2011

**Immigration as portrayed in literature for youth**

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Abstract
This study addressed the problem that immigrant children face difficulties that may not be portrayed realistically in children's literature. Research questions included 1. Are the immigrant children's situations portrayed authentically, and in what ways? 2. How is the undocumented immigrant child depicted? 3. What are the emerging themes of the authentic literature, and how might they bring greater understanding to the authentic experiences for immigrant children?
IMMIGRATION AS PORTRAYED IN LITERATURE FOR YOUTH

A Graduate Research Paper

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By
April A. Crowder
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This Research Paper by April A. Crowder

Titled: Immigration as Portrayed in Literature for Youth

has been approved as meeting the research requirement for the

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Abstract

This study addressed the problem that immigrant children face difficulties that may not be portrayed realistically in children’s literature. Research questions included

1. Are the immigrant children’s situations portrayed authentically, and in what ways?

2. How is the undocumented immigrant child depicted?

3. What are the emerging themes of the authentic literature, and how might they bring greater understanding to the authentic experiences for immigrant children?

This researcher used qualitative content analysis to complete the study. Eight books were analyzed for thematic content using Creswell’s (2008) theme classifications of ordinary, unexpected, and hard to classify themes.

All books featured ordinary themes, and seven of the eight books included more than one ordinary theme. These themes are ordinary themes because the researcher expected to find them, based upon a list of preliminary themes (poverty, child labor, discrimination, family distress) generated through the review of literature.

The theme of the undocumented immigrant child was a hard to classify theme because it overlapped with many of the preliminary themes. Half of the books in the sample included the depiction of an undocumented immigrant child.

An unexpected theme, that of poor conditions experienced prior to leaving the home country, was featured in two books. It is unexpected because it emerged as the researcher was completing the study.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Imagine two scenarios: In one, an immigrant child named Sumi, finds school to “be a lonely, scary, mean place until at the end of the day, she makes a friend, who draws with her in the dirt on the playground” (Fu, Lamme & Lowery, 2004, para. 9) In another, an immigrant child sits in class, and all is well until the principal arrives with a man in a green uniform in tow.

The instant I saw the green uniform, I panicked. I wanted to run but my legs would not move. I began to tremble and could feel my heart pounding against my chest as though it wanted to escape too. Miss Ehlis and the immigration officer walked up to me. Putting her right hand on my shoulder, and looking up at the officer, she said sadly, ‘This is him.’ My eyes clouded. I stood up and followed the immigration officer out of the classroom and into his car marked Border Patrol. (Jimenez, 1998, p. 134)

Both scenarios come from children’s literature, but there is a stark contrast in the approach the author takes. One is somewhat superficial, with a happy ending to a difficult first day. The other is a traumatic look at an undocumented child’s experience with “la migra” (Jiménez, 1998, p. 134).

The problem this research will address is that immigrant children face problems that may not be portrayed realistically in children’s literature. The topic of immigration is both current and important. Children’s literature should be authentic in nature and represent the actual immigration experience, not an over-simplified version.
In the article "Immigrants as portrayed in children’s picture books," Fu et al. (2004) compare stories to the real immigrant experience. Their findings show that several parts of the immigrant experience are missing from the children’s books that they analyzed.

“For teaching and learning about immigrants in a social studies curriculum, we believe that these books do not present the whole picture of immigrant experiences” (para. 29). The article describes the harsh conditions of immigrant labor and housing that are often omitted from children’s literature.

According to Fu et al. (2004) immigrants often encounter discrimination from “mainstream Americans, other minority groups, and those within their own national group who have established more social and financial status” (para. 33). Immigrants often take jobs that are unappealing to other people, and may accept wages that are lower than minimum wage. Immigrants come to this country hoping for a better life for their future and that of their children, but when they first arrive, their lives are “often no better than back home in terms of working and living conditions” (para. 34). They may live in conditions that many Americans would find unacceptable. Immigrants may also have given up a stable, comfortable home and community, hoping for a better life. Fu et al. report that, according to data from the U.S. Census Bureau, over 500,000 illegal immigrants settle in the United States annually. Even so, this population is not represented in children’s literature.
According to Clark, Glick and Bures (2009), immigrant families may reside with both “kin and non kin” (p. 861). This is an example of one the problems immigrant children may face including greater turnover in living arrangements than their peers.

In “Immigration in childhood: Using picture books to cope,” Baghban (2007) states that “many immigrants enter the United States because their families are fleeing persecution or searching for a better economic life” (p. 71). Though immigrants come to the United States seeking a better life, moving away from what has been known as home can be destabilizing to family life. Immigration is a stressful event for the family. Poverty can become a long term situation, even for working immigrants. Immigrants may have difficulty affording food, shelter and basic items for daily living. Baghban (2007) also found that poverty is linked to the ability to speak English. These issues of basic survival may hinder academic progress as they try to adapt to a new culture and new life. Changes brought on by the family’s move to America can leave children feeling homesick, or pulled in different directions between the old and the new.

Baghban (2007) shares an example of how a difficult immigration issue is glossed over in children’s literature in the book Hannah is My Name as an example of a story in which a girl relinquishes her Chinese name, Na-Li, and begins to respond to her new English name, Hannah. This is one of many adjustments the child must make that disorients her; however, as Baghban points out, the author glosses over the disorientating experience, maintaining a false “upbeat” tone (p. 73). This is an example of how a more difficult issue is smoothed over in children’s literature.

Mingshui Cai (1994) also covers the topic of adjustment and the need for realistic portrayal in his article, “Images of Chinese and Chinese Americans mirrored in picture
books.” Cai discusses specifically the book *I hate English*, where an immigrant child hates English at first but later learns the language well. Cai explains that the portrayal is not authentic:

a major flaw in the story is that the girl’s aversion to English is not realistic in the sense that it does not represent the attitudes of recent immigrant children. They typically do not want to speak Chinese, especially in public, because the language makes them appear different from other children.” (p. 183).

**Deficiencies**

The Fu et al. (2004) study covers the depiction of immigrant children in a quantitative way, however, an in depth qualitative study on books with authentic portrayals has not been completed.

**Significance**

Teacher librarians, teachers, and readers of children’s literature (both student and adult) will gain a deeper understanding of the depiction of immigrants in children’s literature by reading this study.

**Problem Statement**

The problem this research addresses is that immigrant children face problems that may not be portrayed realistically in children’s literature.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this research is to analyze children’s literature that includes the realistic portrayal of the immigrant child.
Research Questions

1. Are the immigrant children's situations portrayed authentically, and in what ways?

2. How is the undocumented immigrant child depicted?

3. What are the emerging themes of the authentic literature, and how might they bring greater understanding to the authentic experiences for immigrant children?

Assumptions and Limitations

Recommended children's books will have unrealistic and authentic portrayals of immigration. This researcher will explore positively reviewed books for the elementary through junior high age reader.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The literature this researcher reviewed included studies that fell into three categories: the current immigrant condition, authenticity in children’s literature depicting immigrants, and the immigrant as portrayed in children’s literature.

This researcher examined several studies that provided information on the conditions currently experienced by immigrants to the United States. Conditions explored include poverty, domestic violence, child health conditions and how migration affects the life course of the immigrant.

The Current Immigrant Condition

Clark, Glick, and Bures (2009) examined how migration affects the course of the immigrant’s life. Understanding the ways the international migration affects the life course helps one gain understanding of how migration can disrupt family life. Clark et al. focused on five areas of research on immigrant families: “cultural diversity and adaptation, family formation, living arrangements, immigrant children and the children of immigrants, and family networks and immigration” (p. 853).

Clark et al. (2009) presented a summary of prominent literature about immigrant families in the United States. Specifically, they sought key themes and issues identified through their review of over 20 studies, and examined data sets, including data from the U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, the Mexican Migration Project, National Education Longitudinal Study, and the New Immigrant Survey. They also aimed to provide recommendations for future studies of family and policy research.
Clark et al. (2009) found that "Immigrant mode of entry is an important consideration when studying family patterns. The mode of entry determines whether migrants arrive as part of a family unit or as individuals" (p. 857). Whether the immigrant arrived in a new country with family members could have an effect on the amount of disruption the immigrant would face.

Clark et al. (2009) studied family formation patterns, including the framework of the family, the willingness to assimilate, and the willingness to marry across ethnic or racial groups. These patterns are viewed as an important "indicator of change" (p. 859) among immigrants.

Living arrangements also differ across immigrant groups. Examples of this include immigrants residing with extended family members. For example, immigrants more commonly reside with extended family members when compared with non-immigrants in the United States (Clark et al., 2009, p. 860).

Immigrant children may experience a greater amount of turnover in their household than their non-immigrant peers. Living with extended families may be helpful for the child’s academic performance, however, these households may also experience more change in household composition which could be associated with lower academic performance. For immigrant children, both positive and negative effects have been researched and documented (Clark et al., 2009).

Family networks are also an important component in immigrant families. For example, if a person migrates individually, he or she may be separated from a spouse or family of origin, causing disruption. This may cause emotional consequences, especially when children are separated from parents (Clark et al., 2009).
Clark et al. (2009) concludes by stating that "One of the most important contributions that researchers can make is to extend our understanding of the long term impact of immigration on families and family patterns at the origin as well as the destination" (pp. 867-868).

Allshouse et al. (2009) examined the problems of housing and child health conditions among recent immigrant families from Mexico into the United States. Despite "widespread gains" (para. 3) in environmental quality throughout the United States, there is still a disparate availability of housing resources and exposures to environmental hazards, which can affect the health of a child. The authors of the study inquired about the living conditions of immigrant families in the Commerce City, Colorado area. Based on census data, neighborhoods that included at least 15-20% of households to be eligible for the study were visited, and later a random sample of 1,546 homes were selected; from this number 750 were visited. The goal was to recruit 250 households. For data collection, participants were interviewed in Spanish and gave blood samples. The authors of the study also reviewed public records to determine the age of the participants' homes. Many factors of the housing and environment were taken into consideration, including dampness, mold, pest infestation, indoor smoking, and occupants per room. Children's health was also assessed, including asthma and allergy symptoms, as well as past diagnoses of asthma, eczema, or allergic rhinitis.

Allshouse et al. (2010) found that all of the households in the study had incomes "below the median household income in Colorado ($50,841) and that 54% of recent immigrants had incomes of less than $20,000, compared to 14% of residents" (para. 5) of the area as a whole. The percentage of owner occupied homes was lower among
immigrants (43%), as compared to the general population in Commerce City (60%). Additionally, among the immigrant population, 58% resided in houses built between 1950-1969, whereas 31% of homes in Adams County as a whole were built in that time period. In contrast, only 25% of immigrants resided in homes built after 1970, compared to 65% of the general population. Average household size was greater among the immigrants of Commerce City, with an average of 5.2 occupants, compared to 3.1 occupants in the general Commerce City population. Also, the immigrant households were more crowded than the general population based on the amount of rooms in the household, with 23% having more than one occupant per room, as "compared to 8.5% and 3.9%, respectively in all households in Commerce City and Adams County as a whole" (para. 22).

Allshouse et al. (2010) found that environmental risk factors for asthma are "prevalent across immigrant housing" (para. 27). Hazards included dampness and mold (44%), little or no ventilation potential in the home (26%), pest infestation (28%), and indoor smoking (16%). No data were reported about the same environmental factors in homes in Commerce City as a whole. The study also found a higher prevalence of overcrowded and multi-family households, which may "raise issues beyond risk for asthma" such as "psychological distress, respiratory infections, and tuberculosis activation" (para. 27).

Allshouse et al. (2010) suggested that solutions to address the unhealthy housing conditions be multi-faceted and include both strategies that can be implemented at the household level as well as helping the immigrants access health care. This could be
accomplished by partnering with local housing authorities and public health organizations. These partnerships could “raise awareness of housing and child health needs and to develop healthy housing policies and comprehensive approaches to home remediation that address the range of hazards present in substandard housing” (para. 27).

Cuban immigrants who arrived in the U.S. after 1980 may be disadvantaged when compared to their earlier immigrant counterparts. Cislo, Spence, & Gayman (2010) found that Cuban immigrants who came to the United States after 1980 were compared with people from Cuba who arrived prior to 1980 in levels of anxiety, depression and self-esteem. The research examines “whether adversity and social support, acculturation related factors, or pre-migration conditions” account for any of the differences in levels of anxiety, depression and self-esteem (para. 1). Cislo hypothesized that “Cuban immigrants in South Florida who arrived during or subsequent to 1980 would be at a disadvantage in mental health and psychosocial adjustment relative to earlier arriving compatriots” (p. 1179). Several conditions may contribute to the disadvantages recent Cuban immigrants face, including adversity in the U.S. and coping resources. For example, later arriving Cubans (arrival date later than 1980) may have faced “unequal levels of social support from family and friends, which can serve as coping resources” (para. 4) for the recent immigrant.

According to Cislo et al. (2010) factors related to acculturation may also have an effect on the immigrant experience for the Cubans. Factors related to acculturation include time in the United States, language, social identities (what culture one identifies with), and age at arrival. All of these factors can have an effect on the psychosocial
adjustment of the person. A third set of conditions experienced by immigrants are the conditions the immigrant experiences before the migration, which are known as pre-migration conditions. These include pre-existing psychiatric disorders, and poor quality of life in Cuba, which included economic deprivation in the declining communist system in Cuba.

Cislo et al. (2010) used data from an earlier study, the Physical Challenge and Health study in Miami Dade County Florida. A sample was taken from a square mile block in Miami Dade County, Florida. This sample area included 206,234 households. A random sample of 10,000 of these households was screened via telephone and home visits. The research identified 1000 respondents with a physical disability and 1000 respondents without a physical limitation. To further limit the sample, participants were selected based on age, from 18-59 years. This age range was imposed because “adults 60 years or older were disproportionally represented in the earlier arriving group” (para. 15). This limitation yielded 191 participants.

Participants were interviewed and several dependent variables were measured, including depressive symptoms (measured with the CES-D index of “depressive symptomology” (Cislo, et al., 2010, para. 16), anxiety and self-esteem (both measured with the Rosenberg scale). Independent control variables included the year of migration, the number of stressful events experienced during time in the U.S., discrimination of any sort, and perceived social support. Other factors included English language, strong American identity, and pre-migration factors. After collecting data, Cislo et al. compared the results of the later immigrants of those of earlier arrivals in areas of mental health and
adjustment, sociodemographics, adversity, social support, acculturation, and pre-migration factors. Cislo et al. found that "later arrivals are relatively disadvantaged in anxiety and self-esteem compared to earlier arrivals, and marginally so for depressive symptoms" (p. 1177). Later arrivals are younger on average, fewer have attained a high school degree, and fewer have attained a college degree. Later arrivals also reported lower levels of family support. Additionally, in the areas of acculturation, later arrivals were less likely to complete the interview in English, were less likely to report having a strong American identity, but did not show a significant difference in reporting a strong ethnic identity.

Although Cislo et al. expected that later arrivals would have experienced more adverse conditions, the analysis did not show this. Pre-migration factors did not account for the disadvantages the later arrivals had in the areas of anxiety and self-esteem. Cislo et al. concluded with recommending the benefits of English language courses and family programs to strengthen the Cuban immigrant in the areas of acculturation.

Vidales (2010) studied Latina immigrants who have faced domestic violence. Violence against women in the United States has been well documented. Domestic violence "cuts across social divides" (para. 3), as a woman of any race or ethnicity may be a victim of domestic violence. This study focused specifically on some of the obstacles Latina women face, including "language barriers, gender and economic inequality, and lack of knowledge of laws and series that can support them" (para. 1).

Vidales (2010) used three phases of data collection. First, ethnographic data about women in a battered women's shelter was gathered. Next, interviews were conducted with two groups of people: the professionals who provided service to the women, and
eighty six Latina women who sought assistance. The third phase focused on collecting survey data, such as personal information about the women including demographic characteristics, the person(s) the women first turned to for help, any problems the women had in seeking assistance, organizations the women considered contacting for assistance, and the “woman’s perceptions of the greatest obstacles to overcoming their problems regarding abuse” (para. 17). Spanish was the native language spoken among the majority of the women (96%); therefore, the interviews were conducted in Spanish by the author of the study. Women were asked to share their stories and experiences and if they had received support from “family or friends, whether they had ever used any other resources besides family and friends (police, clergy, or victim witness programs), the extent to which these resources were helpful, and what barriers they encountered when trying to use them” (para. 16). Women in the sample were of predominantly Mexican backgrounds (86%). The other women in the study included 14% from South America, Central America, and the Caribbean. Only two women were born in the United States. Twenty one of the participants did not state a residency status. Of the respondents, 37% stated they were not legal residents (para. 19). Study participants had an average of 2.4 children. Vidales (2010) cited many barriers faced by the Latina women, including language, beliefs, religious convictions, socioeconomic status, and educational level. According to Vidales, Latinas face unique difficulties when trying to extricate themselves from a domestic violence situation. Vidales found that:

Latinas who experience domestic violence face unique challenges in their efforts to prevent or overcome such violence. As we have demonstrated, the social organization of poverty and education, marriage and family, and race and cultural values combine in ways that create distinct obstacles for Mexican women trying to extract themselves and their children from violent relationships and homes. (para. 49)
Vidales concluded by suggesting more research on domestic violence and ways to intervene while keeping in mind the issues that immigrant Latina women might face.

The previous research category discussed living conditions of immigrants. This research showed what immigrant conditions exist. Taken together with the next categories, studies about authenticity in children's literature depicting immigrants and the immigrant as portrayed in children's literature, will demonstrate what deficiencies in the literature may exist.

**Authenticity in Children's Literature depicting Immigrants**

Cai (1995) discussed the importance of cultural authenticity by examining society's ability to "cross cultural gaps on the wings of imagination" (para. 4). Cai gave many examples of books that have been published in the multicultural category that may actually encourage stereotypes about the culture they are attempting to represent. Cai discussed the issue of poorly researched multicultural works, and highlights the insider vs. outsider issue, for example, the relation between the author's own background, his or her imagination, and culturally authentic literature. Cai cautioned against departing from the authentic representation to a more imagined type of writing:

> lack of imagination may result in uninspired, insipid writings, but misrepresentation of reality is even worse; it perpetuates ignorance and defeats the purpose of multicultural literature. Cultural authenticity is the basic criterion in the sense that no matter how imaginative and how well written a story is, it should be rejected if it seriously violates that integrity of a culture. (para. 7)

Cai (1995) showed various examples of books and discusses their authenticity, while expressing the viewpoints of those who believed only insiders can write authentic literature, as well as those who believe an outsider can craft a book using imagination to bridge the cultural gaps.
Cai (1995) stated that they key issue really is concerned with how strong and authentic the connection to the culture is for the author. For example, in this article, cross cultural competence was broken into levels, ranging from superficial interactions with those of another culture, to complete assimilation into the culture.

In “Images of Chinese and Chinese Americans mirrored in picture books,” Cai (1994) studied the images in picture books about Chinese and Chinese Americans and how the images could “imprint in the minds of children in a small Midwest community with a predominantly white population” (para. 1). Cai stated that picture books may be the first image of people from other cultures, before actually encountering people of these cultures in life. Cai sought to find how these picture books portray Chinese and Chinese Americans and how the stories reflect the Chinese culture. Cai used 73 picture story books, classified into three categories. These categories included “folktales (including modern folktales written by American authors), stories about Chinese Americans in the United States and Canada, and stories about contemporary Chinese in mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong” (para. 1). The first category, folktales, accounted for 51 of the 73 books in the study. Cai analyzed these books, and found that some depict negative perceptions of the Chinese, racist overtones, and unflattering stereotypes. Cai also found, however, some books portray the Chinese warmly and accurately. Cai found that progress had been made in presenting “more truthful portraits of the Chinese” (p. 170) as evidenced in the three variations of the 1938 Chinese tale, The Five Chinese Brothers. In the earliest version Cai analyzed, negative stereotypes such as yellow skin and slanted eyes, were depicted. Later versions of the same story such as Six Chinese Brothers in
1979 and *The Seven Chinese Brothers* in 1990 featured more accurate illustrations and helped to undo the stereotypes found in earlier versions of the tale (Cai, 1995).

The second category focused on contemporary Chinese characters. Cai (1994) discussed, in depth, six books from this category in his research. He included books from 1939 to those published recently in this category. Cai found that many of the books are do not provide much information on the Chinese culture. Only two of the books, *A Visit to China* and *Chasing the Moon to China* touch upon aspects of modern Chinese life. Cai stated that these books “give the reader only a glimpse of the contemporary Chinese” (p. 181). There is some repetition of subject matter, too, focusing on “the New Year, kites, and people living on boats” (p. 181). This limited presentation of subject matter is not adequate and leaves the reader without a sense of contemporary Chinese culture.

Cai’s (1994) third category, books on Chinese Americans in the United States and Canada was divided into three subgroups: cultural tradition, adjustment to the new life, and successes in the new world. Several of these books deal with traditional festivals, including the Moon Festival, depicted in *Mr. Fong’s Toy Shop*. Cai found a flaw in this story, as the author confuses the Moon Festival with the Lantern Festival, giving the reader false information about the cultural tradition. Cai preferred a book that has a more accurate representation of the same subject, *The Moon Lady*.

In the same category, Cai (1994) found books that do not accurately represent the image of the Chinese dragon, as well as a book that has a misleading title (*The Happy Funeral*) by Eve Bunting. Cai analyzed books that deal with the adjustment to new life. Cai found books about “isolation, loneliness, poverty, language barriers, and racial discrimination” (p. 184). Cai found both authentic and non-authentic portrayals of these
experiences, including one instance where a character’s aversion to learning English is portrayed incorrectly and unrealistically.

Cai (1994) found more authentic representations in the books he analyzed in the area of success in the new world. Experiences unique to the Chinese in acculturation and new world success are depicted in books such as *El Chino, Pie Biter, and Roses Sing on New Snow*. These books bring to light the accomplishments of Chinese immigrants.

Cai also analyzed cultural authenticity in illustrations. Cai found that, overall, books published recently were better than those published earlier based upon quality of illustrations. In spite of these improvements, Cai found that many visual images in these books were not completely authentic, and even result in “vulgarizing the integrity of the Chinese culture or ambiguity of cultural identity” (p. 185). Illustrators also “confuse images of the Chinese culture with images of the Western cultures” (p. 186) using the dragon as an example. People were also misrepresented in illustrations with stereotypes such as slanted eyes. Finally, some illustrators modeled the Chinese character after his or her own people.

Cai concluded that while most picture books in his analysis provided positive images of Chinese, Chinese Americans, and Chinese Culture, some still had characteristics of cultural inauthenticity. Cai suggested that to “transmit accurate information and to maintain the integrity of the culture, authors and illustrators are obligated to undertake earnest research in that culture” (p. 188). Cai also suggested the need for more picture books that feature contemporary portrayals of Chinese and Chinese Americans.
Immigrants as Portrayed in Children’s Literature

While Cai (1994) discussed the importance of authenticity in children’s literature, Baghban (2007) and Fu et al. (2004) analyzed themes in books for children that depict the immigrant condition, including how the books could potentially help immigrant children cope with their problems. Baghban (2007) found that the U.S. is experiencing the largest wave of immigration in its history. The contemporary immigration is unprecedented in its diversity of ethnicity, class, and countries of origin. The problems the immigrants face include the destabilization of their life, being different, coping with changes, problems with name (Americanization of name), learning language, relating to traditions, maintaining ties with relatives in the home country, and visiting the homeland.

Baghban’s (2007) main question was to analyze characteristics of picture books that could potentially help immigrant children cope with their problems. The author collected data on picture books and correlated it with the aforementioned problems immigrants face. Twenty two books were included in the research. Additionally, the researcher sought information about authors of books that were immigrants themselves, and Baghban further discussed how their writing helped these authors cope with unresolved issues. Baghban’s (2007) findings were that curricular materials that are relevant to the social and cultural experiences of children generated the children’s enthusiasm to keep learning. Books about cultural issues helped many readers see themselves portrayed in literature.

Fu et al. (2004) studied immigrant families and their experiences as depicted in children’s picture books by comparing stories to real immigrant experiences. Research questions asked what themes were constant among the literature and what curricular
connections were possible. This was a content analysis in which the authors read and qualitatively analyzed 27 books for theme and content.

The authors found common themes including making the transition, making connections, and becoming Americans. In the books, however, not all themes were depicted, including poverty, discrimination, child labor, and family distress. The reason behind this, according to the researchers, was that publishers assume children should only learn about positive experiences, not harsh reality. In spite of this, harsh topics are seeping into children’s books, especially historical fiction. In addition, according to the researchers, the public purposely neglects topics that reveal the negative aspects of our society and believes that our children should be protected from the harsh realities. The history of immigration in America is still an uncomfortable topic for many (Fu et al., 2004)

Summary

Allshouse et al. (2010), Cislo et al. (2010), Clark et al. (2009), and Vidales (2010) discussed the living conditions and life course of immigrants, and found that some immigrants face difficulties in the areas of poverty, seeking help for domestic violence, housing, and acculturation. This shows that immigrants in children’s literature are not always authentically portrayed. Cai (1994, 1995) discussed both the authenticity of the treatment of Asians and Asian American characters in the literature, and examined the probability that an author from outside a particular culture could write an authentic, culturally correct book portraying that culture. Baghban (2007) found that immigrant children may use picture books to cope with their new circumstances. Fu et al. (2004) examined the portrayal of the immigrant in children’s literature, and found the portrayal
to sometimes be inauthentic. When combined, their studies reveal that immigrants in children’s literature are not always authentically portrayed.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The purpose of this qualitative content analysis was to analyze children’s literature that realistically portrays the immigrant experience of children.

According to Fu et al. (2004), several common themes were present throughout the literature they reviewed. However, some realistic themes seemed to be missing. The reasoning for this is that publishers may assume “that children should only learn about positive experiences, not harsh reality” (para. 40). The public, according to Fu et al, also tends to neglect topics that reveal the negative aspects of our society and believe that children should be protected from the harsh reality of the world.

The research questions were 1. Are the immigrant children’s situations portrayed authentically, and in what ways? 2. How is the undocumented immigrant child depicted? 3. What are the emerging themes of the authentic literature, and how might they bring greater understanding to the experiences for immigrant children?

According to Zhang and Wildemuth (2009), qualitative content analysis is often used in research applications in information and library science. Qualitative content analysis “pays attention to unique themes that illustrate the range of the meanings of the phenomenon, rather than the statistical significance of the occurrence of particular texts of concepts” (p. 309). Qualitative content analysis fits this research to support an in-depth look at the literature and search for emerging themes to help illustrate the topic of authentic immigrant portrayals in children’s literature.
According to Creswell (2008) qualitative research tends to address research problems in which a detailed understanding of a phenomenon is developed (in this case, authentic experiences of immigrant children depicted in children's literature), as well as collect information from a small number of "individuals or sites" (p. 55). In the case of this research, the information was collected from a small number of books, so that a detailed understanding of the emergent themes was gained.

**Book Sample**

To obtain the books for the sample, this researcher began with H.W. Wilson's *Children's Core Collection*. Search criteria included the term immigrant, NOT Ellis Island, published after 1990, and recommended books. To broaden the sample, terms were changed to immigration OR immigrant NOT Ellis Island, published after 1990, and recommended books. This returned a list of over 50 books. To limit the books to those set in the time period from 1960 to present, those depicting immigration in the United States, and books appropriate for grade levels ranging from four to eight, the researcher read the descriptions of all books. This narrowed the list to six books. To broaden the list of books, the researcher checked H.W. Wilson's *Middle and Junior High Core Collection*, using the same search technique. The results showed two more recommended books about recent immigration topics for grades 4-8, which were added to Appendix A, a list of eight books.

**Data Collection**

The researcher read the selected books (Appendix A) and compared the themes with the preliminary themes (Appendix B), and then looked for themes that emerged during the study. This researcher created this preliminary list of themes based upon studies in the
literature review in this research. According to Creswell (2008) a researcher may use themes to analyze qualitative data. Themes have short labels (two to four words). Additionally, Creswell describes several types of themes, including the following:

- **Ordinary themes**: themes a researcher might expect to find.
- **Unexpected themes**: themes that are surprises and not expected to surface during the study
- **Hard to classify themes**: themes that contain ideas that do not easily fit into one theme or that overlap with several themes (p. 257)

Preliminary themes, for this research included immigrant conditions such as poverty, discrimination, child labor, and family distress, listed in the Data Collection Tool in Appendix B. These themes are considered ordinary because they are themes the researcher expected to find. One hard to classify theme is also present, that of the depiction of the undocumented immigrant child. It is not included with the preliminary themes because it is not included in every book, and only applies to the books that depicted an undocumented immigrant child character. It is hard to classify because it crosses over into many of the preliminary themes, as the undocumented immigrant child may experience the conditions described in the preliminary themes. One unexpected theme emerged after reading the books, that of poor conditions experienced prior to leaving the home country.

**Data Analysis**

To analyze the data, this researcher looked for emerging themes in the books, compared the themes to the preliminary themes list, and compared this to the research questions. This researcher described and interpreted the data collected. According to
Zhang and Wildemuth, (2009) qualitative research is interpretive, and interpretation represents one's understanding of the phenomenon that is being studied.
CHAPTER 4
RESULTS

This researcher analyzed children’s literature for the realistic portrayal of the immigrant child. The books that were analyzed are listed in Appendix A. The preliminary themes the researcher was looking for included poverty, discrimination, child labor, and family distress, which were listed in the data collection tool, Appendix B. This researcher found all of the preliminary themes to be included in at least one book in the sample. Seven of the eight books in the sample included multiple themes.

This researcher examined eight books looking for evidence of the previously listed preliminary themes. The research questions for this study were 1. Are the immigrant children’s situations portrayed authentically, and in what ways? 2. How is the undocumented immigrant child depicted? 3. What are the emerging themes of the authentic literature, and how might they bring greater understanding to the authentic experiences for immigrant children?

The preliminary themes are shown in Table 1. Table 2 was created to show how the undocumented immigrant child is depicted in books included in the study. Table 3 was created for a theme that emerged during the research, the theme of poor conditions experienced before leaving the home country.

Table 1 shows the preliminary themes of poverty, child labor, discrimination and family distress. Examples found in the book sample are included. These are classified as ordinary themes, as they are themes I expected to find. I found all preliminary themes in at least one book in the sample, and seven of the eight books included multiple preliminary themes.
Table 1

Preliminary Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book Name</th>
<th>Poverty</th>
<th>Child Labor</th>
<th>Discrimination</th>
<th>Family Distress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Home of the Brave</td>
<td>Poverty is not specifically mentioned</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>“Leave the white girl alone, one yells. Hands off, boy.” (Applegate, 2007, p.171)</td>
<td>Kek’s mother is missing, father, brother and cousin are dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask Me No Questions</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Aisha has been absent from school because of her father’s detainment. A teacher assumes it is because she is Muslim and says, “you know, I’ve seen this before with the Muslim kids. I push those girls—they’re so bright. Then one day they come in with a head scarf, and they say their marriage has been arranged, and they’re not going to college after all.” (Budhos, 2006, p. 112)</td>
<td>Aisha and Nadira’s father is detained while trying to cross from the United States into Canada and the family is separated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honeysuckle House</td>
<td>No, but Ba Ba, who was an accountant in China, now</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>“The first girl put her fingers in the corners of her eyes and</td>
<td>Ba Ba is waiting for his green card, other family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From North to South</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Mama is deported to Mexico after she was found to be without immigration papers while at work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Linea</td>
<td>&quot;This year, there had been no money at all. It wasn’t her fault.” Jaramillo, 2006, p. 2)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Mama and Papa crossed La Linea (the line) to America six years ago and are separated from their children Elena and Miguel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Circuit</td>
<td>&quot;When I heard Papa say ‘we’re broke, too’ I panicked. My hope for getting a ball of my own that Christmas faded.” (Jimenez, 1998, p. 43)</td>
<td>The summer after 7th grade, Francisco spends the summer picking strawberries and grapes (Jimenez, 1998, p. 71).</td>
<td>&quot;I remember being hit on the wrists with a twelve inch ruler because I did not follow directions in class... but how could I? The teacher gave them in English.” Jimenez, 1998, p. 12)</td>
<td>Baby Torito becomes ill and nearly dies; Papa has back trouble and fears he will not be able to work much longer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saving Sky</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Kareem’s father is taken to a detention camp where Americans of Middle Eastern descent are being held.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

works at a grocery store while awaiting his green card pulled. Her friend copied.” (Cheng, 2004, p. 47) members are left in China.
Crossing the Wire

We might be able to survive in Guanajuato.” I knew what this meant.....it was possible for people with no homes and no work to survive there by begging along the streets...” (Hobbs, 2006, p. 205)

“Right from the start I was making sixty dollars a day.” (Hobbs, 2006, p. 21)

No

Victor comes to the United States, leaving his mother and siblings in Mexico.

The theme of poverty was evident in three of the eight books. In *The Circuit*, Francisco’s family travels with the harvesting of different types of produce. They often live in tents, outbuildings and, just once, in a house. When little Torito becomes ill, they have no money for a doctor, so they wait until he is so ill he nearly dies before taking him to the hospital. Francisco doesn’t have a coat, and school personnel notice him shivering. He is given a coat from the lost and found box. Francisco’s family look for discarded food in the trash behind grocery stores to supplement their diet of tortillas. In *La Linea* and *Crossing the Wire*, the poverty experienced occurs prior to the immigrants coming to the United States. *La Linea’s* main character, Miguel, dreams of joining his parents who have lived and worked in the United States for over six years, unable to visit often because of the danger and expense of crossing the line illegally. The poverty is evidenced by the fact that there is no birthday present this year for Miguel, not even the underwear his grandmother usually gives him. “There is never money for a gift I didn’t need” (Jaramillo, 2006, p. 1). In *Crossing the Wire*, Victor’s family experiences poverty after the death of his father, who used to cross to El Norte (as the United States is referred to)
for work and send money home to the family prior to his death. Victor tries to support his family by selling corn, but has trouble finding a buyer for his crop several years in a row. Fearing that his family will be reduced to begging to survive, he decides to go to the United States to search for work to support his family in Mexico.

The theme of child labor is discussed in two of the books, *The Circuit* and *Crossing the Wire*. In *The Circuit*, Francisco works alongside his family members in the fields as a child. Even before he is old enough to earn his "own cotton sack" (Jimenez, 1998, p. 60) Francisco is charged with watching his younger sibling in the car while his parents work, taking only a short break for lunch to check on the children and change the baby’s diaper. Despite working while still a child, Francisco’s parents do encourage him to attend school whenever possible. Child labor is also a theme in the book *Crossing the Wire*, both before and after the main character, Victor, migrates north. In his home country, Mexico, Victor, at age fifteen, is responsible for the support of his family since his father’s death. Once he gets to El Norte, he begins working in the fields picking asparagus, and is able to make sixty dollars per day, which to Victor is a large amount of money. He is given housing in a dormitory and is able to save much of his earnings. Near the end of the book, he is able to send his mother $250, which would provide many things for his family including food, clothing, and money for his sisters to go to school.

Discrimination is experienced in five of the eight books. In *Home of the Brave* Kek is verbally harassed for giving a valentine to his friend Hannah, a white girl. *Ask Me No Questions* discusses how some Muslim people experience difficulties finding work, losing jobs, being called names, or being physically assaulted in post 9/11 America. A teacher at Nadira’s school even stereotypes Muslim girls by saying “I’ve seen this happen
before with Muslim kids. I push those girls—they’re so bright. Then one day they come in with a head scarf, and they say their marriage has been arranged and they’re not going to college after all. Everything down the tubes, just like that” (Budhos, 2006, p. 112).

*Honeysuckle House* depicts the cruelty of kids picking on others where Tina (the American name of Tiang) sees children in her school pulling their eyes up so they slant, and saying that a bunny’s eyes “are bigger than hers” (Cheng, 2009, p. 47). Tina also experiences teachers mixing her up with another girl of Chinese heritage in her school. In *The Circuit* Francisco’s brother, Roberto also experiences a form of discrimination when his brother is punished in school for not following directions which were given in English, which he was unable to understand. Discrimination is alluded to when a former principal tries to line up a job for Roberto with someone who owns a shoe store. Roberto is surprised to find that the job is not at the shoe store, but is, in fact, taking care of the store owner’s yard work instead. In *Saving Sky*, persons who appear to be of Middle Eastern heritage are actually being arrested and detained in prisons when terrorists begin to attack gas pipelines. Kareem’s physician father is arrested while at work, and officials come to his school to take him to the detainment area too, but he is helped by Sky and her family, who believe this treatment of people is wrong.

Family distress is a theme expressed in every book this researcher read for the study. Families were separated in several of the books. In *From North to South*, Jose’s mother is deported back to Mexico during an immigration raid at her work. Jose’s father, who is in the country legally, and Jose travel to Mexico to see her weekly while a lawyer works on her case. Jose understandably misses his mother and is uncertain when they will be permanently reunited again. *Home of the Brave* tells the story of Kek, who is separated
from his mother and doesn’t know her fate. His father, brother, and cousin have died due to a violent uprising in his home country. Kek lives in Minnesota with his aunt and cousin, Ganwar. Ganwar has had some difficulty adjusting to life in the United States and has also suffered the loss of his hand in the events that led to the deaths of his relatives. In *Honeysuckle House* Tina (Tiang) has family members that stayed in China including her grandparents, uncle and cousin. Additionally, her father travels from Ohio to Chicago frequently to try to obtain his green card. Her mother and father fight occasionally, as well. *Ask Me No Questions* has the main character’s father detained while trying to seek asylum in Canada for himself and his family. Nadira and Aisha go back home in the United States and go to school, and tell no one at school what has occurred. The girls’ mother stays in a shelter near where their father is detained, and Nadira and Aisha stay with relatives. The stress they experience cause Aisha, a good student, to miss school and miss an important college interview. *The Circuit* depicts a loving family who travels from place to place following work. The family experience distress when Torito becomes ill, when Papa has back pain and has difficulty working, and because they live in a state of upheaval, as they never know when, where, or what type of living situation they will experience next, or if la migra (the immigration officers) will find them and arrest them. *Saving Sky’s* Kareem experiences his father’s detainment, and hiding with a classmate’s family, hoping that government officials do not find him. Sky and her family, who are hiding Kareem, experience the distress of seeing what is happening to their friend, and what is occurring in the country, as well as possible arrest themselves for harboring a fugitive.
Table 2 shows the theme of the depiction of the undocumented immigrant, which is a hard to classify theme because it overlaps with all of the preliminary themes.

Table 2

*Depiction of the Undocumented Immigrant*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book Name</th>
<th>Depiction of undocumented immigrant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Ask Me No Questions</em></td>
<td>Aisha and Nadira are undocumented immigrants who live an American lifestyle, going to school, eating at McDonalds and Dunkin’ Donuts. “You Forget. You forget you don’t really exist here, that this isn’t your home.” (Budhos, 2006, back cover). However, they feel like they have always “lived this way-floating, not sure where we belong. In the beginning, we lived so that we could pack up any day, fold all our belongings into the same nylon suitcases.” (Budhos, 2006, p.8) Things worsen for them after September 11, 2001, when “suddenly being Muslim means you are dangerous-a suspected terrorist.” (Budhos, 2006, back cover).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Circuit</em></td>
<td>“La Migra swept through the camp about an hour ago, and know if the Immigration officers searched your school too. Mama must have Noticed the fright in my eyes when I heard the word ‘migra’ because She immediately came and hugged me. That word had evoked fear Ever since the immigration raid in Tent City……” (Jimenez, 1998, p. 95)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Crossing the Wire</em></td>
<td>“Enrique told us who to see about fake green cards and Social Security cards….You’ll get by with those. Nobody wants to check up. Just don’t think they will fool anyone at the border.” (Hobbs, 2006, p.206)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>La Linea</em></td>
<td>“She’s staying here with me until I can cross la linea and come back again freely.” (Jaramillo, 2006. p.124)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The undocumented immigrant child is depicted in four books, *Ask Me No Questions*, *The Circuit*, *Crossing the Wire* and *La Linea*. *Ask Me No Questions* features Nadira and Aisha, who appear to be typical American girls, hiding their secret until their father is detained. In *The Circuit*, the family is always worried about la migra (the immigration
officers), and at the end of the book, Francisco and Roberto are taken into custody by them. *Crossing the Wire’s* Victor decides to stay in the United States, working illegally, to send home money to his family. *La Linea* features siblings going to the United States to join their parents. Miguel stays to finish his college education, and afterwards states he will not go back to Mexico until he can cross freely and come back again. Both *La Linea* and *Crossing the Wire* show the immigrant children evading the immigration officers during their border passage.

Table 3 shows examples of the poor conditions characters in the books experienced in the country of origin, prior to coming to the United States. This is an unexpected theme because it emerged in more than one book the researcher read for the study, and was therefore prominent enough to include as an emerging theme.

Table 3

*Poor Conditions Experienced Prior to Leaving the Home Country*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book Name</th>
<th>Example of Conditions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Home of the Brave</td>
<td>Kek, a refugee from Africa, experienced violence from men who attacked his village. His father and brother are killed. “The round windows open and guns are there and hating words, and I am screaming.” (Applegate, 2007, p.49)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crossing the Wire</td>
<td>Victor’s father is deceased, and he tries to support his family by growing corn. However, no one is buying the corn. “You might as well not plant any corn, Victor-no more than your family can eat. It’s not going to get better this year, in fact, it is going to get much worse. If you are able to sell your corn at all, you will get almost nothing for it.” (Hobbs, 2006, p. 20)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In *Home of the Brave* Kek’s poor living conditions go far beyond financial need, as Kek loses several family members to violence in his home country in Africa. A specific country in Africa is not mentioned. After Kek’s father, brother, uncle and cousin are killed, he and his mother seek refuge in a camp. The camp is invaded by gunfire, and Kek and his mother run. Kek’s mother is hurt, and encourages him to continue on without her. He eventually is sheltered in another camp prior to coming to the United States as part of a refugee resettlement program. His mother is missing, and he awaits word about her after he reaches Minnesota. The poverty Victor experiences in *Crossing the Wire* occurs prior to his crossing into the United States, in fact, it is his reason for making the trip to El Norte.

Out of the eight books, six of them showed the harsh reality of the conditions immigrants face, both in the United States and in their country of origin. Only one book seemed to gloss over the harsh reality. *From North to South* tells a harsh story, however, the pictures depict a happy child, Jose, and the story feels hopeful throughout. *Honeysuckle House* depicts a realistic immigrant story; however, it, too remains hopeful and has a somewhat glossed over storyline where the reader seems to know that things will turn out all right—that Ba will get his green card, that Tina (Tiang) will make friends and do well in school, both of which do occur in the book. The other six books do not gloss over the immigration experience— in fact, some of the depictions were very harsh. *La Linea* is a suspenseful, sometimes tragic, story, that has some, but not all, characters safely reach the United States. *Crossing the Line* shows how difficult and dangerous the journey to the United States is for an illegal immigrant, and has one character stay in the United States and another return to Mexico. *The Circuit*, which is a book of stories from
the life of the migrant child, depicts real situations that the author faced as a child of migrant workers. *Home of the Brave* discusses how difficult an adjustment to a new country, climate, and way of life can be, even if the country the character left behind was filled with violence and heartbreak. *Saving Sky* shows an America that gathers up and detains suspected terrorists based on their ethnic background. Although fictionalized, it harks to the World War two era where Japanese Americans were interned during the war. This is a harsh lesson in what has occurred in American History, and the need to speak out if something like this was to occur again, as Sky’s family does in the book.
CHAPTER 5
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary
This study addressed the problem that immigrant children face difficulties that may not be portrayed realistically in children's literature. This researcher looked for themes such as poverty, child labor, discrimination, and family distress. An additional theme emerged as the books were studied, that of poor conditions experienced prior to leaving the home country. Research questions included 1. Are the immigrant children’s situations portrayed authentically, and in what ways? 2. How is the undocumented immigrant child depicted? 3. What are the emerging themes of the authentic literature, and how might they bring greater understanding to the authentic experiences for immigrant children?

All books featured preliminary themes, and seven of the eight books included more than one preliminary theme. One book, *The Circuit* included all preliminary themes. These themes are ordinary themes because the researcher expected to find them. The preliminary themes are detailed in Table 1.

The theme of the undocumented immigrant child overlapped with many of the preliminary themes; that is to say that the undocumented immigrant also was depicted experiencing poverty, child labor, discrimination, or family distress. Half of the books in the sample included the depiction of an undocumented immigrant child. This is a hard to classify theme, because it is interwoven into many of the preliminary themes. The theme of the undocumented immigrant child is found in Table 2.
An unexpected theme, that of poor conditions experienced prior to leaving the home country, was featured in two books. It is unexpected because it emerged as the researcher was completing the study. The details of this unexpected theme are shown in Table 3. All tables include examples from the books to support the findings.

This researcher used qualitative content analysis to complete the study. Eight books were analyzed and conclusions are as follows.

Conclusions

Research question one asked, are the immigrant children’s situations portrayed authentically, and in what ways? This researcher found that all books in the study depicted at least one of the preliminary themes, and seven out of the eight books depicted multiple themes. The themes were based on the review of the literature, to ensure that they depicted authentic portrayals of the immigrant experience. There was a high level of authenticity in the books analyzed for this study. Previous research shows that culturally authentic materials are important for readers of the less dominant cultures to see themselves through literature, thus motivating reading, and authentic books are also important for children of dominant cultures, in order to dispel cultural stereotypes.

According to Baghban, (2007) using curricular materials relevant to the social and cultural experiences of children helped to generate the children’s enthusiasm to keep learning. Norton (1991) makes a connection between learning about other cultures through multicultural literature and how this can help the reader to understand that people who belong to different racial or ethnic groups are “real people, with feelings, emotions, and needs similar to their own-individual human beings, not stereotypes” (p. 531).

Taylor (2000) states that “all students need to see reflections of themselves and their lives
in school and in the curriculum” (para. 5). Reading authentic literature can help the reader to have respect for other cultures, and can be a source of pride for children who are members of the featured immigrant group.

Fortunately, this research found a high level of authenticity in the books analyzed for this study. However it must be noted that the book sample was chosen specifically based upon professional literature review sources that are used by teacher librarians to select the best books for libraries. Books in this study were chosen from the H. W. Wilson Children's Core Collection and the H.W. Wilson Middle and Junior High Core Collection. Using these collections provided highly reviewed and recommended books for the sample. It is important to note that this is an essential component of school library programs. Students benefit from having a certified teacher librarian selecting materials for the school library to endure the quality and authenticity of books depicting the immigrant experience. A certified teacher librarian uses professional tools, such as the Core Collection to select appropriate and authentic literature for the school library, and ensure that students are receiving high quality literature. Additionally, according to the Iowa School Library Guidelines, a school library should include a current and diverse collection. By having books that depict current and authentic immigrant experiences, this goal is met.

Question two asked, How is the undocumented immigrant child depicted? Four books from the sample included an undocumented immigrant child as a main character. The undocumented immigrant child was depicted in several ways, from experiencing discrimination from teachers, fearing immigration officers, and obtaining false identification to experiencing family separation when a parent is detained for being in the
United States illegally. The depiction of the undocumented immigrant child also crosses over into experiences featured in the preliminary themes such as family distress and child labor. The issue of the undocumented immigrant is timely and current in the social and political issues of today's world. Being able to access literature that covers current topics such as this adds to the diversity and currency of the library collection.

Question three asked, What are the emerging themes of the authentic literature, and how might they bring greater understanding to the authentic experiences for immigrant children? This researcher found one theme that emerged, that of poor conditions experienced prior to leaving the home country. Two of the books included this theme, which was prominent enough to classify it as an emerging theme. In the other six books, the conditions experienced prior to leaving the home country were either not indicated or were only alluded to, but in either case were not a prominent part of the book. In the emerging theme, the characters faced situations of economic and political unrest and difficult life experiences that either encouraged or forced the child to come to the United States. The character of Victor in *Crossing the Wire* faces extreme poverty and feels the best option would be to come to the United States to work illegally and send money to his family. In *Home of the Brave*, Kek, from Africa is relocated to the United States from a refugee camp in Africa as part of a refugee resettlement program after losing many family members to severe fighting in the home country. These can add greater understanding to the authentic experiences because they depict difficult experiences and decisions that some immigrants may face. By including this authentic literature in a school library collection, teacher librarians help students to have the best examples of
current and diverse literature in the collection, as set forth in the Iowa School Library Guidelines.

**Recommendations**

This study included books with settings in the past 40 years, with copyright dates in the past 15 years. For future study, books depicting a wider range of time periods or copyright dates could be included, and could be compared with immigration laws or events that occurred around the time of setting or publication of the books. Another topic for future study would be to compare the authenticity of highly reviewed books, such as those in this study, with books about the same topic that are widely published but not as highly reviewed.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

BOOK SAMPLE


# APPENDIX B

## DATA COLLECTION TOOL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book Name</th>
<th>Poverty</th>
<th>Child Labor</th>
<th>Discrimination</th>
<th>Family Distress</th>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask Me No Questions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Honeysuckle House</td>
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<tr>
<td>From North to South</td>
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