picturebooks, a thorough review of research related to Black American children's literature provides a rationale for studying the authenticity behind award winning Black American picturebooks written and/or illustrated by Black Americans themselves. As children of color progress into their educational careers, these children should be offered a sense of connection to their experiences with the books they read. Without an accurate account of the Black culture in picturebooks, it may become increasingly difficult for children of color to strive to read for pleasure. Much of the research reviewed for this thesis explores the diverse content of Black Americans children's literature along with how this may be used to benefit the children academically, emotionally, and mentally. This thesis offers hope to educators and families as well as tangible resources to move forward. The time has come for young Black American children to become accustomed and proud of seeing themselves in picturebooks, use that acquired confidence to enjoy reading, and succeed academically. The following chapter highlights the review of related research literature associated with this thesis along with authentic representations of Black Americans, and last, how teachers and students will benefit from utilizing picturebooks highlighting Black Americans.

ANSWERING THE QUESTION: WHAT IS A PICTUREBOOK?

To fully understand what a picturebook is, we must understand what this term entails: “A picturebook is text, illustrations, total design; an item of manufacture and a commercial product; a social, cultural, historical document, and foremost, an experience for a child. As an art form, it hinges on the interdependence of pictures and words, on the simultaneous display of two facing pages, and on the drama of the turning page” (Bader, 1976, p. 1). Another definition of what a picturebook represents is offered by Wolfenbarger and Sipe (2007) who state that “picturebooks represent a unique visual and literary art form that engages young readers and older readers in many levels of learning and pleasure” (p. 273). Sipe (2007) argues that “‘Picturebooks’ emphasize[s] the inextricable connection of words and pictures and the unique qualities of the form: a picturebook is not simply a book that happens to have pictures.” (p. 273). Therefore, one must conclude that a picturebook is a book where the story is dependent on the pictures and the words as a whole and these entities cannot be considered independently. The sum is truly greater than its parts in the case of picturebooks. A book without pictures enables the young reader to visualize and imagine a world in which they cannot physically see. Oftentimes, the concepts these readers are encouraged to visualize have yet to be introduced into their schema. A picturebook without words gives no real meaning behind the pictures which leaves it up to the child to interpret on their own. Young children should be able to use picturebooks to see and feel the emotions of the characters and dive deeply into the book’s illustrations of characters, plot, and setting and to imagine themselves in that moment through the total design of the book.

Hence, this thesis examined only picturebooks, and later determined to focus on Coretta Scott King Award winners and runners-up.

Picturebooks can be a powerful learning tool for children to learn about and understand different perspectives. Since picturebooks are often used in elementary schools, the text and illustrations that were traditionally offered to young Black students often do not offer the students a chance to connect and relate their own experiences to the book from the Black perspective. Having authentic literature for Black children to relate to is very important, because it is the best way to promote reading among young Black children, which perfectly notes the importance inherent in picturebooks.

ANSWERING THE QUESTION: WHY PICTUREBOOKS?

Picturebooks are often used in the classroom to support young readers in their reading skills as well as their quest in reading for enjoyment. Picturebooks offer visuals for young readers to cling to while reading and interpreting text. The process of creating visuals through reading literature is called visual literacy. According to O'Neil (2011), in these and other picturebooks, *“the story hovers between the words and pictures; remove one and the story disappears. The reciprocal nature of the pictures and text in these books suggests an apt name for this mode of interaction.”* (p. 216). The images behind the books have more of an impact on young children that most would like to believe. In most cases, images in picturebooks influence

young readers on an emotional level. If words can do this for adults, who is to say that the pictures cannot do the same for children? Nikolajeva (2013) states:

One potential way of fostering empathy in young children is through picturebooks. Like all fiction, picturebooks represent fictional characters' emotions as well as their interpretation of each other's emotions. However, unlike novels, picturebooks evoke our emotional engagement through images as well as words and, moreover, through amplification of words by images. In wordless or nearly wordless picturebooks, images carry the primary task of emotional engagement. Many picturebooks use wordless double-spreads to convey strong emotions for which words would be insufficient and inadequate. (p. 249).

No doubt, the importance of making books, especially picturebooks for our youngest, most impressionable readers, is key to growing readers and critical thinkers as well as strong, empathetic citizens. The CSK award-winning picturebooks are often made available through free public libraries, school libraries, community centers, which is important access to all regardless of socioeconomic status.

Picturebooks have been found to have a powerful influence on the reader in so many positive ways and Black children need to be able to feel this influence when they read authentic text. Children of color need to be able to see the visuals that picturebooks have and resonate with them, bringing them a sense of belonging in the world of literature. Seeing themselves in books and being able to relate to the character even in small ways, may go a long way. To read for years and not come across or interact with literature that connects with one's own cultural understandings and life experiences is disheartening. One primary motivation for reading fiction involves the pleasure that can be taken in relating to characters, their lives, their problems, and their experiences. When readers frequently encounter texts that feature characters with whom

they can connect, they will see how others are like them and how reading can play a role in their lives. (Hefflin & Barksdale-Ladd, 2001).

ANSWERING THE QUESTIONS: WHY CORETTA SCOTT KING AWARD BOOKS?

The Coretta Scott King Award was established in 1969 by the American Librarians Association (<http://www.ala.org/rt/emiert/cskbookawards>). This award was made to commemorate the life of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr, his wife Coretta Scott King and their work. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr and his wife, Coretta Scott King were both American civil rights activists who first met in Boston. The couple then got married shortly after and began their activist work together. Coretta Scott King worked beside Dr. King in the moments where he became the leader of the civil rights movement. Together, they took part in the famous civil rights movement events like the Montgomery Bus Boycott of 1955 and traveled around the world to help pass the 1964 Civil Rights Act. After her husband was assassinated, Coretta decided to continue the mission and led a march days after her husband's funeral, she founded the King Center which focused on continuing Dr. King's legacy and continued to build her own career as a civil rights activist until she passed in 2006. The couple's lifework is still very much recognized by major civil rights organizations like the NAACP and many more. Each year, the award is given to a Black American author or illustrator of children's and young adult books, published the year prior in the United States, that show an appreciation for the Black American culture with the winner receiving a plaque and \$1,000. Every year, The American Library Association's selection committee receives a plethora of nominated books that are published the

year prior. Usually, the committee chooses up to four books to award for the following year. However, there have been years where only two books have been given, an Award and a runner-up Honor book. The first book receives the Coretta Scott King Award and the runner-up books, usually between one and three, receive the Coretta Scott King Honor Award giving recognition to those books that came close. Both Award and Honor books are career changing for the authors and illustrators who receive them. As one of the most prominent and well-known awards outside the Newbery and Caldecott Awards, school and public libraries often rely on the quality assurance within this list to use funds to purchase these books and make them available to young children. The committee follows a specific criterion when determining the award. The criteria are described as follows, per their website ala.org:

1. Must portray some aspect of the black experience, past, present, or future.
2. Must be written/illustrated by an African American.
3. Must be published in the U.S. in the year preceding presentation of the Award.
4. Must be an original work.
5. Must meet established standards of quality writing for youth which include:
 - Clear plot
 - Well drawn characters, which portray growth and development during the course of the story.

- Writing style which is consistent with and suitable to the age intended.
 - Accuracy
6. Must be written for a youth audience in one of three categories:
- Preschool-grade 4
 - Grades 5-8
 - Grades 9-12
7. Particular attention will be paid to titles which seek to motivate readers to develop their own attitudes and behaviors as well as comprehend their personal duty and responsibility as citizens in a pluralistic society.
8. Illustrations should reflect established qualitative standards identified in the statement below:
- Illustrations should... “heighten and extend the readers' awareness of the world around him. They should lead him to an appreciation of beauty. The style and content of the illustrations should be...neither coy nor condescending...Storytelling qualities should enlarge upon the story elements that were hinted in the text and should include details that will awaken and strengthen the imagination of the reader and permit him to interpret the words and pictures in a manner unique to him.” (Cianciolo, 1970, p. 24-25).

For the purpose of this thesis, the selection of books included picturebooks that were awarded the Coretta Scott King (CSK) Award or Honor books from 2013 to 2020. This award is among the highest distinctions a children's picturebook can receive in the United States. The Coretta Scott King Award notes the quality of the book including illustrations and text and the higher order messages or themes presented within the book. The award was created in 1969 and recognized as an official award by the American Library Association (ALA) in 1982 as a means of expressing gratitude for those Black American authors and illustrators who write and illustrate authentic Black American life and experiences. The CSK Award and Honor books were selected for this study because of their respect for Black American culture and their general accessibility. Many public libraries' budgets would work to include these books in order to enhance their multicultural offerings. In this way, Coretta Scott King books tend to be available and free to children in public schools and libraries across the country. Giving Black American children and all children access free quality literature provides them the opportunity to interact with award winning books that also provide representation. Next to the more prominent Newbery and Caldecott Awards, parents can also find these books at their local library, bookstore, or purchase them online.

REPRESENTATIONS OF BLACK AMERICANS IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

Oftentimes, young Black readers are presented with Black American children's literature that reflects the historical struggles of the Black culture and are representative of slavery and/or the Civil Rights Movement (i.e., The Montgomery Bus Boycott, Freedom Rides, and I have a

dream). Although these events are a part of the most important, life changing movements in the Black community and should not be forgotten, there should also be an emphasis on recognizing that the authenticity of the Black culture is almost entirely excluded from children's literature.

Further, the Black culture represented in children's books may be portrayed with a false sense of reality and sometimes even stereotyped. Smith-D'Arezzo and Musgrove (2011) studied books with Black American characters and found that many narratives of oppression and struggle in Black American children's picturebooks were repeated, particularly stories about "twentieth century oppression" and both "happy" and "unhappy black families." (p. 194). The purpose of their study was to look at the sociocultural representations of Black children in picturebooks. Their research (2011) also indicates that a portion of Black American books told an incomplete story of the Black American. The incomplete story, of their reviewed research material, points out that if the Black family had finally achieved freedom, then the narrative implied that they would never experience hardship ever again. This lack of hardship as a happy ending is simply not true for Black families during the setting of their analyzed book research and does not hold true for the Black families of today. Smith-D'Arezzo and Musgrove (2011) concluded that in picturebooks with Black American protagonists, there seems to be no medium or middle ground for young children of color between oppressive and everyday narratives that might mirror modern life or their own lives.

Therefore, this current study sought to examine the portrayals of everyday narrative lives of Black Americans in picturebooks. When books from the Black American tradition are infrequently represented or used as extra material to preexisting curriculum (i.e., Black History Month), those meanings and issues seldom get explored for their own value.

Teachers and librarians may tend to offer Black American children literature about past events and recurring themes of oppression, yet the motivation to read is still diminished because of the selection of books in regard to their central theme and main ideas. All children need to be exposed to different topics of literature, especially Black children. Black children should be able to see themselves in a positive light with positive messages, rather than an incomplete struggle story. Aside from young Black American children, what about children of other ethnicities and nationalities? Books also assist all children in breaking and questioning stereotypes and help broaden their cultural perspectives (Thein, Beach, & Parks, 2007). Without books that represent this diverse world, how can we see a change in society when all we have been introduced to are books with European Caucasian protagonists? According to Robinson (2013), students of different ethnicities and races enter school, they are constantly challenged to “fit-in” and assimilate. In most cases, the texts they read in class do not allow these students to make connections to their own cultures and practices or aid to achieve proper emotional responses. Since research indicates that diverse representations are important, this thesis explored the diversity of characters within the content of Coretta Scott King award winning books written and/or illustrated by Black Americans.

THE BENEFITS OF UTILIZING PICTUREBOOKS PORTRAYING AUTHENTIC BLACK AMERICAN CULTURE

Picturebooks are educational tools, and most children come into contact with them; consequently, the content of picturebooks matters (Koss, 2015). Multicultural literature helps children identify with not only their own culture but also the cultures of others, thus promoting discussions of diversity (Colby & Lyon, 2004). Multicultural literature can be used in the classroom for several different reasons and can aid students into exploring the diversity of the cultures outside of their own little worlds. Through literature, children could go beyond a tourist perspective of gaining surface level information about another culture. Children are invited to immerse themselves in story worlds, gaining insights into how people feel, live, and think around the world. They also come to recognize their common humanity as well as to value cultural differences (Short, 2009).

Introducing children to a variety of different cultures through literature can provide students with a non-biased outlook on life and build respect for those who come from different backgrounds. Multicultural literature provides parents and teachers with ways to teach character education and instill strong characteristics of morality into their children. For example, one article *Promoting Resilience Through Read-Alouds* (Lacina, Baumi, & Taylor, 2016) performed a study using picturebooks to promote resilience in children ages five to eight. Using multicultural books in the classroom gives children of color a chance to learn through meaningful experiences while relating to the book by seeing themselves in it. Lacina, Baumi, and

Taylor (2016), note that multicultural books also give children the opportunity to strengthen their reading skills and motivation by reading aloud to them and allowing them to think about and watch how books are supposed to be read fluently and with prosody.

“Children need to be exposed to good literature, and they need to have daily experiences with fluent, oral reading. Children need opportunities to talk about the text and vocabulary and, just as importantly, to talk about their lives and how to resolve challenges in their lives. Reading can be a safe haven, especially for children living in urban environments, and a way to better understand themselves and develop a positive identity.” (Lacina, Baumi, & Taylor, 2016, p. 21).

A child’s life experiences can shape their perceptions of the books they read which should be something that educators and parents should consider when selecting literature for their children. A good book should not be excluded as a resource from curriculum or a library simply because of a disagreement with the author’s point of view or main message. In my experience, many teachers seem to utilize Black American books with Black American characters only during Black History Month in February, which artificially limits introductions to multicultural books that can provide authenticity and meaning. Books with diverse characters should be available year round. Books have power that should not be exclusive to books featuring European Caucasian Americans. There are so many resources to find quality books for educators and parents to use for their Black American children. This thesis provides an analysis and resources to use these books to their fullest potential.

In the following chapter, an in depth examination of the Coretta Scott King Honor and Award winning books will be described when looking at the methodology used to obtain the selection of population of books needed for this thesis.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this thesis was to examine the representations and portrayals of Black American culture in children's literature through an exploration of Coretta Scott King (CSK) Award children's picturebooks during the past seven years. With this knowledge, this thesis offers recommendations to expose children of color to books that resonate with their own life experiences and to literature that provides vicarious experiences for all students. This study analyzed a select group of books with Black characters living authentic lifestyles within the CSK Honor and Award books, written by Black authors or illustrated by Black illustrators. In this chapter, the selection of books along with a method of analysis is examined for the target population to be studied.

SELECTION OF THE TIME FRAME FOR EXAMINATION

In discussions with the thesis chair, who is an expert in children's literature, I decided to consider her suggestion of setting a time marker for the review of the picturebooks in this thesis. After reviewing the research of Smith-D'Arezzo and Musgrove (2011), the dates of 2013-2020 was selected because of the demarcation of Black Lives Matter beginning in 2013. The movement of Black Lives Matter (BLM) has had and remains profoundly impactful on the country and the Black community.

"#BlackLivesMatter was founded in 2013 in response to the acquittal of Trayvon Martin's murderer. Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundation, Inc. is a global organization in the

US, UK, and Canada, whose mission is to eradicate white supremacy and build local power to intervene in violence inflicted on Black communities by the state and vigilantes. By combating and countering acts of violence, creating space for Black imagination and innovation, and centering Black joy, we are winning immediate improvements in our lives.”
(<https://blacklivesmatter.com/about/>)

When the BLM movement was started in late 2013, many books dating from the year 2013 were books that address the social injustices experienced within the Black community as well as within everyday life at the time. Since this thesis analyzed those books highlighting Black Americans, this year seems to be a critical demarcation point. The beginning year of 2013 was chosen to honor the books that won the CSK title in 2013 but were originally published in 2012 to begin the content analysis of the CSK Honor and Award books.

SELECTION OF THE TARGET POPULATION FOR EXAMINATION

This study has analyzed a group of books within recent awarded Coretta Scott King books representing Black Americans. Both Coretta Scott King Award and Honor (runners-up) books published from 2013 to 2020 were selected to analyze. The breakdown of chosen Coretta Scott King books for this study is simple. Any book within the 2013-2020 time frame that was not a chapter or transitional book was chosen.

Initially, only CSK picturebooks published within the 2013 to 2020 time frame were included, excluding any transitional series chapter books, graphic novels or chaptered novels, regardless of whether or not they were an Honor or Award book. Second, since the criteria for all

Coretta Scott King books includes the author and/or illustrator being Black American, authentic authorship, for the purposes of this study, is acknowledged.

The study narrowed from the original 56 books by delimiting the focus to only picturebooks, omitting all chapter books and graphic novels. Then, in an effort to narrow and explore everyday culture, as many books as were available were borrowed or bought, abstracts were carefully read as well as observed electronic versions available through library systems, Amazon, and YouTube websites) in order to omit books that were obviously the purest historical fiction books. In order to explore and preserve the uniqueness of the Black culture in everyday life in CSK books, I had anticipated that these genres such as historical fiction, biographies, and general nonfiction about historical events would be culled in order to get a smaller cadre of picturebooks that would be portrayals of everyday culture. This process left the final cadre of books for the most careful examination at 16. These 16 books were all obtained physically, were read and re-read, while taking copious notes and capturing salient quotes, and discussing possible trends and patterns with my thesis chair of these 16.

Next, as I delved into these 16 books deeper, I was surprised to find that I needed to divide them into two larger categories, reflecting the work of Smith-D'Arezzo and Musgrove (2011): historical struggles and everyday life. Although it should be noted that some books were not excluded early on, such as *Ellen's Broom* (Lyons, 2012), deeper analysis revealed that historical events played a significant role in the book. After deeper analysis, if books included a historical struggle, figure, or event, such as Civil Rights activism/event, the book was placed in a

separate category, noted as historical struggles of social injustice. If the book did not include such historical significance or social justice struggle, then the book moved into a category requiring more in-depth analysis focusing on everyday culture and life experiences or representations of Black Americans.

Initially, a total of 56 books satisfied the requirement of having won the distinction in the years 2013 to 2020 with two books winning the award twice; one award was in recognition of the illustrator and the second repetition recognized the author. The two books are *Crown: An ode to the fresh cut* (Barnes, 2017) and *Freedom over me: Eleven slaves, their lives and dreams brought to life* (Bryan, 2016). Any books that did not fit the additional criteria were omitted. For example, the book, *New Kid* (Craft, 2019), a 2020 CSK Award winner, was omitted from the study because this is a graphic novel chapter book and not a picturebook. Out of the 56 books total, 27 books were omitted due to its format not being strictly a picturebook (likely a chaptered novel). Of the remaining 29 books, all were picturebooks with 13 of these books clearly including some historical figures and/or references. The list of books below are the 13 books that were originally placed in the historical reference category to omit.

1. King, M. L. (2012). *I have a dream* (1st ed.). Schwartz & Wade Books. (2013 Honor/Picturebook)
2. Hughes, L., Collier, B., & Linn, L. (2012). *I, too, am America* (First edition.). Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers. (2013 Award/Picturebook)

3. Pinkney, A. D., & Pinkney, J. B. (2012). *Hand in hand: Ten Black men who changed America* (First edition.). Disney/Jump at the Sun Books. (2013 Award/Picturebook)
4. Nelson, K., & Rago, M. (2013). *Nelson Mandela*. Katherine Tegen Books. (2014 Honor/Picturebook)
5. Weatherford, C. B., Christie, R. G., & Evans, F. W. (2016). *Freedom in Congo Square*. Little Bee Books. (2017 Honor/Picturebook)
6. Bryan, A. (2016). *Freedom over me: Eleven slaves, their lives and dreams brought to life*. Atheneum Books for Young Readers. (2017 Honor/Picturebook)
7. Cline-Ransome, L., & Ransome, J. (2017). *Before she was Harriet*. Holiday House. (2018 Honor/Picturebook)
8. Duncan, A. F., & Christie, R. G. (2018). *Memphis, Martin, and the mountaintop: The sanitation strike of 1968*. Calkins Creek, an imprint of Highlights. (2019 Honor/Picturebook)
9. Clark-Robinson, M., & Morrison, F. (2018). *Let the children march*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. (2019 Honor/Picturebook)
10. Shetterly, M. L., Conkling, W., Freeman, L., & Shetterly, M. L. (2018). *Hidden figures: The true story of four Black women and the space race*. Harper, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers. (2019 Honor/Picturebook)
11. Ransome, J. E. (2019). *The bell rang*. Atheneum Books for Young Readers. (2020 Honor/Picturebook)

12. Bryan, A. (2019). *Infinite hope: A Black artist's journey from World War II to peace*. Atheneum Books for Young Readers. (2020 Honor/Picturebook)

13. Alexander, K., & Nelson, K. (2019). *The undefeated*. Versify, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. (2020 Winner/Picturebook)

Therefore, the remaining list of 16 books were left for deeper analysis and were the focus of the study and will be discussed in Chapter Four of this thesis.

METHODS FOR ANALYSIS

This thesis used methods of content analysis to analyze each of the books by reading and rereading, determining initial trends, discussing themes and trends with thesis chair, and coding the themes for patterns. Identifying how these themes can become incorporated into personal and classroom libraries as well as integrated into the classroom can ensure young Black children with exposure to Black American children's literature. Content analysis was chosen as the most effective approach to conduct this study.

This study was approached using critical content analysis, a method used to interpret texts by harvesting patterns and themes, with special regard given to cultural depictions and identity (Botelho & Rudman, 2009; Johnson, Mathis, & Short, 2017). First, the entire population of recent CSK picturebooks were identified and initially analyzed for either Historical figures/events or Everyday life. Then, I read the following three books as an embedded pilot study to confirm the original categories of patterns I created to assist in finding patterns: *Crown:*

An ode to the fresh cut, Sulwe, and Radiant Child. Coretta Scott King books were identified from the website: <https://www.ala.org/rt/emiert/ckbookawards/coretta-scott-king-book-awards-all-recipients-1970-present#2010s>

This study's research question is based on Johnson, Mathis, and Short's (2018) guidelines and focused this thesis: *What are the common themes or messages for young children that might be derived from the Coretta Scott King picturebooks awarded between 2013- 2020 to portray everyday Black culture?* To secure the basic data regarding title, authorship, year, and summaries, a Google form (See Appendix A for example) was created to record gender, age, year of publication, genre, summary, and possible themes. Then, the emerging themes across all picturebooks and portrayals of Black American culture were considered using a constant comparative method, (Corbin & Strauss, 2014; Marsh & White, 2006). I analyzed the formats, the genres, and the summaries in order to extract notable patterns and themes based on rereading these 16 picturebooks. Notations were made regarding the portrayals that Black Americans within these books exemplified. Then biweekly, with my thesis chair, I reviewed, revisited, revised, and carefully crafted the patterns and themes presented in this thesis. Last, recommendations of books considered highly valued and lending authenticity in terms of Black American culture, were identified as exemplars for parents and teachers.

POSITIONALITY

Because I, the researcher, am considered the tool with which these books will be analyzed and evaluated, I want to include my positionality as I approached the analysis of these books. I am a Black American, cisgender female who was born and raised in South Florida. Since I have been through and dealt with the social injustices that Black people face in society, I decided to research how this can extend into children's literature. I felt compelled to figure out why is the Black culture is limited to its history when it comes to children's literature with Black people in it. If there were books out there that do not fit into this category, were they written by Black authors? Do they describe the robust, fun, exciting, and everyday lifestyles of the Black experience?

As part of this research process, my thesis chair served as my sounding board and in many instances as a second reader and examiner throughout the analysis process. She self-identifies as a cisgender, Caucasian female who was raised in the segregated South, specifically East Texas, until sixth grade when her public schools were integrated. Because of her knowledge of prior generations of ignorance, hatred, and active racism, she feels particularly dedicated to working toward gender and racial equality.

The following chapter highlights the findings of the content analysis of these 16 books, while Chapter Five uses these results to draw conclusions and make recommendations for

teachers and parents around important themes. Additionally, Chapter Five shares the limitations of this thesis, opportunities for future research, and the educational implications of this research.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter provides an in-depth look at each of the selected picturebooks and their portrayal of Black American culture. An annotated bibliography of each book is provided to note the concepts and themes present in each book. This study analyzed all the realistic fiction picturebooks within the Coretta Scott King Award and Honor books to note the culture in the books as well as the presented themes and overall messages exemplified within the books.

ANALYZING THE PICTUREBOOKS

This examination led to an initial list of 16 total books upon which to focus on my primary goal of this research: To explore books for their portrayals of authentic Black American culture that reflect the everyday lives of the Black American children. Therefore, the following books were identified for further examination from oldest to newest:

1. Lyons, K. S., & Minter, D. (2012). *Ellen's broom*. G. P. Putnam's Sons. Illustrated by Thomann, R. (2013 Honor)
2. Woodson, J., & Lewis, E. B. (2012). *Each kindness*. Nancy Paulsen Books. Illustrated by Thomann, R. (2013 Honor).
3. Myers, C., & Lenhart, Y. (2012). *H.O.R.S.E.: A game of basketball and imagination*. Egmont USA. (2013 Honor)

4. Beaty, D., & Collier, B. (2013). *Knock knock: My dad's dream for me*. Little, Brown and Company. Illustrated by Bart-Horvath, S. (2014 Award)
5. Copeland, M. (2014). *Firebird: Ballerina Misty Copeland shows a young girl how to dance like the firebird*. G.P. Putnam's Sons, an imprint of Penguin Group (USA). Illustrated by Myers, C. (2015 Award)
6. Russell-Brown, K. (2014). *Little Melba and her big trombone*. Lee & Low Books. Illustrated by Morrison, F. (2015 Honor)
7. Powell, P. H. (2014). *Josephine: The dazzling life of Josephine Baker*. Chronicle Books. Illustrated by Robinson, C. (2015 Honor)
8. Andrews, T. (2015). *Trombone Shorty*. Abrams Books for Young Readers. Illustrated by Collier, B. (2016 Award)
9. Nelson, V. M. (2015). *The book itch: Freedom, truth & Harlem's greatest bookstore*. Carolrhoda Books. Illustrated by Christie, R. G. (2016 Honor)
10. de la Peña, M., & Robinson, C. (2015). *Last stop on Market Street*. G.P. Putnam's Sons, an imprint of Penguin Group (USA). Illustrated by Thomann, R. (2016 Honor)
11. Steptoe, J. (2016). *Radiant child: The story of young artist Jean-Michel Basquiat*. Little, Brown and Company. (2017 Award)

12. Jackson, R. (2016). *In plain sight*. Roaring Brook Press. Illustrated by Pinkney, J. (2017 Honor)
13. Alexander, K., Colderley, C., & Wentworth, M. (2017). *Out of wonder: Poems celebrating poets*. Candlewick Press. Illustrated by Holmes, E. (2018 Award)
14. Barnes, D. (2017). *Crown: An ode to the fresh cut*. Bolden, An Agate imprint. Illustrated by James, G. C. (2018 Honor)
15. Bauer, M. D. (2018). *The stuff of stars*. Candlewick Press. Illustrated by Holmes, E. (2019 Award)
16. Nyong'o, L. (2019). *Sulwe*. Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers. Illustrated by Harrison, V. (2020 Honor)

TABLE 1: ORIGINAL LIST OF 16, DIVIDED INTO TWO CATEGORIES

- The following Table 1 shows the initial two categories, formed upon first reading with consultation, with books that are significantly biographical in nature shown with an asterisk.

Historical Figures/Events	Everyday Life
* <i>Trombone Shorty</i> (Andrews, 2019)	<i>Crown: An ode to the fresh cut</i> (Barnes, 2017)

<i>*Little Melba and her big trombone</i> (Russell-Brown, 2014)	<i>Last stop on market street</i> (de la Peña, 2015)
<i>*Josephine: The dazzling life of Josephine Baker</i> (Powell, 2014)	<i>Sulwe</i> (Nyong'o, 2019)
<i>*The book itch: Freedom, truth, & Harlem's greatest bookstore</i> (Nelson, 2015)	<i>Firebird: Ballerina Misty Copeland shows a young girl how to dance like the firebird</i> (Copeland, 2014)
<i>Ellen's Broom</i> (Lyons, 2012)	<i>Each Kindness</i> (Woodson, 2012)
<i>*Out of Wonder: Poems celebrating poets</i> (Nelson, 2017)	<i>Knock knock: My dad's dream for me</i> (Beatty, 2013)
<i>*Radiant Child: The story of young artist Jean-Michel Basquiat</i> (Stephoe, 2016)	<i>In Plain Sight</i> (Jackson, 2016)
<i>The Stuff of Stars</i> (Bauer, 2018)	<i>H.O.R.S.E: The game of basketball and imagination</i> (Myers, 2012)

This categorization in Table 1 was created by me and approved by my chair and guided the content analysis and provided ways to consider the portrayals.

After revising and solidifying the categories with the first three books: *Crown: An ode to the fresh cut*, *Sulwe*, and *Radiant Child*, I ordered all the books from the library, requested books from InterLibrary Loan, and bought books online that needed to be read and documented. After procuring the 16 texts that met the search criteria, I engaged in repeated readings in order to analyze the portrayals of Black Americans in recent CSK books. The current study was limited to picturebooks that seemed to initially portray Black Americans in a positive, nonpolitical, or lacking reference/s to historical figures or events, although certainly these topics often intersect with each other. I wanted to analyze books without an apparent reference to the larger racial struggle or historical side of Black American history. Over the next month, I read, reread, and discussed with my chair these 16 total books, organizing and re-organizing into three categories. My findings were pretty similar to Smith-D'Arezzo and Musgrove's study (2011), which concluded that picturebooks with Black American protagonists conveyed less than 50% of the population of books observed conveyed everyday narratives to mirror modern life or the lives of young Black children.

Table 2 helped me realize that many of the books I originally included in the 16 were biographical, telling a life story. Misty Copeland's book was left in the everyday life category because it does not tell the arc of her life or address the social justice issues she had to face. The

last two books in the mixed category are quite global and esoteric, not focusing on everyday life or Black culture. The three categories are found in Table 2 below.

TABLE 2: REORGANIZATION OF THE 16 BOOKS

- The following table shows the three final categories all books were found in.

Historical Figures/Events- (all biographical)	Everyday Life	Mixed/Both
<i>Trombone Shorty</i> (Andrews, 2019)	<i>Crown: An ode to the fresh cut</i> (Barnes, 2017)	<i>Ellen’s Broom</i> (Lyons, 2012)
<i>Little Melba and her big trombone</i> (Russell-Brown, 2014)	<i>Last stop on market street</i> (de la Peña, 2015)	<i>The Stuff of Stars</i> (Bauer, 2018)
<i>Josephine: The dazzling life of Josephine Baker</i> (Powell, 2014)	<i>Sulwe</i> (Nyong’o, 2019)	
<i>The book itch: Freedom, truth, & Harlem’s greatest</i>	<i>Each Kindness</i> (Woodson,	

<i>bookstore</i> (Nelson, 2015)	2012)	
<i>Radiant Child: The story of young artist Jean-Michel Basquiat</i> (Steptoe, 2016)	<i>Knock knock: My dad's dream for me</i> (Beaty, 2013)	
<i>Out of Wonder: Poems celebrating poets</i> (Nelson, 2017)	<i>In Plain Sight</i> (Jackson, 2016)	
	<i>H.O.R.S.E: The game of basketball and imagination</i> (Myers, 2012)	
	<i>Firebird: Ballerina Misty Copeland shows a young girl how to dance like the firebird</i> (Copeland, 2014)	

The categorization table titled Table 2 created by me and approved by my chair helped me realize that I wanted to focus on the middle category titled Everyday Life and thus guided the content analysis.

PICTUREBOOKS FOR EXPLORATION AND PICTUREBOOK SUMMARIES

Therefore, the following 16 picturebooks were narrowed from the larger CSK Award list to exclude chapter books, transition books, graphic novels, and the most obvious of nonfiction or historical fiction.

1. Lyons, K. S., & Minter, D. (2012). *Ellen's broom*. G. P. Putnam's Sons. Illustrated by Thomann, R. (2013 Honor)
2. Woodson, J., & Lewis, E. B. (2012). *Each kindness*. Nancy Paulsen Books. Illustrated by Thomann, R. (2013 Honor).
3. Myers, C., & Lenhart, Y. (2012). *H.O.R.S.E.: A game of basketball and imagination*. Egmont USA. (2013 Honor)
4. Beaty, D., & Collier, B. (2013). *Knock knock: My dad's dream for me*. Little, Brown and Company. Illustrated by Bart-Horvath, S. (2014 Award)
5. Copeland, M. (2014). *Firebird: Ballerina Misty Copeland shows a young girl how to dance like the firebird*. G.P. Putnam's Sons, an imprint of Penguin Group (USA). Illustrated by Myers, C. (2015 Award)

6. Russell-Brown, K. (2014). *Little Melba and her big trombone*. Lee & Low Books.
Illustrated by Morrison, F. (2015 Honor)
7. Powell, P. H. (2014). *Josephine: The dazzling life of Josephine Baker*. Chronicle Books.
Illustrated by Robinson, C. (2015 Honor)
8. Andrews, T. (2015). *Trombone Shorty*. Abrams Books for Young Readers. Illustrated by
Collier, B. (2016 Award)
9. Nelson, V. M. (2015). *The book itch: Freedom, truth & Harlem's greatest bookstore*.
Carolrhoda Books. Illustrated by Christie, R. G. (2016 Honor)
10. de la Peña, M., Robinson, C. (2015). *Last stop on Market Street*. G.P. Putnam's Sons, an
imprint of Penguin Group (USA). Illustrated by Thomann, R. (2016 Honor)
11. Steptoe, J. (2016). *Radiant child: The story of young artist Jean-Michel Basquiat*. Little,
Brown and Company. (2017 Award)
12. Jackson, R. (2016). *In plain sight*. Roaring Brook Press. Illustrated by Pinkney, J. (2017
Honor)
13. Alexander, K., Colderley, C., Wentworth, M., (2017). *Out of wonder: Poems celebrating
poets*. Candlewick Press. Illustrated by Holmes, E. (2018 Award)
14. Barnes, D., (2017). *Crown: An ode to the fresh cut*. Bolden, An Agate imprint. Illustrated
by James, G. C. (2018 Honor)

15. Bauer, M. D., (2018). *The stuff of stars*. Candlewick Press. Illustrated by Holmes, E.
(2019 Award)

16. Nyong'o, L., (2019). *Sulwe*. Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers. Illustrated by Harrison, V. (2020 Honor)

As one may notice, holds many biographies, memoirs, and autobiographies, even poetry, and realistic fiction. In these picturebooks referencing historical struggle, two trends were pronounced: a trend of art and music and a trend of empowering self-confidence. I noticed that these books spoke about real life issues in the Black community. For example, *Knock Knock, Crown, Firebird*, and *Sulwe* focused on the self-confidence and identity concepts of being Black. *Knock Knock* describes something very real in the Black community about a young boy being raised by his mother because his father was incarcerated, and the boy had to grow up without his father. The following quote touches on the identity pattern that is being discussed: “*No longer will I be there to knock on your door, so you must learn to knock for yourself. Knock knock down the doors that I could not.*” (p. 29-30). In the book *Crown*, it celebrates the experience of young boys getting their haircut and feeling like a king afterwards. This quote from the book reflects the self-confidence pattern being discussed: “*And when you see the cut yourself, in that handheld mirror. You’ll smile a really big smile. That’s the you that you love the most. That’s the you that wins everything. That’s the gold medal you.*” (p. 17). *Firebird* tells the story of Misty Copeland raising the confidence of little Black girls becoming ballet dancers. Here is a quote exemplifying

self-confidence from this book: “*you will soar become a swan, a beauty, a firebird for sure, soon with the same practice you’ll join me in this dancing dream...*” (p. 19). *Sulwe* speaks about the colorism within the Black community in regard to identity and self-confidence. Here are two quotes that represent both self-confidence and identity. “People gave *Sulwe* names like “Blackie” and “Darky” and “Night.” *Sulwe* felt hurt every time (p. 4).” Similarly, this second quote focuses more on her not being able to accept her identity as a darker skinned girl. “So she got the biggest eraser she could find and tried to rub off a layer or two of her darkness.” (p. 7).

Only until I read them carefully, could one see a demarcation being either a significant focus on everyday life or on struggles based on historical events and social injustices. Because I wanted to provide a list of books that is relevant to today’s age where young Black children could read stories that resonate currently with some aspects of their lives, I narrowed the list even further to eight books. For the purposes of this study, I wanted books that did not have a struggling Black family or featured the prominent figures of the past, because we are no longer in the past. I wanted books with characters in them doing normal activities and telling normal stories of our Black culture. I also, wanted to see how authors and illustrators of color portrayed Black American culture in realistic fictional works within the boundaries of historical accuracy. Once I divided these books and separated out poetry, biographies, autobiographies, and historical fiction, the number to be examined was eight. The following eight picturebooks along with their summaries are listed below:

CROWN: AN ODE TO THE FRESH CUT (BARNES, 2017)

- This book is about a young boy who goes into the barbershop for a haircut and embraces the experience of the barbershop in its entirety. The people, the conversations, and the girls who notice when men walk out with a fresh cut. This book encourages young Black boys (and girls) to feel empowered by their fresh cuts.

LAST STOP ON MARKET STREET (DE LA PEÑA, 2015)

- Shows a grandmother and her grandson on a Sunday afternoon. After church, the two ride the bus downtown to see the beauty in the community. The grandson does not understand what his grandmother speaks of until they reach the last stop on market street, which is far from beautiful on the outside, but holds an inner beauty.

SULWE (NYONG'O, 2019)

- This story is about a young girl named Sulwe in a family of four (mom, dad, sister, and Sulwe). Sulwe struggles with accepting her skin color because she is the darkest among her family members and the children in her school pick on her for being so dark skinned. This story goes through her journey of accepting the skin she was born in and how she has overcome the battle of Colorism.

EACH KINDNESS (WOODSON, 2012)

- This story was about a little Caucasian girl who was poor and a little black girl who was not. The Black girl was being rude to the Caucasian girl after she tried to befriend her multiple times. So, once the Caucasian girl started to miss school, the little Black girl wondered about her and eventually wanted to apologize for her behavior and become friends. When her teacher revealed that the little girl was not coming back to school, the little Black girl immediately felt regret.

KNOCK KNOCK: MY DAD'S DREAM FOR ME (BEATY, 2013)

- This book was about a little boy who shared his favorite things with his father and one day, his father never returned home. In the end, the boy grew up to be a strong, respectable, young man and the best father he could be to his own children all without the presence of his own father in his life.

IN PLAIN SIGHT (JACKSON, 2016)

- This story is about a little girl named Sophie who lives with both parents and her grandfather. Every day after school, the grandfather hides things around the house for Sophie to help him find. In the end, it is Sophie that he has to find at the end of the week. This game keeps the grandfather's inner child alive.

H.O.R.S.E: THE GAME OF BASKETBALL AND IMAGINATION (MYERS, 2012)

- This game is about two boys who play a basketball game called H.O.R.S.E where an active imagination of dreams is in constant play in the game. The two boys display their impressive skills and infuse that with imagination in order to reach seemingly unattainable goals in the game of basketball.

FIREBIRD: BALLERINA MISTY COPELAND SHOWS A YOUNG GIRL HOW TO DANCE LIKE THE FIREBIRD (COPELAND, 2014)

- This story is about Misty Copeland helping young Black ballerinas achieve their dreams in the same ways that she has by building the young Black dancer's confidence and relating her struggles to Misty's own struggles throughout her career.

Based on the study's thrust of examining portrayals of culture, these eight picturebooks offered interesting themes. By limiting my studies to realistic books, I could best determine how accurate and authentic the Black culture as well as how Black families are being portrayed for young readers in CSK picturebooks. Often, when books feature Black people and their families, my analysis revealed a sort of tension behind the characters and the storyline. Families in these published books might be placed in a stereotypical struggle that does not always match the lived experience true for most Black families.

In the two books, *Last Stop on Market Street* and *Each Kindness*, some day-to-day activities and character traits were brought to light. For example, *Last Stop on Market Street* is an example of authentic everyday culture because it showcases the good that we can do for the community even though we ourselves might not have many possessions. Likewise, *Each Kindness* talks about how being kind to others goes a long way.

No one wants to be stereotyped; books are needed to explore the fullness of our Black culture and the ways of being and doing. Children's books can help achieve that reality. I noticed, in conversation with my committee, that these eight books have the following in common: 1) Navigating real societal problems within the Black community, 2) Realizing empowerment within ourselves, 3) Valuing relationships with others, and 4) Finding value in everyday activities.

Navigating No one wants to be stereotyped; books are needed to explore the fullness of our culture and ways of being and doing. Children's books can help achieve that reality. I noticed, in conversation with my committee, that these eight books have the following in common: **1) Navigating real societal problems within the Black community, 2) Realizing empowerment within ourselves, 3) Valuing relationships with others, and 4) Finding value in everyday activities.**

Many books contributed to the theme of **1) Navigating real societal problems within the Black community.** *In Plain Sight, Last Stop on Market Street, Knock Knock, and Each*

Kindness each find connections to the reality of their specific situations in Black communities in terms of socioeconomic status, caring for elderly, and absentee fathers. All of these topics are very real scenarios that any child may need a vicarious rehearsal for navigating their everyday lives through a powerful and beautiful book.

All of these eight books contributed to the theme 2) **Realizing empowerment within ourselves**, but *Crown* and *Sulwe* are the best examples of this important pattern for young Black readers. Some of these ideas and quotes conveyed really accurate experiences, in my opinion, about the Black culture because most of these ideals and experiences aligned with some of my personal experiences with family and friends. For example, when I get my hair done, I feel empowered, and I feel like a queen just like in the book *Crown*. Also, in the book *Sulwe*, when she deals with colorism, I have seen what that battle can do to someone's confidence firsthand. I have had friends who felt as though they were not beautiful because they were darker than others, but it simply is not true. Dark skinned women should feel just as confidence as lighter skinned women. We are all beautiful no matter what shape, size, and color. I feel that these are the kinds of books that we should be introducing to our little ones, so that they know how to deal with self-confidence and know that they can make a difference in someone's life even if they do not have it all together themselves.

The third theme 3) **Valuing relationships with others** is also present. These eight books focused on a variety of different relationships with others and the day-to-day activities of the

Black lived experiences. The books that really resonated in regard to relationships were *H.O.R.S.E*, *In Plain Sight*, *Last Stop on Market Street*, and *Each Kindness*. The book *H.O.R.S.E* focused on the playful bond between two boys and their love of basketball through trash talking about each other's quality skills in the game. The following quote supports themes related to friendships and relationships: "*That's not bad for an amateur. If you are as bad as you say you are, we can start where I usually start.*" (p. 21). In the book, *In plain sight*, a familial relationship between a granddaughter and grandfather is the focus. A quote that resonated with me was this: "*Here I am!*" *Sophie says. "Like always."* (p. 29). This quote touched me because it highlights how the grandfather always knows that his granddaughter will be there for him to remind him of his youthful playfulness.

4) **Finding value in everyday activities.** Each of the eight books showed not only everyday activities, but the value of everyday activities to our lives. From getting a haircut to playing games with grandparents to mentoring a dancer and playing basketball with your friends, each of the eight books corresponded to children's lived experiences and to mine.

The following and last chapter echoes the importance of these findings by summarizing the conclusions, limitations, and recommendations that emanated from this study.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

This thesis focused on the importance of children's literature to young Black minds and hearts as well as and impactful the portrayals of everyday Black culture could be in shaping the way young Black children think about themselves and view themselves in society. The purpose of this thesis was to examine the Coretta Scott King (CSK) Award and Honor books from 2013 to 2020 that are used with all children and with our young Black children, published between 2012 to 2019, as a population to dive deep into the contents of Black American children's literature in terms of how different patterns and themes are portrayed in these books. How they may contribute to Black American children's lives, identity, self-confidence, and their experiences of reading for fulfillment and pleasure is of great importance.

REVISITING AND SUMMARIZING TRENDS AND THEMES

Trends and themes can be found throughout all of children's literature. Some may be subtle while others can be bold. Whatever the case may be, trends and themes are engrained in children's literature and can be considered in some ways progressive or diverse. Books with Black Americans in them absolutely falls under the diverse and progressive category given the history of Black Americans in this country. With that being said, it is important to have diverse books for children to relate to. A student who is able to see themselves in the books they read benefits greatly from that reflection (Smolkin & Young, 2011). Protagonists in books are crucial because the readers will try to connect most to that character. When the protagonist looks like

them, talks like them, and shares a similar family life it is then where a child will feel the most comfortable and never want to stop reading.

A trend found while analyzing the original list of 16 books was that of this total 16, there were six books related to the Arts in terms of music, poetry, and art. This theme of artistic contributions gave me a chance to reflect on the impact of the Black community in terms of music, poetry, and art. Most know about the Harlem Renaissance which brought upon about some of history's most famous pieces of art and musical genres.

“Harlem Renaissance brought together literature, music, visual art, dance and other art forms in an explosion of creativity. Harlem itself became the focal point not just of African American art, but also of the nightclub scene, as the Cotton Club, Small's Paradise and Connie's Inn became centers of music, dance, and social life. Political life was quickened, as the NAACP and Urban League grew in stature partly through their support of Harlem artists.” (Washington and Lee University, n.d., unpaginated)”.

Still, the Black culture continues to influence American art and culture today. For example, CSK picturebooks that exemplify the artistic themes are *Trombone Shorty* (Andrews, 2019), *Little Melba and her big trombone* (Russell-Brown, 2014), *Josephine: The dazzling life of Josephine Baker* (Powell, 2014), *Radiant Child: The story of young artist Jean-Michel Basquiat* (Stephoe, 2016), *Out of Wonder: Poems celebrating poets* (Nelson, 2017), and lastly, *The book itch: Freedom, truth, & Harlem's greatest bookstore* (Nelson, 2015). The fact that CSK picturebooks recognized this enough to award them this coveted children's literature award. This appears to be a proud and recognizable theme.

Another trend found throughout my research was that quite a few of the books celebrate the notion of being true to yourself and building self-worth. Self-confidence and self-worth are important especially for young Black children because oftentimes, we are portrayed in negative ways and are almost always stereotyped. Not only this but also, being in a day and age where social media has a huge impact on what young Black children think of as confident or worthy and how that tie into the way society treats you. As a young child constantly seeing people in positions of power, in the media, and major key roles in society are people not of color nor do they share the same experiences, can be heartbreaking. Providing books that give Black children the representation they deserve is what makes a difference.

The last trend found when analyzing the 8 books alone versus the 16 total is a subtle one. This trend touches on the boundaries of reality and imagination within children's lives. It was found that three out of the eight books indulged in the notion of having to be creative or use your imagination whereas four out of the eight books express some type of real life experience lived through the books, leaving one of the books out as an outlier. For example, the books *H.O.R.S.E*, *Sulwe*, and *Firebird* all bring the characters on an out of body experience that leads up to the person they are supposed to be towards the end of the story. *In Plain Sight*, *Last Stop on Market Street*, *Knock Knock*, and *Each Kindness* touch a bit more on the reality of their situations in terms of socioeconomic status, caring for elderly, and absentee fathers. All of these topics are very real scenarios that could happen to any child.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PARENTS AND TEACHERS

Teaching our young Black ones about how to cope with society as a Black male or female can and should be done through books that have shared experiences with them. Although learning about our history and the struggles and triumphs of Black Americans in history is important, but it is also important to know how to handle societal pressures as a Black person. Picturebooks provide those vicarious experiences with everyday life to provide a dress rehearsal for each day and for crises (Crawford, Roberts, & Zygouris-Coe, 2019). With the following list of recommendations, I would like to help parents and teachers be able to empower their Black children and inspire them to read for pleasure.

Growing up, I was not fond of reading at all. I wish there had been a book like *Crown: An ode to the fresh cut* (Barnes, 2017) and a book like *Firebird: Ballerina Misty Copeland shows a young girl how to dance like the firebird* (Copeland, 2014) for me to relate to, all while building a relationship with reading and books without even realizing it. I encourage teachers to use these books in their classroom libraries to connect with their students on a different level while encouraging them to read as well. I am also hopeful for parents who will show these books to their children and help them navigate through the tough world out there and make them feel valued and worthy. The following table contains the book recommendations of CSK picturebooks that exemplify Black American culture below:

TABLE 3: RECOMMENDED PICTUREBOOKS

- Table 3 provides the recommended picturebooks or deliverable of this thesis (See Appendix B for a reference list of these books as well). The following list of books is not in any particular order. However, it is the official list of recommended resources to use with children at home and children in the classroom as well.

Title	Protagonist+ gender	Art/music	Self-worth	Other
<i>Each Kindness</i> (Woodson, 2012)	Chloe, young biracial female.	N/A	YES	YES; Socioeconomic status.
<i>I, too, am America</i> (Hughes, 2012)	Young Black males and females around the country.	N/A	YES	YES; Society views.

<p><i>Knock knock: My dad's dream for me</i> (Beaty, 2013)</p>	<p>Young Black boy.</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>YES</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p><i>Firebird: Ballerina Misty Copeland shows a young girl how to dance like the firebird</i> (Copeland, 2014)</p>	<p>Young, teenage, Black female.</p>	<p>YES</p>	<p>YES</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p><i>Last stop on market street</i> (de la Peña, 2015)</p>	<p>Young Black male.</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>YES; Socioeconomic status.</p>

<i>In Plain Sight</i> (Jackson, 2016)	Young Black female.	N/A	N/A	YES; Caring for the elderly.
<i>Crown: An ode to the fresh cut</i> (Barnes, 2017)	Young Black Male.	N/A	YES	N/A
<i>Hidden figures: The true story of four Black women and the space race.</i> (Shetterly, Conkling, & Freeman, 2018)	Black women	N/A	N/A	YES; Societal views.
<i>The Stuff of Stars</i> (Bauer, 2018)	All humanity and races	N/A	YES	N/A

<i>Sulwe</i> (Nyong'o, 2019)	Young Black female.	N/A	YES	YES; Societal views.
<i>Trombone Shorty</i> (Andrews, 2019)	Young Black Male	YES	N/A	N/A

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS AND SIGNIFICANCE

Sharing diverse literature is a moral and political act that positions students to negotiate multiple points of view, ideologies, and feelings (Zapata, Fugit, & Moss., 2017). Without this, children are stuck with books that include a majority perspective and may even be riddled with hidden biases that are not their own. Young students should be able to form their own thoughts and opinions through books that resonate with their own experiences as well as about books they read and how it relates to them. There are many ways to use the recommended list of books in the classroom to benefit the education of your students. For example, one strategy to use is to incorporate Literature Circles (Daniels, 2002; Peterson & Eeds, 1990/2007). Often affectionately known as Lit Circles; they are a great way to expose students to new books while fostering open discussion about the books and engaging in critical thinking as well as reflecting on the books

read. These lit circles are done in small, self-selected groups so collaboration and collaborative reading is key in this literature strategy.

Another strategy to use with your students in the classroom is to use these books during your thematic units and/or lesson plans. For example, if a lesson that involves and infuses music and/or people who have made strides within the music industry, teachers should consider utilizing some of these high-quality books that positively portray the Black American experience. as resources. When planning a unit on character education and morality, the use of the books in the recommendations list could prove to be very helpful. Other educational implications teachers should make sure to include, but are not limited to:

- Facilitating empathy and compassion
- Learning about everyday aspects of the Black culture
- Support multicultural awareness.
- Self-empowerment of students identifies and self-concepts.
- Student led discussions.

RATIONALE AND LIMITATIONS FOR THE STUDY

The rationale of my research began with the lack of available children's literature that which included Black Americans in a non-stereotypical or that were not tied to specific,

historical events way, which is also a genuine limitation. Perhaps, this may be due to the small number of Black authors and illustrators out there to write and record their stories. Although it is important to shed light on the history of Black people in America, I have found that it is also important to have children exposed to literature written by those who look like them and stories that emulate their culture and lifestyles. This study showed that there are not many books available that can do both. This led to the major another limitation of my research; was that I was the sole reader and coder, although I was guided and facilitated by my thesis chair and my thesis committee. If I were to open my research up with another research partner, there may have been different themes or trends found. My last known limitation is in regard to the multiple amounts of awards for children's literature that were excluded from the current research. Although, other formats besides picturebooks could have been included and other awards that are embedded within the CSK awards, I chose to focus exclusively on CSK awards and not to research awards, such as the Lifetime Achievement award and the John Steptoe Award for New Talent.

NEXT STEPS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

After completing this research, I intend on providing this list of recommendations of books to all of the private families of color that I work very closely with as well as some of my colleagues who are dedicated to making a change in today's social justice climate. Because I believe it makes a difference when people are aware of their own biases, books that provide impetus toward positive change are important. My expectations for the parents I intend to share

this list with is to read these books with their children and teach their children that reading is not just for checking boxes off, but reading is for meaning and enjoyment. Hopefully, some of these books in my recommendation list can very well become favorites of my future students and may influence children to become lifelong readers. My expectation for the educators is to use my list in open minded and receptive ways and be willing to introduce these books to not only the children of color in classrooms, but also to the Caucasian children as well. Using these resources throughout the entire school year and not just in the month of February is also imperative. Further, having often uncomfortable, but open and meaningful conversations with your students about the biases that many people in this world have about people of color will create important, safe spaces for all children. Lastly, my expectations for the children of color reading these books are to be able to see themselves and for their lives to resonate with the ones within the pages of these books. Know that we are recognized and appreciated throughout these books and know that we are capable of anything our minds are set to. Reading can be fun and exciting once similarities and experiences are seen within the stories and yourself.

Future research in this topic can be done in multiple ways. Researchers can be beyond my limitations and discuss the representations and portrayal of Black Americans in picturebooks and chaptered, transitional books. The time frame can be expanded to compare the portrayal of books in the far past, maybe before the Black Lives Matter movement, versus in the present. Another aspect of this research that would certainly be beneficial towards the whole project is to look at and compare the Coretta Scott King Award winning books to the Caldecott Award winning

books. Opportunities for professional development in the way of understanding teacher biases can take place for educators in order to expose their students to multicultural books, especially books that describe everyday events and lifestyles of all children they are teaching in schools.

APPENDIX A: GOOGLE FORM CODING SHEET

Book Annotation Questions

Answer questions based on the book that was read.

* Required

Title of book *

Your answer _____

Author/Illustrator *

Your answer _____

Date first analyzed? *

Date

mm/dd/yyyy 📅

Year of Publication *

Your answer _____

Which category would this belong in? *

- A.A. Cultural Reference
- Historical Reference
- Identity Reference
- Family/Community Reference
- Other: _____

Coretta Scott King Honor or Award? *

- Honor
- Award

Brief Summary *

Your answer _____

Noticeable Quotes/Lines w/ Page # *

Your answer _____

Year of Publication *

Your answer _____

Genre? *

- Autobiography
- Biography
- Realistic Fiction
- Fantasy/SciFi
- Historical Fiction

Which category would this belong in? *

- A.A. Cultural Reference
- Historical Reference
- Identity Reference
- Family/Community Reference
- Other: _____

What African American culture is presented? *

Your answer _____

Lesson Learned/Present Themes *

Your answer _____

Family Dynamics? *

Your answer _____

Protagonist Info (gender, race, age, etc.) *

Your answer _____

Submit

APPENDIX B: TEACHER RESOURCES/BOOK LIST

Andrews, T., (2015). *Trombone Shorty*. Abrams Books for Young Readers. Illustrated by Collier, B. (2016 Award)

Barnes, D., (2017). *Crown: An ode to the fresh cut*. Bolden, An Agate imprint. Illustrated by James, G. C. (2018 Honor)

Bauer, M. D., (2018). *The stuff of stars*. Candlewick Press. Illustrated by Holmes, E. (2019 Award)

Beaty, D., Collier, B., (2013). *Knock knock: My dad's dream for me*. Little, Brown and Company. Illustrated by Bart-Horvath, S. (2014 Award)

Copeland, M., (2014). *Firebird: ballerina Misty Copeland shows a young girl how to dance like the firebird*. G.P. Putnam's Sons, an imprint of Penguin Group (USA). Illustrated by Myers, C. (2015 Award)

de la Peña, M., Robinson, C., (2015). *Last stop on Market Street*. G.P. Putnam's Sons, an imprint of Penguin Group (USA). Illustrated by Thomann, R. (2016 Honor)

Hughes, L., Collier, B., (2012). *I, too, am America*. Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers. Illustrated by Linn, L. (2013 Award)

Jackson, R., (2016). *In plain sight*. Roaring Brook Press. Illustrated by Pinkney, J. (2017 Honor)

Nyong'o, L., (2019). *Sulwe*. Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers. Illustrated by Harrison, V. (2020 Honor)

Shetterly, M. L., Conkling, W., Freeman, L., & Shetterly, M. L. (2018). *Hidden figures: the true story of four Black women and the space race*. Harper, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers. Illustrated by Shetterly, M. L. (2019 Honor)

Woodson, J., & Lewis, E. B., (2012). *Each kindness*. Nancy Paulsen Books. Illustrated by Thomann, R. (2013 Honor).

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Alexander, K. (2019). *The undefeated*. Versify, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. Illustrated by Nelson, K. (2020 Award)

Alexander, K., Colderley, C., Wentworth, M., (2017). *Out of wonder: Poems celebrating poets*. Candlewick Press. Illustrated by Holmes, E. (2018 Award)

Andrews, T. (2015). *Trombone Shorty*. Abrams Books for Young Readers. Illustrated by Collier, B. (2016 Award)

Barnes, D. (2017). *Crown: An ode to the fresh cut*. Bolden, An Agate imprint. Illustrated by James, G. C. (2018 Honor)

Bauer, M. D. (2018). *The stuff of stars*. Candlewick Press. Illustrated by Holmes, E. (2019 Award)

Beaty, D., Collier, B., (2013). *Knock knock: My dad's dream for me*. Little, Brown and Company. Illustrated by Bart-Horvath, S. (2014 Award)

Bryan, A. (2016). *Freedom over me: Eleven slaves, their lives and dreams brought to life*. Atheneum Books for Young Readers. (2017 Honor)

Bryan, A. (2019). *Infinite hope: A Black artist's journey from World War II to peace.*, Atheneum Books for Young Readers. (2020 Honor)

Clark-Robinson, M. (2018). *Let the children march*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. Illustrated by Morrison, F. (2019 Honor)

Cline-Ransome, L. (2018). *Finding Langston* (First edition.). Holiday House. (2019 Honor)

Cline-Ransome, L., (2017). *Before she was Harriet.*, Holiday House. Illustrated by Ransome, J. (2018 Honor)

Copeland, M. (2014). *Firebird: ballerina Misty Copeland shows a young girl how to dance like the firebird*. G.P. Putnam's Sons, an imprint of Penguin Group (USA). Illustrated by Myers, C. (2015 Award)

Craft, J. (2019). *New kid*. Harper, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers. (2020 Award)

de la Peña, M., & Robinson, C., (2015). *Last stop on Market Street*. G.P. Putnam's Sons, an imprint of Penguin Group (USA). Illustrated by Thomann, R. (2016 Honor)

Duncan, A. F. (2018). *Memphis, Martin, and the mountaintop: The sanitation strike of 1968*. Calkins Creek, an imprint of Highlights. Illustrated by Christie, R. G. (2019 Honor)

Hughes, L., & Collier, B. (2012). *I, too, am America*. Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers. Illustrated by Linn, L. (2013 Award)

Jackson, R. (2016). *In plain sight*. Roaring Brook Press. Illustrated by Pinkney, J. (2017 Honor)

King, M. L. (2012). *I have a dream* (1st ed.). Schwartz & Wade Books. (2013 Honor)

Lewis, J., Aydin, A., (2013). *March: Book one*. Top Shelf Productions. Illustrated Powell, N.
(2014 Honor)

Lewis, J., Aydin, A., & Powell, N. (2016). *March: Book three*. Top Shelf Productions. Illustrated
Walton, L. (2017 Award)

Lyons, K. S., & Minter, D. (2012). *Ellen's broom*. G. P. Putnam's Sons. Illustrated by Thomann,
R. (2013 Honor)

Nelson, K. (2013). *Nelson Mandela*. Katherine Tegen Books. Illustrated by Rago, M. (2014
Honor)

Nelson, V. M. (2012). *No crystal stair: A documentary novel of the life and work of Lewis
Michaux, Harlem bookseller*. Carolrhoda Lab. Illustrated by Christie, R. G. (2013 Honor)

Nelson, V. M. (2015). *The book itch: Freedom, truth & Harlem's greatest bookstore*. Carolrhoda
Books. Illustrated by Christie, R. G. (2016 Honor)

Nyong'o, L., (2019). *Sulwe*. Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers. Illustrated by
Harrison, V. (2020 Honor)

Pinkney, A. D. (2012). *Hand in hand: Ten Black men who changed America* (First edition.).
Disney/Jump at the Sun Books. Illustrated by Pinkney, J. B. (2013 Award)

Powell, P. H. (2014). *Josephine: The dazzling life of Josephine Baker*. Chronicle Books.
Illustrated by Robinson, C. (2015 Honor)

Ransome, J. E. (2019). *The bell rang*. Atheneum Books for Young Readers. (2020 Honor)

Russell-Brown, K. (2014). *Little Melba and her big trombone*. Lee & Low Books. Illustrated by Morrison, F. (2015 Honor)

Shabazz, I., (2015). *X: A novel* (First edition.). Candlewick Press. Illustrated by Magoon, K. (2016 Honor)

Shetterly, M. L., Conkling, W., Freeman, L., & Shetterly, M. L. (2018). *Hidden figures: the true story of four Black women and the space race*. Harper, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers. Illustrated by Shetterly, M. L. (2019 Honor)

Step toe, J. (2016). *Radiant child: The story of young artist Jean-Michel Basquiat*. Little, Brown and Company. (2017 Award)

Weatherford, C. B., Christie, R. G., (2016). *Freedom in Congo Square*. Little Bee Books. Illustrated by Evans, F. W. (2017 Honor)

Woodson, J., & Lewis, E. B., (2012). *Each kindness*. Nancy Paulsen Books. Illustrated by Thomann, R. (2013 Honor).

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